ADressIng intersectionAL stEreotypes, building sChool communities of Tolerance through physical education

Project 101084968 – DIALECT3 – CERV-2022-EQUAL

Edited by EKKE's DIALECT projects' Research Team:
Joanna Tsiganou, Dimitra Kondyli,
Christina Varouxi, Natalia Spyropoulou, Katerina Vezyrgianni,
Magdalini Tsevreni, Katerina Savva

ADressIng intersectionAL stEreotypes, building sChool communities of Tolerance through physical education

ADressIng intersectionAL stEreotypes, building sChool communities of Tolerance through physical education

....

Project 101084968 — DIALECT3 — CERV-2022-EQUAL

Edited by EKKE's DIALECT projects' Research Team

....

Joanna Tsiganou, Dimitra Kondyli, Christina Varouxi,
Natalia Spyropoulou, Katerina Vezyrgianni,
Magdalini Tsevreni, Katerina Savva

Contents

BASIC PRINCIPLES GUIDING OUR VISION

Joanna Tsiganou[*]

Introduction

Since 2018, the National Centre for Social Research (EKKE) has embarked, along with partners from Greece and Europe, upon a series of EU funded projects under the acronyms of DIALECT,[1] DIALECT2[2] and DIALECT3.[3]

---

* Director of Research, National Centre for Social Research (EKKE).

1. "Disrupting polarisation: building communities of tolerance through football - (DIALECT)", - implemented from 2018-2020, under EU Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme, (REC) of the European Union (2014-2020), REC-RRAC-RACI-AG-2018, no 848445, EU - Directorate-General Justice and Consumers. Visit: https://dialectproject. eu/dialect/project/. Project Leader Action Aid Hellas. Partners from Greece, Italy, Germany, Hungary, Serbia: The National Centre for Social Research (EKKE), Action Aid Italy, Oltalom Sportegyesulet, Football friends Streetfootballworld gGmbH, Melissa Network of Migrants. The EKKE research team was comprised by: J. Tsiganou, D. Kondyli, Ch. Varouxi (Research Co-ordinators), A. Capella, M. Thanopoulou, N. Spyropoulou, K. Vezyrgianni (Members of EKKE's Research Team).

2. The project DIALECT2 (2020-2022), titled "Combating youth raDIcalizAtion: Building communities of toLEranCe combining fooTball with media and digital literacy" was co-funded by the EUROPEAN EDUCATION AND CULTURE EXECUTIVE AGENCY (EACEA), EACEA.A – Erasmus+, EU Solidarity Corps, A.3 – Erasmus Mundus, Sport, no 101050782. https://dialectproject.eu/dialect-2/project/. Project Leader Action Aid Hellas. Partners from Greece, Italy, Germany, Hungary, Norway, Serbia: EKKE, ACTIONAID INTERNATIONAL ITALIA ONLUS, OLTALOM SPORTEGYESULET, OND FOOTBALL FRIENDS ZA UNAPREDENJE SPORTSKOG OBRAZOVANJA KROZ FUTBAL, STREETFOOTBALLWORLD GGMBH, NORSENSUS MEDIAFORUM, PANELLINIOS SINDESMOS AMIVOMENON PODOSFERISTON SOMATEIO. The EKKE's research team was comprised by: J. Tsiganou, K. Vezyrgianni (Research Co-ordinators), and N. Spyropoulou, M. Tsevreni, Ch. Varouxi (Members of EKKE's Research Team) along with the external research associates E. Tsouparopoulou, D. Kalabaliki, Ch. Botsou, I. Kourou, A. Daskalaki.

3. The project DIALECT3: "ADressIng intersectionAL stEreotypes, building sChool

All three projects were based on the rational, provided through extended desk research demonstrating that political polarization remains still in place across Europe, a fact, which is creating a fertile ground for racism, discrimination and hate intolerance. Populist groups and parties have a pivotal role in the capitalization of sentiments of intolerance, particularly as far as young people are concerned. Evidence suggests that youths are attracted and approached by populist groups and parties, in order to act as supporters, while embracing their values.

According to relevant EU recommendations of the last ten years, for the prevention of radicalization leading to extremism, young people should be reached through innovative tools not only in the fields of education and training but also in the field of sports. As considered, sport interventions can promote group belonging and a sense of identity and they have been identified as an effective way of engaging especially youths detached from their communities and/ or the schooling system. Among sports, football has been broadly recognized as a social space, where community and identity construction is taking place with increased significance for the youth. Football communities historically provide the opportunities for the construction of collective identities. The target is to prevent intolerance and particularly xenophobia at local level, promoting community building and cohesion, using the same tool that it is frequently been used for the radicalization of young people, namely football. With an emphasis on dialogue and conflict-resolution, football may be used to enable players to grasp the power of

consensual decision-making allowing them to bridge cultural differences in a social environment marked by a constant inflow and outflow of community members.

Further, a number of studies are devoted to the preventive type of pedagogical interventions on the social, psychological, and pedagogical mechanisms that produce, maintain, and perpetuate racism which is conceived as ideology and social practice, with cultural parameters and established attitudes. The personality of the individual is viewed as a source of prejudice and racism as well as of the reproduction of racism through multiple channels of communication and institutions such as schools, church and politics, as well as the family and the media.

Studies examine also how sports can be a key factor in promoting health, take control of one's own life, build social capital and support networks, skills and competences, learn team work, leadership skills, creativity, and receiving and giving feedback. Research focuses on how sports can be used as a tool to fight inequality, discrimination and oppression, on how they bring people together in spite of their differences and build bridges, and in this way they acquire a unique potential for fostering social inclusion. Racism and ethnic discrimination in sports have also been addressed. The occurrence and different forms of racism, ethnic discrimination and exclusionary practices in sports, focusing on different sports and levels of practice, have been examined. Studies conclude that despite significant progress made in past years, sports continue to face a number of challenges related to racism and ethnic discrimination, incidences that affect sports at professional as well as at amateur level. At the same vein of research, key elements are described that are considered to be important to enable equal access and regular participation of migrants and ethnic minorities in mainstream sport clubs and programs. To date, migrants and ethnic minorities are to a lesser extent regarded as specific target groups for traditionally organized sports in comparison with more "alternative" or non-organized sport settings. In addition, an all -inclusive sport participation of migrants and ethnic minorities is addressed. More specifically educational tools that raise young people's awareness of discrimination and encourage them to promote diversity and equality, particularly in

football, are produced and evaluated. Studies on how to integrate diversity and anti-discrimination into football's organizational structures and activities, are devoted to football, since, as contested, by eliminating discrimination from the game, football will become more attractive for players, spectators, TV viewers and users of social media.

On the other hand, experts on the field of football explore the intersection between politics and football focusing on political activism in football. Analyses focus on the ideological conflicts between fascist and anti-fascist fans within football life worlds and the ways organized fans use current political circumstances to negotiate and re-interpret their identities. As shown, the intersection between fandom and political activism as well the newly emerged political formations that come from football elites and big business signify an important turn towards the 'footballization' of politics.[4] Nevertheless, unlike football in general, literature of football3,[5] is still lacking and only accessible through international publications which nevertheless state the merits of football3 as inspired by street football. The so called *"feminization of football"* also has not been addressed in the relevant literature.[6]

---

4. Indicatevely, Zaimakis, Y. (2018). Football fan culture and politics in modern Greece: the process of fandom radicalization during the austerity era. *Soccer & Society*, 19(2), pp. 252-270, https://doi.org/10.1080/14660970.2016.1171214

See also, Georgiadou, V. (2019). *The State of the Far Right in Greece*. Athens: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/athen/15846.pdf Georgiadou, V., Rori, L. and Roumanias, C. (2018). Mapping the European far right in the 21st century: A meso-level analysis. *Electoral studies,* 54, pp. 103-115. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2018.05.004. Georgiadou, V. (2015). Drawing from the reserves of the Right: Electoral strongholds and Golden Dawn voters. In N. Georgarakis and N. Demertzis (Eds.), *The political portrait of Greece. Crisis and the deconstruction of the Political* (pp. 206-233). EKKE-Gutenberg. Georgiadou, V. and Rori, L. (2013). Economic crisis, social and political impact. The new right-wing extremism in Greece. *Anuari del Conflicte Social 2013*, pp. 322-339. https://revistes.ub.edu/index.php/ACS/article/view/10341/13133

5. An innovative football methodology and tool, see following chapters.

6. Clark, Sh., Paechter, C. (2007). Why can't girls play football? Gender dynamics in playgroud. *Sport, Education and Society*, 12(3), pp. 261-276. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/248975381.

Filling the gaps: the contribution of the DIALECT projects

Our **DIALECT project** research has also verified that in the process of identity building, youths are highly vulnerable and susceptible to populist parties' campaigns, which tend to simplify complex realities, disseminate political cynicism and increase racial stereotypes. All evidence concludes there is a need for powerful tools for community building within the space of social and political polarization.[7] Addressing the increasing influence of extremist parties to youth, the project's research and implementation aimed to promote positive interethnic communications and interactions through football, while creating poles of understanding at local level. It was thought that such a course of action could normalize moderate discourses and combat the spread of extremism and populist group's xenophobic narratives. The project was targeting particularly disadvantaged communities across Europe, facing increased risk of being radicalized and influenced by hate speech and intolerant rhetoric. Based on a holistic approach and through an analysis of the current social and political polarisation, the DIALECT project aimed to primarily target adolescents aged 12-18, as well as their parents and the local authorities and CSOs, in order to develop a network of agents of change. The project aimed to contributing to the area of preventing racism by addressing the spread of intolerance and xenophobia through preventative community work, for the benefit of those which are forming their identities at the moment and their social environment, as extremism precedes citizenship.

The specific objectives of the DIALECT project were: a) to identify, analyse and address the spread values of intolerance through football by extremist parties, engaging particularly youth; b) to design and implement a holistic community building methodology, preventing and combating intolerance, while addressing community disintegration, through football; c) to empower adolescents, their parents and local authorities (incl. sports professionals) to form

---

7. See DIALECT project's reports and deliverables. https://dialectproject.eu/dialect/project/.

powerful networks of change at local level disrupting polarisation through the creation of poles of tolerance.

To these ends an innovative methodology and tool, namely the football3, has been used.[8] As a result, key research findings during the implementation of DIALECT project in all four participating countries (Italy, Hungary, Greece and Serbia) have demonstrated and reaffirmed the following:

In all four countries, aspects of racism, intolerance and xenophobia promoted against the acceptance of "otherness" and multiculturalism at community level were identified and witnessed creating a social climate that provides ground for racism, discrimination and hate intolerance which affect not only migrants and women but all kinds of 'different others'. In the middle of such a social climate is adolescence, a very sensitive and reactionary age. Populist groups are indeed playing a role in adolescents' identity construction, in times of social and political polarization with the promotion and reinforcement of existing stereotypes and prejudices which are occasionally used to classify and organize the external world and might be translated to action when the conditions are favorable. On the other hand, the risk of poverty and social exclusion contributes to intolerance. However, nowadays youth's interest in politics and related political participation has subsided in comparison to previous decades and youth's radicalization has been subdued by the uncertainties created by the covid pandemic.

Once more, football is valued as a social space, where community and identity construction is taking place with increased relevance and significance for the youth. Football communities indeed provide the opportunities for the construction of collective identities, although professional football was and has increasingly been politicized. This is so, especially due to the fact that football provides an opportunity in order to build collective identities, in times of frustration and uncertainty (i.e. increased migration, economic crisis, covid pandemic). Young people are extremely attracted by football and shaped by values surrounding it.

---

8. See next chapters.

In accord to the above, sports in general and football in particular provide opportunities to developing innovative tools in engaging youths in order to avoid social segregation and political polarization in community level. To this respect football3 is seen as a valuable tool promoting confidence, trust and safety, enabling players to put values they learn into action and become engaged in their communities. Engaging with the football3 methodology encourages informed decision-making and stimulates an interest in how social challenges can be overcome. An emphasis on dialogue and conflict-resolution enables players to grasp the power of consensual decision-making allowing them to bridge cultural differences in a social environment marked by a constant inflow and outflow of community members.

What is more, as the DIALECT impact assessment research results have indicated we can observe a positive trend in all countries with regards to skills and characteristics which are important for young people to show a more inclusive and welcoming behavior. More specifically, information and data from important stakeholders (government or civil servants, NGOs and CSOs representatives, football leaders) suggest that disrupting polarization through football and more specifically football3 lies in the hands of local governments, NGOs, CSOs, football leaders, educators and charismatic sport personalities who may act as 'agents of change' at local community level. In all four countries the merits of football3 initiative were out marked as an effective way to tackle different aspects of social exclusion, racism and intolerance, and as opportunity for sports skills to be transformed into life skills and be used by adolescents outside of the pitch. Difficulties were identified regarding: state bureaucracy, weak networking, issues of funding, community mistrust, pandemic issues, burden in co-operation among important stakeholders, lack of availability of spaces for trainings, difficulties in reaching out to adolescents, especially girls.

To almost all of these difficulties, important stakeholders, could contribute, but also to: the interconnection with universities and departments of physical education as strong promoters; to the modification of the training curriculum in order experiential learning and non-formal education methods to be included within the frame

of formal education; to the close cooperation of local authorities with school. In reference to self-esteem it was observed that shyness was gradually overcome, social, leadership and communication skills as well as community's acceptance were improved; there was observed development of co-operative spirit and team work to achieve a common goal and compliance to the set rules. In reference to a*spects of combating hate intolerance by the adolescents it was observed the d*evelopment of a sense of belonging, formation of new friendships and gradual improvement of skills to ask advice on issues or incidents which were troubling them, of avoiding relevant conflicts or rows, of avoiding reacting when they were called names and of being less intimidated.

The adolescents' acquaintance with foorball3 methodology and its implementation proved fruitful in developing individual merits and helped adolescents own empowerment and respect the fair play. Overall outcomes on the individual level indicate a positive change on how participating adolescents perceive themselves in the sense of the development of personal skills, tasks they prefer to perform, and how they perceive themselves towards the others, 'the real world' in the sense of belonging, their engagement to decision-making processes, as well as their perception and response to issues of equality, respect, justice, but also hate intolerance and discrimination.

The **DIALECT2 project** capitalizing on the experience gained through the implementation of the DIALECT project also refers to the "*sport-for-development*" area, with effects that go well beyond the sphere of physical activity, (elite) player and game development. DIALECT2 has been also based on the vision that people's love for football can be used to build opportunities for belonging, racial harmony and community cohesion. Football addresses these issues since it is basing its foundations on both: structural variables and social processes which act at multiple levels to impact on health and social behavior. As already said results of research on these issues underline football's positive impact on participating young people's sense of self, and appreciation for and engagement with peers from diverse backgrounds. Research has also revealed

unanticipated connections between participation in football activities and learning foreign languages, positive engagement with school, and building self –confidence.[9] In addition, DIALECT2 has been adapted to a growing volume of research indicating that continuous racist attacks, increase in xenophobic sentiments and discrimination against migrants and Roma across Europe offline and online.[10]

The theoretical and operational guidelines upon which the DIALECT2 project was based and implemented included the following:

Research has shown that Europe is experiencing intense dilemmas in regulating hate speech and online harassment. Often, the media exacerbate the tendency by reporting negatively about minorities. There is a need to control and limit incitement to violence in reconciliation with the fundamental right to freedom of expression. Three distinct aspects of hate speech have been identified: the first relates to the role of freedom of expression as a tool of inclusiveness. With the limits of liberal tolerance being unclear, just like the definition of hate speech itself, legal actors and systems are torn between criminalizing the speaker's motive alone or in conjunction with the effects of the speech. The second aspect concerns the challenges of the regulation of the freedom of expression in the digital age, with emphasis of the online dimensions of the phenomenon from a legal perspective. The final aspect concerns an actor -based analysis of hate speech, as it emerges from the current regulatory frameworks applied, the role of the State but also with that of equality bodies, political parties and private businesses in providing more efficient networks of protection of minorities from

---

9. See also Sonntag, A. and Ranc, D. (2015). *Colour? What colour? Report on the fight against discrimination and racism in football*. UNESCO, p. 15. Zaimakis, Y. (2016). Football fan culture and politics in modern Greece: the process of fandom radicalization during the austerity. *Soccer & Society*, 19(2), pp. 252-270. FRA (2010) *Racism, ethnic discrimination and exclusion of migrants and minorities in sport. A comparative overview of the situation in the European Union*, pp. 31-33.

10. OCSE (2018). Xenophobia, radicalism and hate crime in Europe. Annual Report 2018. https://www.osce.org/odihr/395336?download=true. European Union (2019). Progress report on the Implementation of the European Agenda on Migration" COM(2019), NEMO project.

such violent expressions of hatred.[11] Yet, beyond the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, young people are facing rising inequality, the climate crisis and conflict. Across the OSCE region, young women especially are facing barriers to political and economic opportunities, and are disproportionately affected by discrimination and violence. They are also underrepresented at the policymaking level and lack role models within these institutions, as less than one per cent of parliamentarians globally are women.[12]

Further, episodes of discrimination take place especially online and responses are needed while the significant role of the media has been recognized with respect to the "distorted" narrative. As it has been noted, however, adolescents possess a scarce knowledge regarding the concept of stereotype and prejudice and the consequences that these two modes of thought bring, and an awareness not always deep with respect to the concept of discrimination and to the dynamics that lead to hatred towards foreign people, although gender discrimination is experienced as serious and generally less accepted, or at least more recognizable in kids' perception as an injustice. On the other hand, young people are generally aware that the use of derogatory terms in online storytelling and in information spaces is something very serious and that not all online news are true (even if there is not always the ability to recognize the fake ones, especially when they concern discrimination against foreigners). As also noted, an aspect to be considered regards the process of familiarization with discrimination through the use of discriminatory terms in the moment of the "game" between equals. This involves also the relationship between language and context that deserves to be studied. Parents and teachers also play a decisive and complementary role with respect to the way young people learn or live with the phenomenon of discrimination in everyday life. However evidence on their perception with respect to kids' and

---

11. ECMI (2019). Working Paper #118 European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) Working Paper Series. Editor: Dr. Sergiusz Bober. Topidi, K. (2019). Words that Hurt (1): Normative and Institutional Considerations in the Regulation of Hate Speech in Europe.

12. OSCE, Schmid, H.M. (2022). What does security mean to youth – generational solidarity through empowerment and inclusion. https://www.osce.org/blog/524058

students' awareness of prejudice, fake news and discrimination, or on the level of knowledge with respect to discrimination and fake news and the educational responsibilities arising therefrom, remains still inconclusive. In addition, social media research, examining the far-right blogs has shown a wider expansion of the horizontal and vertical relations of supporters and members of far-right formations, who may no longer feel isolated.[13] At the same time, the governance of migration and how it is represented online and off line, raises lots of dilemmas and contradictions in all Europe and even more in some countries.[14] Thus, it was thought that the dynamics of community creation based on ideologies of hate, being influenced by extremist groups at local level, needed to be examined also in view of the virtual and/or digital worlds and "mediascapes".[15]

In fact, overviews of media landscapes across the European countries indicate that new online technologies are becoming more

---

13. Indicatevelly, Afouxenidis, A. and Georgoulea, I., (2018). An investigation of far right blogs; speech and aesthetics. In Spyridakis M., Koutsoukou I., Marinopoulou A (Eds.), *The Society of the Cyberspece*, Athens, Sideris pp. 91-127 (in Greek).

14. NEMO - Using the New media in Education to overcome Migrant discrimination Online Grant Agreement n. 821553 — NEMO — AMIF-2017-AG-INTE, p. 12. https://project-nemo.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/comparative-report_en_def_condisclaimer_acknowledgments.pdf

15. NEMO, p. 18. As cited "media systems, media cultures, and audience practices have to be conceived of in relation to nation-states. In line with the insight of Giddens (1984, p. 25), "*structure is not 'external' to individuals; it is not to be equated with constraint but is always both constraining and enabling... the structural properties of social systems are both medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organize*". Giddens, A. (1984). *The constitution of society: Outline of the theory of structuration*. Polity Press. So, we have to understand mediascapes in their context. Further, the original understanding of "scapes" indicates different viewpoints of geography which are not objectively given. Scapes should be seen as "*deeply perspectival constructs, inflected very much by the historical, linguistic and political situatedness of different sorts of actors: nation-states, multinationals, diasporic communities, as well as subnational groupings and movements*". Appadurai, A. (2000/1990). Disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy. In K. Nash (Ed.), *Readings in contemporary political sociology*, Blackwell, pp. 100-114, ibid. pp. 101. Thirdly, the consequences of technological developments imply that Internet is the currently dominant environment for different and ever-diversifying media-related practices, yet contemporary media cultures are no longer defined by one media alone. It is worth to use its wider definitions according to which media landscapes comprehend legacy and digital media, "*sticky*" and "*spreadable*" media.

and more embedded in everyday life, at work, in education, in politics; they affect family life and social relationships. However, in this ever changing landscape European countries present a quite diverse picture with respect to media and digital cultures and audiences. According to statistical data available, there is a considerable decrease of European readers of the written press every day, while there is an ever increasing percentage of Europeans using the Internet, as well as of those involved in online social networks. In the last years, the time people spend on Internet has increased and also the reach of the media.[16]

Nevertheless, no conclusive research evidence exists indicating the effects of internet use on adolescents. No link has been traced between Internet use and socio-demographic variables, such as gender and age, lower school performance, online gambling, online pornography and friend attachment, while there is evidence that the use of digital technology has a negative impact on children's physical activity but seems to be beneficial for children's social relationships. With respect to the consequences of digital activity on children's mental well-being, studies suggest that the relationship is U-shaped, where no use and excessive use can have a small negative impact on mental well-being, moderate use can have a small positive impact. Research has also shown that in cases of migrant and refugees they also use the Internet for family reasons, probably referring to communicate with relatives about their whereabouts or being connected to family abroad.[17] On the other

---

16. NEMO, p. 23. Eurobarometer data (Standard Eurobarometer 88/2017). World Internet Project, 2015, Greece, http://eke.gr/siements/WIPreport_gr.pdf. Also, World Internet Project, 2016, International report (6th edition). Los Angeles: USC Annenberg School Center for the Digital Future, http://wwwdigitalcenter. org/world-internet-project. Also, see European Commission - Press release: Digital Economy and Society Index 2022: overall progress but digital skills, SMEs and 5G networks lag behind. Brussels, 28 July 2022. Also, and indicatively, Trevlaki, A. (2017). Dimensions of the Digital Gap in Greece. In Demertzis N. (Ed.), *Governance and the Internet,* Athens, EKKE. European Commission - Press release: Digital Economy and Society Index 2022: overall progress but digital skills, SMEs and 5G networks lag behind. Brussels, 28 July 2022. Also, http://www.lse.ac.uk/media-and-communications/research/research-projects/eu-kids-online

17. Kardefelt Winther, D. (2017). How does the time children spend using digital technology impact their well-being, social relationships and physical activity? An

hand, ample is the evidence that adolescents "like to be online" while parents and teachers are voice certain concerns about the time spent online which is occasionally associated to addiction to the web, and different online addictions such as gambling, about privacy terms and express fears that children will provide private information to unknown people undertaking a risk of harassment. They are also concerned about children's critical skills, as they feel that time online will affect children's ability to build their own opinions, make them prone to fake-news and refer to the risk of distortion of reality. They have been concerned about excessive time spent online and its consequences, like sleep deprivation, superficiality and attention deficit, disciplinary problems, social isolation and the difficulty of creating non-computer based social relations. Considering adolescents' social skills fears are also voiced on a probable distortion of "real" life. Parents and teachers alike are concerned about effects on kids' concentration ability, effects on their cognitive skills and exposure to disturbing and/or harmful content (pornography, violence, violent games). The bad influences or "wrong" models ranging to the influence of videos pushing students to extreme and dangerous acts have also been mentioned. Some of the above fears have been associated to a possible generational gap between children and parents and/or kids and trainers who are not using the same social networks and do not have the same set of skills.

Thus the DIALECT2 project, included the energizing of media and digital literacy skills acting as multipliers of the aims targeted and project's results on community building in a way where generations may create a "world" which is just, inclusive, tolerant and healthy incorporating relevant values. This way DIALECT2 goes beyond DIALECT project's objectives in that it included not only education through sport – and more particularly football – but also training of both vulnerable adolescents and trainers in combating discrimination and hate intolerance at both: on and off line.[18]

---

evidence-focused literature review, Innocenti Discussion Papers no. 2017-02, UNICEF Office of Research - Innocenti, Florence. And NEMO, p. 27.

18. See, also, Sonntag, A. and Ranc, D. (2015). *Colour? What colour? Report on the fight against discrimination and racism in football.* UNESCO, p. 15. Zaimakis, Y.

Consequently DIALECT2 project's targets were also in accord with respective UN resolutions as follows: The disruption of polarization through football builds on the power of sports "to change perceptions, counter prejudices and improve behavior, as well as to inspire people, break down racial and political barriers, promote gender equality and combat discrimination"[19] and its unique ability to "present the world with a universal language and a sense of belonging and support. In promoting mutual respect and tolerance, sports teaches important social and interpersonal skills. Using sports to help people, especially youth, has proven to be an effective tool in keeping them from falling into a cycle of anti-social behavior, violence, crime and drug use".[20]

Polarization encompasses a wide range of dichotomies and extreme attitudes and can take different forms, such as racist violence, discrimination, intolerance and extremism. The growing number of divisive phenomena makes preventing social and educational measures all the more relevant.[21] Young people may be more exposed to abuse, exploitation, manipulation or recruitment by violent or criminal groups. The central idea always remains the same: using the game of football itself to educate and empower young people.[22] This way youth can become more self-worth and

---

(2016). Football fan culture and politics in modern Greece: the process of fandom radicalization during the austerity. *Soccer & Society*, 19(2), pp. 252-270. FRA (2010). *Racism, ethnic discrimination and exclusion of migrants and minorities in sport. A comparative overview of the situation in the European Union*, pp. 31-33.

19. UN Resolution adopted by the General Assembly "*Integrating sport into youth crime prevention and criminal justice strategies*", A/RES/74/170, 7/1/2020.

20. UNODC, Doha Declaration Global Programme, *Sports, keeping youth away from crime*, https://www.unodc.org/dohadeclaration/en/news/2018/02/sports--keeping -youth-away-from-crime.html

21. As the OSCE recognizes "*Racism, intolerance and discrimination in society continue to be matters of concern. Individuals are targeted and properties are vandalized as a result of racist and/or xenophobic sentiments. Such acts jeopardize the safety of victim communities and may impact the stability of societies. Acts of intolerance and discrimination also affect the relationships between different communities and present a threat to cohesive societies*". OSCE (2012). *Combating racism, intolerance and discrimination in society through sport.*

22. As the Council of the European Union underlines "*the human and social conditions which provide fertile ground for radicalization, particularly in young people, are complex and multifaceted and may include: a profound sense of personal and/or cultural alienation, real and/or perceived grievances, xenophobia and discrimination, limited*

confident, acquire resilience skills[23] to overcome adverse living experiences and reject polarization. Sport spreads and shares a universal framework of values: honesty, fair play, respect for self and others, adherence to the rules and teamwork.[24] Sport can teach values such as fairness, teambuilding, democracy, diversity, tolerance, equality, discipline, empathy, inclusion, perseverance and respect,[25] the propagation and adoption of which is more important today than ever before in a world that seems to be becoming more polarized.[26] Sport is believed to be much more than a mere "hobby", "past-time", "recreation" or "leisure activity" and along with religion and war, it represents one of the most successful means of collective mobilization.[27] As such, sport can build bonding bridges and social ties across diverse groups, communities and cultures "that might otherwise tend towards distrust and hostility".[28] Sport is used as a

---

education, training or employment opportunities, social marginalization, urban and rural degradation, geo-political interests, distorted ideological and religious beliefs, unstructured family ties, personal trauma or mental health issues". Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on the prevention of radicalisation leading to violent extremism (2016/C 467/02). As UNESCO stresses *"[Sport] represents a safe refuge to find original and good values and moral principles. [...] Sport can play a role in bringing the population together, decreasing crime rate and having a social and cultural impact. Sport is still of fundamental importance in our modern society, where understanding the importance of diversity among individuals is getting more and more difficult and where respect for the neighbor is constantly losing importance"*. UNESCO (2018). *The question of values education through sport.*

23. As resilience skills (the 7Cs of Resilience) are considered the following: competence, confidence, connection, character, contribution, coping and control. See UNESCO/IICBA (2019). *Play and Resilience*, pp. 71-72.

24. UNESCO (2018). *The question of values education through sport.*

25. Council of the European Union (2018). *Promoting European values through sport.*

26. As UNODC states *"sport fosters important human values and can be used as a tool to promote respect for rules and for others, teamwork, a sense of belonging and community, tolerance, diversity, hospitality and empathy. In this context, sport can serve as an effective platform to address the ideologies and root causes of violent extremism by strategically providing a tool to create ideal conditions for learning, social participation and the meaningful and positive engagement of youth within communities"*. UNODC (2020) *Preventing violent extremism through sport. Technical Guide*. UN: Vienna, p. 17.

27. Dunning, E. (2001). *Sport matters: sociological studies on sport, violence and civilization*, p.1.

28. UN SDGF (2018). *The contribution of sports to the achievement of the sustainable*

tool for creating learning opportunities and gaining access to often disadvantaged or marginalized populations. In the specific context of disrupting polarization the more commonly used interventions would be "plus sport" interventions, the majority of which would provide sport in addition to supporting social outcomes.[29]

---

development goals: a toolkit for action. As Dunning says, sport functions as something akin to a lingua franca which permits not only the consolidation of bonds among friends but also the breaking of ice between strangers. […] in its modern, more 'civilized' forms involves a usually relatively effective resolution of the antimony between rivalry and friendship. It involves, that is, forms of 'friendly rivalry'. Dunning, op.cit., pp. 221-222.

29. UNODC (2020). *Preventing violent extremism through sport. Technical Guide.* UN: Vienna, p. 4. As the Council of the European Union recognizes "*Sport plays a strong societal role with a powerful potential for social inclusion in and through sport, meaning that participation in sport or in physical activity in many different ways contributes to inclusion into society; whereby inclusion in sport involves a combination of 'sport for all', equal access to sport, equal opportunities in sport, and varied demand-oriented sporting opportunities and sport facilities, and whereby social inclusion through sport involves inclusive participation in society, community development and strengthened social cohesion*". The Council of the European Union, *Council conclusions of 18 November 2010 on the role of sport as a source of and a driver for active social inclusion (2010/C 326/04)*. Among the common priorities identified is "*to make better use of the potential of sport as a contribution to community building, social cohesion and inclusive growth by: 1. focusing on the use of sport to promote inclusion into society of disadvantaged groups so as to develop more cohesive communities; 2. recognizing and increasing the acquisition of skills and competences such as discipline, team-work and perseverance through informal learning activities in sport, including voluntary activities, as a way of enhancing employability; 3. acknowledging the economic, employment and learning potential of sport for contributing to the smart, sustainable and inclusive growth necessary for achieving a sustainable future*". The Council of the European Union, op.cit. The contribution of sport to social cohesion by breaking down prejudices, stereotypes and social barriers has also been emphasized by the European Commission. "*Sport and physical activity are valuable motivators for social inclusion and integration. Such activities provide opportunities for marginalized and underprivileged groups, such as migrants and people at risk of discrimination, to interact and integrate with other social groups. Sport also provides those with a disability an opportunity to showcase their talents and challenge stereotypes. Persons with disabilities have the right to participate on an equal basis with others in sporting activities, the mainstreaming of gender issues into sport-related activities is encouraged, in order for the under-representation of women in some areas of sport to be addressed, while sport enables immigrants and the host society to interact in a positive way, thus furthering integration and inter-cultural dialogue. Sport can be a vehicle to promote social inclusion of vulnerable or disadvantaged groups and contribute towards better understanding among communities*". European Commission, *Communication on Sport (2011). Developing the European Dimension in Sport.* COM (2011) 12 final, 18.1.2011.

However, sport on its own cannot lead to positive outcomes and transform beliefs or be the only solution to emerging social issues such as violence and youth polarization. For sport interventions to be effective for the prevention of polarization they should be developed in conjunction with more holistic and knowledge-based initiatives that can address more deeply rooted causes of polarization and the context-bound social issues.[30] Because of its popularity, simplicity and accessibility, football has a great potential to enhance socialization and promote inclusion by bringing together millions of people with diverse societal, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.[31] To these ends, the conceptual and operational definitions of the DIALECT2 project included the ideas used by *Prevention of Violent Extremism Scheme*[32] constituted by different zones through which sport can have an impact. The zones of the scheme include: *safe spaces, social inclusion, resilience, education and empowerment.* The adaptability of DIALECT2 targets to such a scheme apart from touching upon the *power of Sport Values,*[33] included the energizing of media and digital literacy skills acting as multipliers of the aims targeted.[34] In UNESCO's approach

---

30. As Dunning underlines "*modern sports are not a panacea. The degree of violence they entail is fundamentally dependent on the habitus and personality structure of the people who play, watch, organize and control them, and these, in their turn, are dependent on the stage in a civilizing or de-civilizing process or the balance between them at which their society stand*". Dunning, op.cit., p. 248.

31. As Dunning explains "*The reasons for its comparative success are not difficult to find. It does not require much equipment and is comparatively cheap to play. Its rules – apart perhaps from the offside law – are relatively easy to understand. Above all, these rules regularly make for fast, open and fluid play, and for a game which is finely balanced among a number of interdependent polarities such as force and skill, individual and team play, attack and defense. As such, its structure permits the recurrent generation of levels of excitement which are satisfying for players and spectators alike. At the heart of this lies the fact that matches are physical struggles between two groups governed by rules which allow the passions to rise yet keep them – most of the time – in check*". Dunning, op.cit., pp. 103-104.

32. United Nations Office On Drugs And Crime (2021). Preventing Violent Extremism Through Sport: *Practical Guide.* United Nations Office On Drugs And Crime Vienna, U.N., Vienna, Criminal Justice Handbook, p. 6.

33. UNESCO, *Power of Sport Values, 246351_eng_pdf.*

34. UNESCO, op.cit. Also in Jagtar Singh, Paulette Kerr and Esther Hamburger (Eds.) (2016). Media and Information Literacy: Reinforcing Human Rights, Countering Radicalization and Extremism, MILID Yearbook United Nations Educational, France,

media and digital literacy is also seen as empowering people to be curious, to search, to critically evaluate, to use and to contribute information and media content wisely.[35] As stated "a rights-based approach to media and information literacy and to sustainable development – including countering hate, radicalization and violent extremism - can play a crucial role in perceptions of the "other" by encouraging reporting, research and analysis as well as the design and implementation of development interventions that are objective, evidence-based, inclusive, reliable, ethical and accurate, and by encouraging individuals to take sound actions based on their rights and the rights of others".[36]

Further, UNICEF publications point out that digital literacy can be seen as an *umbrella term* that includes a continuum of meanings extending across the ability to use digital devices or software, to being capable of consuming and producing digital content, to meaningfully participating in digital communities. Further, multiple and overlapping understandings and uses of the terms "digital literacy", "digital skills" and "digital competencies" exist as well as a number of sister concepts to digital literacy, such as computer literacy, information literacy, 21st century skil ls, new

---

UNESCO Open Access Repository http://www.unesco.org/open-access/terms-usec cbysaen. Also, (2016). *Mapping of media literacy practices and actions in EU-28*, European Audiovisual Observatory, Strasbourg.

35. Jagtar Singh, Paulette Kerr and Esther Hamburger (Eds.) op.cit, pp. 7-8, http://www.unesco.org/open-access/terms-useccbysaen. As Alton Grizzle has put it "a negative and undesirable consequence, all over the world, there has been a sudden rise in incidents of individuals using hate speech against migrants, forced migration and minority communities or social groups, blaming them for their nations' struggles. The words used in politics, in the news, in social media, in research studies, national reports and general literature or debate about these human phenomena has consequences. History has shown that rhetorical excesses and unbalanced or biased historical accounts of certain events in relation to any ethnic group, place, culture or religion can give rise to a climate of prejudice, discrimination, and violence. It is these prejudices, discrimination and violence that often compromise individual rights or equal rights to all – the right to cultural and religious expressions, the right to security and peace, the right to freedom of expression, the right to education, the right to information, the right to associate or connect et al." Grizzle, A. (2016). Introduction. In Jagtar Singh, Paulette Kerr and Esther Hamburger (Eds.), op.cit, p. 12.

36. Grizzle, op.cit, p. 12.

media literacies, media and information literacy.[37] Research based on the Global Kids Online surveys[38] recommend a comprehensive approach for policy interventions dealing with children's well-being and rights in the digital age: "Access, skills, risks and opportunities are all part of the overall picture of children's well-being and rights in the digital age and should all, therefore, be kept in mind when developing policy interventions".[39] The DigiLitEY project3 supported also by the European Commission, connects literacy and digital literacy suggesting that three elements are involved in children's digital literacy: operational, cultural and critical, where operational elements refer to the skills required to read and write in diverse media; cultural elements include understanding literacy as a cultural practice; and critical elements emphasize the need for critical engagement as well as to ask questions about power, representation and authenticity.[40]

Another important element is the call for an active role for children. Increasingly, the empowering approach is being extended in viewing children's digital literacy as a way to increase future employability of children, for a future where there will be tens of millions of jobs for people with advanced digital skills as well as their entrepreneurial and innovative potential.[41] More recent

---

37. Fabio Nascimbeni and Steven Vosloo (2019). Digital Literacy for Children: Exploring definitions and frameworks (Scoping Paper No. 01). United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), New York, p. 11.

38. Global Kids Online is an international research project that aims to generate and sustain a rigorous cross-national evidence base around children's use of the internet by creating a global network of researchers and experts. It is a collaborative initiative of the UNICEF Office of Research–Innocenti, the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), and the EU Kids Online network. More at http://globalkidsonline.net.

39. As cited in Fabio Nascimbeni and Steven Vosloo, op.cit, pp. 14-15.

40. The Digital Literacy and Multimodal Practices of Young Children Network is a COST action supported by the European Commission for the period 2015-2019, analyzing what requirements multimodal and interactive media impose on the digital literacy of children of up to eight years old, and how they can support the use and interpretation of these services. More at www.digilitey.eu. As cited in Fabio Nascimbeni and Steven Vosloo, op.cit., p. 15.

41. See, for example, the UNICEF UPSHIFT programme, that aims to empower young –and often disadvantaged– people to identify challenges in their communities and create entrepreneurial solutions to address them.

developments have created "The Digital Intelligence Framework".[42] On the other hand the CoE competence framework identifies a mix of knowledge and critical understanding, skills, attitudes and values, for a total of 20 competencies.[43] UNICEF calls for a holistic approach to digital literacy, in terms of skills (stressing that children should be empowered with the technical, cognitive and social skills needed to be protected and productive in a digital age), stakeholders (claiming that parents/caregivers and educators should play an active role in children's digital literacy) and connection with traditional literacy (noting that digital literacy should be grounded within a broader skills framework for life and work).[44] Further, within the EU, the Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN) of the European Commission acknowledges that "A broader approach is needed, aimed at earlier intervention and prevention, and engaging a wide spectrum of actors from across society".[45] Young people are an important focus in the prevention of radicalization as they can be both the perpetrators and the victims of violent extremism. Because of their adolescence they constitute a very vulnerable "at-risk" group. As RAN points out, young people constitute the largest group of individuals joining violent extremist groups. In protecting adolescents against radicalization that may lead to violent extremism, literature review reveals the significance of the role of education on and off line as also UNESCO emphasizes. [46] On the other hand and the Council of Europe acknowledges that children *need special protection online and need to be educated about how to steer clear of danger and how to get maximum benefit from their use of the Internet. To achieve this, children need to become* digital citizens. As digital technologies are disruptive in nature and constantly evolving, competence building is a lifelong process that should begin from

---

42. Fabio Nascimbeni and Steven Vosloo op.cit., p. 24. https://www.coe.int/en/web/digital-citizenship-education/digital-citizenship-education-project. And https://www.dqin stitute.org/dq-framework.

43. Fabio Nascimbeni and Steven Vosloo, op.cit., p. 25.

44. Fabio Nascimbeni and Steven Vosloo, op.cit., p. 34.

45. Radicalization Awareness Network (2019). *Preventing Radicalization to Terrorism and Violent Extremism. Approaches and Practices*.

46. UNESCO (2018). *Preventing violent extremism through education: effective activities and impact; policy brief*.

earliest childhood at home and at school, in formal, informal and non-formal educational settings.[47]

In turn, the **DIALECT3** project invested on how sports can be used as a tool to fight inequality, discrimination and hate intolerance in formal education environments. The serious impact of discrimination and intolerance in the school environment has been highlighted by educators, school communities and European and international organizations.[48] In protecting adolescents against racism, intolerance, xenophobia and radicalization that may lead to violent extremism, literature review reveals the significance of the role of education.[49] According to UNICEF, inclusion in education is a process that helps overcome barriers changing the system to fit the student. All personal differences (i.e., age, gender, ethnicity, indigenous status, language, health status, etc.) are acknowledged and respected. The key message is that every learner matters and matters equally.[50]

To promote inclusive school settings for all, building teacher capacity for inclusive teaching, represents a key policy area. Teachers play a fundamental role in this and must be equipped with the knowledge, skills and tools to incorporate inclusive teaching strategies into pedagogies, curricula and assessments while promoting an inclusive classroom environment. Education systems need to ensure that teachers are adequately prepared for inclusive teaching and supported throughout their career. Mechanisms to attract and retain a more diverse teaching body as well as to monitor and evaluate teacher preparation and work with respect to diversity and inclusion should also be developed. While teacher policies have increasingly addressed some of these areas, most education systems lack comprehensive capacity-building frameworks for inclusive

---

47. Council of Europe (2022). *Digital citizenship education handbook*.

48. Such as OSCE/ODIHR, Council of Europe and UNESCO.

49. UNESCO (2017). Council of Europe (2015). Report of the Conference "Tolerance and Diversity through Physical Education and Sport" EPAS (2015) 69, 1680737882 (coe.int). UNESCO (2017). *Kazan Action Plan*. UNESCO's Sixth International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport, MINEPS VI. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000252725

50. UNICEF (2014).

teaching.[51] The Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN) emphasizes that institutions of formal education are key actors in preventing racism, intolerance, xenophobia and radicalisation.[52]

On the other hand for many children, especially those from less advantaged backgrounds, physical education provides their only regular sessions of physical activity.[53] Schools offer the only compulsory opportunity in most countries for young people to take part in, and learn about, physical activity through education programmes in formal settings. It is evident therefore that there is a need for children to receive their entitlement of quality physical education (QPE)[54] within school curricula. Physical Education (PE) is

---

51. Brussino (2021). Council of Europe (2017). *Fighting school segregation in Europe through inclusive education: a position paper*, COM(2020) 275 final.

52. Op.cit.

53. According to HBSC/WHO survey (2018) with regard to adolescents in Greece, research findings highlight the need to strengthen the role of the school (especially the public one) as a central body for promotion of physical activity and physical exercise in adolescent-students both within school building as well as outside school hours. The benefits of frequent physical activity of teenagers are not limited only to the teenagers themselves and their families but are reflected back to the school helping to improve academic performance and generally the quality of life at school. (epipsi.gr) Also, Van der Kreeft, P. (2017). *Life skills training through sport to prevent violence, crime and drug use. Trainer Manual.* United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Sanders, B. (2020). *Youth crime prevention through sport. Insights from the UNODC "Line Up Live Up" pilot programme.* United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

54. Quality Physical Education (QPE) is the planned, progressive, inclusive learning experience that forms part of the curriculum in early years, primary and secondary education. In this respect, QPE acts as the foundation for a lifelong engagement in physical activity and sport. The learning experience offered to children and young people through physical education lessons should be developmentally appropriate to help them acquire the psychomotor skills, cognitive understanding, and social and emotional skills they need to lead a physically active life. Quality physical education is distinct from physical education. Critical distinctions relate primarily to frequency, variety, inclusivity and meaning or value content. Quality physical education places emphasis on peer-led learning and rounded skill development. UNESCO (2018). *The question of Values Education through Sport.* https://2018.cfmunesco.it/media/uploads/ckeditor/2018/10/05/UNESCO-The%20Question%20of%20Values%20through%20Sport.pdf

UNESCO (2017). *Kazan Action Plan.* UNESCO's Sixth International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport, MINEPS VI. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000252725. UNESCO (2015). *Inter-*

not limited to training in physical skills but has also a societal worth that has been expressed in various documents. Physical education can contribute crucially to the personal growth of young people in helping them to develop physical awareness and belief in their own physical abilities, along with a general feeling of bodily well-being and thus greater self-confidence and self-esteem. Physical education also develops their willpower, sense of responsibility, patience and courage. At the same time, it helps them to be realistic about their physical and other capabilities and in their decisions and actions, so that they both learn to accept themselves and tolerate differences in others. In relation to gender issues and access of girls and women in sport practices, physical education in school is a key part of both boys' and girls' education. Because physical education covers all the boys and girls in the same age group, it is regarded more than ever as a sphere of equal opportunities and a key means of democratizing sport. Yet, what happens in practice does not always live up to these intentions and major gender inequalities can be seen both in access to physical education and in the way it is practiced.[55] It has also been

---

national Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport. International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport - UNESCO Digital Library. UNESCO (2015). *UNESCO's role in promoting education as a tool to prevent violent extremism.* (Decision 197EX/46) Decisions adopted by the Executive Board at its 197th session - UNESCO Digital Library. Nordbruch, G. (2016). *The role of education in preventing radicalization.* Radicalization Awareness Network, European Commission. See, also, UNESCO (2016). *A teacher's guide on the prevention of violent extremism.* Wöllenstein, J. (2022). *Developing resilience as an approach to dealing with the influences of problematic informal and non-formal education in schools. A practical guide for first-line practitioners.* Radicalization Awareness Network, European Commission.

55. Physical education is a statutory area of the school curriculum, concerned with developing pupils' physical competence and confidence, and their ability to use these to perform in a range of activities. Whilst the performance of physical skills forms a central and characteristic feature of the subject, like all other areas of the curriculum, it is fundamentally concerned with knowledge, skills and understanding. In the words of a position paper for the World Summit on Physical Education, the subject 'involves both "learning to move" and "moving to learn". In other words, physical education is concerned with learning the skills and understanding required for participation in physical activities, knowledge of one's own body and its range of and capacity for movement; and it is also a context for and means of learning a wide range of outcomes which are not inherent to physical activity, but which are valuable extrinsic educational lessons, such as social skills, aesthetic judgement, literacy and numeracy. Bailey, R. (2005). Evaluating the relationship between physical

recognized that stereotypical perceptions burden girls participation to sports clearly identified as boyish prerogative. Investment in quality education, particularly for girls, generates immediate, intergenerational payback across all dimensions of sustainable development. Schools are the ideal way to reach large numbers of girls and equip them with the information, skills and confidence necessary for lifelong physical activity and enjoyment of sport. Indeed, for girls who are able to attend school, physical education is of central importance. Scholars have noted that physical education programs which ignore girls' views on relevance and enjoyment can act as a barrier to their participation. Specifically, the traditional, sport-based, multi-activity form of physical education, where lessons focus on sports techniques, and where the predominantly masculine values of over-competitiveness and aggression override values such as fair play and co-operation. It is argued that provision of this nature caters only for a minority of already sport-competent children, typically boys, resulting in confirmation of incompetence and failure for the majority. DIALECT's project research results have also verified the above arguments.

Looking ahead

Good practices as the case of football3 rational and methodology are most welcome as in accord with all the above. Football3 targets to promoting key life skills and empower youth to become leaders as well as to providing both players and mediators with knowledge and life skills, are enhanced. It is aiming not only to increased willingness to include others, regardless of gender, ability, age or background, increased communication, decision-making and conflict-mediation skills, improved respect for women and girls, and appreciation of gender equality, enhanced sense of fair play, responsibility and accountability, increased desire to become a role model for others and increased participation in the community but also to increased

---

education, sport and social inclusion. *Educational Review*, 57(1), pp. 71-90, doi: 10.1080/0013191042000274196: https://doi.org/10.1080/001319104200027196

social participation. It is also aiming to advance creative skills of building interaction, engagement and participation in the economic, social and cultural aspects of society through sports and especially football and football3, promoting democratic participation, fundamental rights and intercultural dialogue.[56]

In the DIALECT3 project we were based on the idea that physical education and sport can be used as a vehicle to promote the social inclusion of marginalized populations, and to contribute towards better understanding among communities. Physical education and sport enable immigrants and the host society to interact in a positive way, thus furthering integration and inter-cultural dialogue. Moreover, sport can play an important role in reducing social tensions and conflicts at the community and national level by addressing the sources of this exclusion and providing an alternative entry point into the social and economic life of communities. At the most fundamental level, well-designed activities that incorporate the core values of physical education and sport — self-discipline, respect, fair play, teamwork, and adherence to mutually agreed upon rules — help individuals to build the values and communication skills necessary to prevent and resolve conflict in their own lives.

The DIALECT3 project used all the valuable information from the desk research and proceeded to a combined effort in schools, through the pilot introduction of football3 in physical education in selected schools. Thus, DIALECT3 seeks to harness the potential of physical education teachers to support inclusive education, and combat racism and intolerance in secondary schools (high schools) in Greece. The goal is to integrate in the curriculum of physical education in high school the already tested "football3" methodology that contributes to an integrated and cross-sectoral approach for preventing and combating intolerance, racism, and discrimination. Tackling racism as part of intersectional stereotypes in schools, the project seeks to support the inclusion of immigrant, refugee and Roma adolescent students, boys and girls, by promoting the creation of school communities of tolerance through the physical

---

56. Jagtar Singh, Paulette Kerr and Esther Hamburger (Eds.), op.cit. Also, *Mapping of media literacy practices and actions in EU-28*, op.cit..

education curriculum. The growing number of divisive phenomena makes preventive social and educational measures all the more relevant.[57]

The central idea always remains the same: using the game of football itself to educate and empower young people.[58] This way youth can become more self-worth and confident, acquire resilience skills to overcome adverse living experiences and reject polarization. Sport spreads and shares a universal framework of values: honesty, fair play, respect for self and others, adherence to the rules and teamwork.[59] Sport can teach values such as fairness, teambuilding, democracy, diversity, tolerance, equality, discipline, empathy, inclusion, perseverance and respect,[60] the propagation and adoption of which is more important today than ever before in a world that seems to be becoming more polarized.[61] Sport is used as a tool for creating learning opportunities and gaining access to often disadvantaged or marginalized populations. In the specific context

---

57. OSCE (2012). *Final Report: Combating racism, intolerance and discrimination in society through sport*. Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Combating Racism, Intolerance and Discrimination in Society through Sport, 19-20 April, Final Report | OSCE.

58. Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly (2016). *Sport for all: a bridge to equality, integration and social inclusion*. Resolution 2131/12.10.2016. http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-DocDetails-en.asp?FileID=23155&lang=en As UNESCO stresses "*[Sport] represents a safe refuge to find original and good values and moral principles. […] Sport can play a role in bringing the population together, decreasing crime rate and having a social and cultural impact. Sport is still of fundamental importance in our modern society, where understanding the importance of diversity among individuals is getting more and more difficult and where respect for the neighbor is constantly losing importance*". UNESCO (2018). *The question of values education through sport.* https://2018.cfmunesco.it/media/uploads/ckeditor/2018/10/05/UNESCO-The%20Question%20of%20Values%20through%20Sport.pdf

59. UNESCO, op.cit.

60. Council of the European Union (2018). *Promoting European values through sport*.

61. As UNODC states "*sport fosters important human values and can be used as a tool to promote respect for rules and for others, teamwork, a sense of belonging and community, tolerance, diversity, hospitality and empathy. In this context, sport can serve as an effective platform to address the ideologies and root causes of violent extremism by strategically providing a tool to create ideal conditions for learning, social participation and the meaningful and positive engagement of youth within communities*". UNODC (2020). *Preventing violent extremism through sport. Technical Guide*. Vienna, p. 17.

of disrupting polarization, the more commonly used interventions would be "plus sport" interventions, the majority of which would provide sport in addition to supporting social outcomes.[62]

Further, considering the combined educational and health outcomes, quality physical education lessons provide a low cost/high impact opportunity for governments. By fusing physical, mental and social learning domains, engagement in quality physical education curricula exposes students to a dynamic range of experiences which build on educational outcomes related to literacy and numeracy. Students participating in quality physical education delivered using creative, values-based teaching and learning practices, are empowered to think critically and equipped to communicate effectively. These are skills which are vital to recovery, future proofing and the uprooting of pervasive social inequalities.

The DIALECT3 project intends to realize all the above with a combined effort in schools and through physical educational curricula towards a more inclusive sports culture and football3 implementation, especially in school environment.

---

62. UNODC, op.cit. Also, The Council of the European Union, *Council conclusions of 18 November 2010 on the role of sport as a source of and a driver for active social inclusion* (2010/C 326/04). Also, European Commission, *Communication on Sport (2011). Developing the European Dimension in Sport.* COM (2011) 12 final, 18.1.2011.

WHEN STEREOTYPES LEAD TO PREJUDICE: A PRACTICAL AND THEORETICAL GUIDE

Magdalini Tsevreni[*]

Walking through commonplaces and stereotypes

Did you know that "time is money" and "knowledge is power"? You may have also repeated these common truths, as they are said since the beginning of time. Besides, they are plain as day; nobody needs to explain what they mean when they repeat them. However, let's take a breath of fresh air and look closer to the significance of using clichés and commonplaces in our everyday communication and how this is linked to nurturing stereotyping, an uncritical way of stereotypical thinking.

First of all, we will use in the same category clichés, idioms, commonplaces and the such, as they share some common features that are of interest here: they are linguistic expressions familiar to the people who use them and, at the same time, if we look closer to them, their meaning is not always linked with the words said. Nice examples from Orin Hargraves' book, *It's been said before: A guide for the use and abuse of clichés* (2014, p. 8) are the noncompositional propositions, "such as *elephant in the room; lock, stock, and barrel;* and *on the same page.* Other clichés, however, do not meet this criterion, such as *quick to point out; in any way, shape, or form;* and *a whole new level*". Nevertheless, in every case a proposition might make sense, but the clear meaning demands another level of cultural complexity understanding.

---

[*] Special Scientific Personnel, National Centre for Social Research.
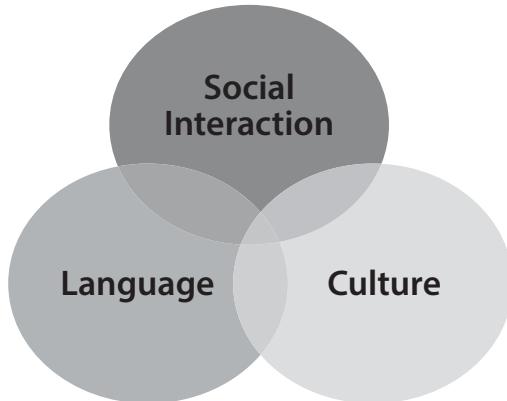
So, commonplaces have a long history that begins with logic, passes by rhetoric, goes through philosophy and ends up between theory and practice. Commonplaces from the beginning signified groups of arguments appropriate to a given subject, the common beliefs or popular opinions that are considered to be true. Commonplaces thus could be seen as a "tool" for our discussions.

However we understand commonplaces, they are an indispensable communication trait, one we all use in our cultural context. As John Dewey (1915/2001, pp. 8-9) notes: "The communication which ensures participation in a common understanding is one which secures similar emotional and intellectual dispositions – like ways of responding to expectations and requirements"; or, as Habermas (1984, p. 58) writes later on: "[F]or members of the same culture the limits of their language are the limits of the world. They can broaden the horizon of their form of life in an ad hoc manner, but they cannot step out of it; to this extent, every interpretation is also a process of assimilation".

A special case of commonplaces, seen in this broad sense, are the stereotypes. A stereotype is first and foremost a generalisation, a simplification. With stereotypes one can express ideas, and opinions, and, deliberately or inadvertently, attribute to individuals or groups specific evaluative characteristics and characterisations. Stereotypes are general claims about social kinds, as in "women have babies" as much as in "Muslims are terrorists" (Beeghly, 2015, pp. 676-678). However, stereotypes are a complex communication form and they

are not always expressed in structured sentences and clearly stated propositions. Like commonplaces, stereotypes are in the foundation of the way we think (Colston, 2015, pp. 103-125); they can arise from our assertions, statements, speech acts, and formed attitudes that imply certain stereotypical beliefs.

Primarily, stereotypes enable us to categorize our experiences, interpretations, and beliefs. Stereotypes sometimes help us understand the world; other times, create incorrect impressions, perceptions, and opinions. We usually believe that our stereotypical ideas are accurate, but in reality they are just clusters, generalizations, and simplifications (Hargrave, 2014). However, our stereotypical opinions are so familiar to us, and we constantly repeat them that we no longer think about their meaning.

Source: https://www.voicesofyouth.org/blog/gender-stereotypes-are-daily-action-and-are-very-normalized
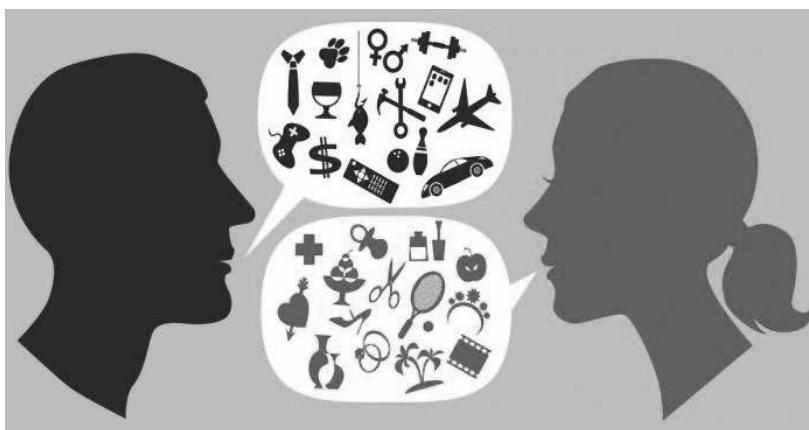
Stereotypical categorizations are transmitted by the social environment and influence social judgments, even when we try to avoid using them. With stereotypes, we categorize the world so that we can effortlessly move in everyday life. Our goal, therefore, is not to fight or eliminate stereotypes – which would be impossible. Our goal is to learn how to detect and be able to reconstruct them so that they do not uncritically influence our views and opinions. Our primary goal is to judge what we consider definite and standard.

Source: www.freepik.com Designed by macrovector

From stereotypes to prejudice

Stereotypes as claims for social kinds have an evaluative content; thus, they can have a "positive" or "negative" significance. The characterisation of the stereotype as positive or negative sometimes is clear and sometimes it is not. It mostly depends on the cultural understanding of the people communicating. The example of the stereotype that was mentioned above, "women have babies", has not a clear sign; it can have a positive or a negative connotation depending on the context. On the contrary, the other stereotype mentioned, "Muslims are terrorists", has undoubtedly a negative meaning.

The distance we have to cover from negative stereotypes to prejudices is not a long one. Stereotypes soften potential differences with members of the same group; but, they sharpen differences with members of other groups, despite any similarities (e.g., if I belong to the women group, the negative stereotype "men are lazy" unites me with the other women, despite the differences I may have with them - nationality, religion, sexual preferences, etc.).

A prejudice not only separates a social kind (e.g. men/women, young/old, immigrants/natives, etc.), not just attributes negative characteristics to it (e.g. politicians can't be trusted); a prejudice isolates a social group and it targets it (e.g., "immigrants go back to your countries", "women should not drive"). A prejudice, in other words, surpasses the possibly unfair labelling of stereotyping, and

adds a specific biased attitude, especially action-oriented attitudes – biased attitudes that probably qualify actions.

When the stereotypical classification or the characteristics attributed to the stereotyped group are derogatory and/or dismissive, then it is possible to form rigid beliefs and opinions. In this sense, stereotypes are the basis of prejudices, and as Dovidio et al. (2010, p. 5) notes: "Prejudice is typically conceptualized as an attitude that, like other attitudes, has a cognitive component (e.g., beliefs about a target group), an affective component (e.g., dislike), and a conative component (e.g., a behavioural predisposition to behave negatively toward the target group)".

Prejudice, thus, arises when we add beliefs, actions, or reactions to stereotypes (Hinton, 2017); based on these beliefs, we often make decisions and organize our everyday lives. For example, if I have the stereotypical belief that "immigrants are thieves" then when I see an immigrant on the street, I may instinctively hold my bag tighter and feel that I am in danger. Prejudices are the opinions, beliefs, perceptions and impressions that we form when we rely on stereotypes, commonplaces and discriminations without thinking about their arbitrary content and when we make decisions and act in our daily lives based on these beliefs (Blum, 2009).

Source: www.freepik.com Designed by pikisuperstar

To talk about and understand the range of prejudice, one should begin to overview the extent to which it permeates all communications and social relations. As stereotypes categorize the social world and shape our biases, prejudice follows easily and can be applied to any of our stereotypical classifications. In prejudice, our evaluations are built on terms of superior and inferior, better and worse, and give rise to favorable or unfavorable emotions towards specific stereotypical clusters. Rigid prejudice generates racism, lack of tolerance, and hate speech. For example, we hardly feel surprised when we encounter gender and racial prejudice in the field of sports, racist and xenophobic attitudes.

How to address stereotypes and overcome prejudice: a practical guide

As we have already seen, stereotypes and stereotyping are the foundation upon which a large part of our beliefs, actions and reactions are built; they are the medium for our understanding of the world, and we cannot live without them. Participation in our communities and integration into the wider society inevitably depend on the formation of stereotypes and commonplaces. Stereotypes and commonplaces are the cognitive media to understand the world; they come with the necessary categorization, simplification, and systematization of experiences, information, and our social environment.

At the same time, stereotyping is also the foundation of prejudice. For that reason, the first thing (but not the only one) that we can do to address our stereotypical way of thinking is to begin to understand our stereotypes; not to understand what a stereotype is in general, but to try to reveal to ourselves our own generalisations and simplifications. In other words, we have to be on alarm for attitudes, ideas, beliefs that begin with words such as "all of", "every", and the like; words that signify the possibility of a generalisation.

It is not at all easy to understand and accept our stereotypes as such, let alone to rearrange the way we think. The first exercise that could apply here is trying to fill sentences that begin with the

Source: www.freepik.com Designed by rawpixel.com

characteristics we identify with, and then critically examine how we filled the sentence. For example, if I feel that I belong to the group "woman" or let's say to the group "writer", how would I complete sentences that begin like: "I am a woman so I must…"; or, "I am a writer so I must…". The qualities that we choose to fill these sentences form our stereotypical way of thinking. It will be equally if not more enlightening to do the same with groups that we feel far away from our identity, or even with groups that generate negative feelings to us.

After this attempt, the next practical and rather amusing step we could take to break our stereotypes and prejudices is to mix up the first and last part of our sentences either for different groups that we identify with or for their opposites. For example, if I have noted a stereotypical belief like "I am blonde so I must… be stupid" and another one like "I am a vegetarian so I must… only eat vegetables", and a third one, let's say: "I wear glasses so I must… be a geek". Now if we mix these sentences, not only we can create new stereotypes, but also break our stereotypical ideas by understanding that many different things could be equally legitimate, and probably equally absurd.

Once we understand somewhat better the stereotypical circle through which we understand the world, the next step would be trying to trigger an original way of thinking. An exercise we could choose to take in this direction would be to create new commonplaces – sentences, sayings, and ideas – that only we can understand. By creating our own commonplaces and stereotypes, not only do we create an original space of personal expression but also engage our critical thinking and our creativity.

These exercises can be done individually or in groups and they can be adapted in any age category. First of all, they aim at understanding how stereotypes are structured and function. Also, they aim at improving self-awareness and at discovering our own stereotypes. Finally, by the activation of critical thinking and intellectual creativity we try to create new ways of approaching our social environments, maybe with a little bit of humor, if we're lucky.

How to address stereotypes and overcome prejudice: the theoretical framework

As we saw above, stereotypes and commonplaces are transmitted through our cultural environments and they are of great importance both in understanding our social environment, as in communicating and acting/reacting easily and within a reasonable time frame. Stereotypes and commonplaces have an empirical and experiential nature, and they are not part of "hard science", they are not a subject matter in school curricula, for example. As we enter the world of stereotypes oblivious of what is happening, it is in a similar way that we can learn to understand them.

Explanatory teaching style, the modern pedagogical myth according to Rancière (1991), limits student autonomy, critical thinking, and active participation. It cedes control to the teacher and turns students into passive recipients, nurturing already the idea of understanding our social world in terms of inferiors and superiors. This is a good demonstration of how discrimination context can be transmitted indirectly, even unintentionally.

Source: https://www.montana.edu/extension/4h/projects/experiential_learning.html

In contrast, experiential learning (e.g., Kolb, 1984; Dewey, 2001 [1915], Piaget, 1950) places the student's interest at the center of the educational process and encourages the student to learn through active participation, through practice, through exercises, and also through experimentation. In experiential learning, learners are at the center of the learning process; they define or co-organize the learning process according to their learning needs, their concerns, their difficulties, etc. The emphasis is now on active participation and reflection, on experience. The educational aim is that the learner theorizes and shapes or modifies knowledge and beliefs they already have.

In the broader context, inclusive pedagogy advocates that no one should be excluded from the educational process, from the school context/the learning and educational environment. With its origins in the field of special education, inclusive education emphasizes everyone's right to education, as well as the equal participation of all students in the educational process, regardless of any barriers they may face, including gender, origin, language, and physical or social limitations. Inclusive pedagogy strongly supports providing support

Source: https://mi.mcmaster.ca/5-principles/
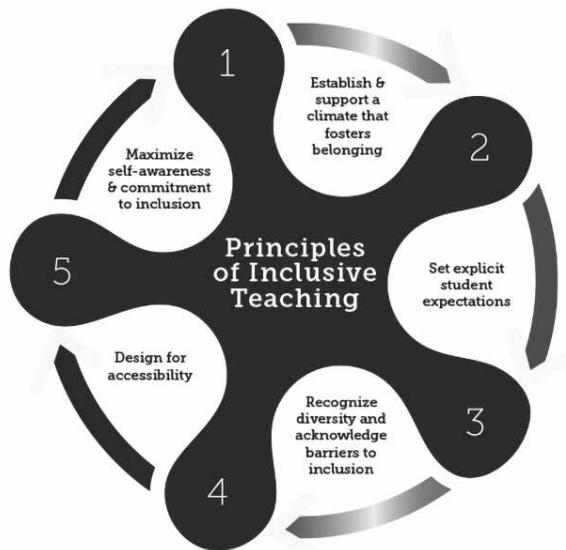
to learners who need it with the main aim of equal participation. Inclusive pedagogy persists on a student-centered approach, it raises issues of diversity in an effort to involve all students and develops practices that promote equality, equity and participation. Inclusive pedagogy is an important tool for social inclusion (e.g., Freire, 2015).

The case of sports

Over the past few years, teaching physical education and sports activities has been developing at a fast pace. Their dynamic presence and potential contribution to the field of social inclusion and the development of social capital are emerging (Council of Europe, 2018). In addition to the physical benefits of exercise, significant social benefits have now been recorded and highlighted. For example, social skills such as leadership skills, participation in decision-making, the development of social behaviour, etc. Another field of particular interest in recent studies is the participants' emotional and cognitive development in physical activities and sports, such as concentration, training, goal setting, and teamwork.

Source: https://dorringtonacademy.co.uk/our-school/health-wellbeing/school-games/

Sports bring learners into profound contact with each other. Thus, sports have become an important tool for creating communities of learners (Casey and Quennerstedt, 2020). Physical education can contribute to personal development and participation in groups and communities based on values such as fair and equal treatment or respect. Also, through physical education and sports, there is an opportunity to directly address problems such as violence, extremism, racist behaviours, etc. Physical education is an appropriate space for cultivating ideas and values such as tolerance, friendship, efficiency, rights, participation, etc.

Physical education and Cooperative learning

> Development of social capital
> Leadership
> Participation
> Decision making
> Social interaction
> Respect.

It is important to emphasize that sports are generally characterized by hierarchy and the formation of specific identity

qualities or distinctive characteristics, which constitute the basis for fan identity and rivalry. In other words, there is intense stereotyping related to sports, with gender discrimination and inequalities being widespread as we often encounter stereotypical ideas about coaches and/or athletes, even about sports. These sports stereotypes link to broader stereotypical social perceptions and prejudices.

In sports, we often come across gender and racial prejudices. The field of sports is overwhelmed by prejudice, discrimination and violence. Hooliganism and violent behaviour in stadiums are the rule, not the exception, and often end up identifying sports with racist and xenophobic attitudes, corruption, unfair practices, etc. Unfortunately, many factors in this field favour discrimination or gender inequalities, sexism, and hate speech. However, these well-known problems should not overshadow sports' multiple virtues. Here, we want to emphasize the possibility of creating communities in which the values of fair and equal treatment of all, participation, intercultural ties, and tolerance will be cultivated (Van der Kreeft, 2017).

References

Beeghly, E. (2015). What is a stereotype? What is stereotyping?. *Hypatia*, 30(4), 675-691. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24541975

Blum, L. (2009). Prejudice. In H. Siegel (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Education* (pp. 451-468). Oxford University Press.

Casey, A. and Quennerstedt, M. (2020). Cooperative learning in physical education encountering Dewey's educational theory. *European Physical Education Review*, 26(4), 1023-1037. https://doi.org/10.1177/1356336X20904075

Colston, H.L. (2015). *Using figurative language*. Cambridge University Press.

Council of Europe (2018). *Good practice handbook for the sports movement. Inclusive and innovative approaches to physical education and sports training*. In https://edoc.coe.int/en/sport-for-all/7687--inclusive-and-innovative-approaches-to-physical-education-and-sports-training.html

Dewey, J. (2001, 1915). *Democracy and education*. A Penn State Electronics Classics, Pennsylvania.

Dovidio, J.F., et al. (2010). Prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination: Theoretical and empirical overview. In J.F. Dovidio, M. Hewstone, P. Glick and V. Esses (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping and Discrimination* (pp. 3-28). Sage.

Paulo Freire (2005). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, trnsl.: Myra Bergman Ramos. Continuum.

Habermas, J. (1984). *The theory of communicative action*. vol. 1: *Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, trnsl.: Thomas McCarthy. Beacon Press.

Hargraves, O. (2014). *It's been said before; A guide to the use and abuse of clichés*. Oxford University Press.

Hinton, P. (2017). *Implicit stereotypes and the predictive brain: cognition and culture in "biased" person perception*. Palgrave Communications, 3:17086. https://doi.org/10.1057/palcomms.2017.86

Kolb, D.A. (1984). E*xperiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Prentice Hall.

Piaget, J. (1950). *The psychology of intelligence*. Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Ranciere, J. (1991). *The ignorant schoolmaster. Five lessons in intellectual emancipation*, trnsl.: Kristin Ross. Stanford University Press.

Van der Kreeft, P. (2017). *Life skills training through sport to prevent violence, crime and drug use. Trainer manual*. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). https://www.unodc.org/documents/dohadeclaration/ Sports/LULU/Manual/LULU_Manual_EN.pdf

INVESTING IN THE POWER OF SPORT TO COMBAT RACISM AND INTOLERANCE AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE: DESK RESEARCH AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Christina Varouxi[*]

Introduction

Through desk research and literature review conducted in the framework of the DIALECT3 program «ADdressIng intersectionAL stEreotypes, buiLding sChool communitiEs of Tolerance through physical education», we have gained deep knowledge about the dynamics of sport in building communities of tolerance. In the following lines, a brief presentation of the main points and conclusions of the desk research carried out in the context of the program follows. The literature review focuses on reviewing existing academic literature, policy papers and reports from European and international organisations on how sport can be used to combat discrimination, intolerance and racist ideology, polarisation and potential violent radicalization of youth. Desk research focused on the EU and the case of Greece, with a view to establish a common understanding of the field of discrimination and racism with that of physical education. The aim was to integrate community building through football methodology to prevent intolerance in the school context.

Desk research confirmed that racism, intolerance and xenophobia are reinforced throughout Europe and Greece as well (ECRI, 2022·

* Researcher, National Centre for Social Research.

FRA, 2013· Gazakis, 2014). The literature review also reaffirmed that racism is strongly based on values of intolerance, defined as the unwillingness or refusal to accept beliefs, views, practices or behaviors that differ from our own and that intolerance can take various forms, ranging from avoidance to acts of hate and physical harm of people who differ. Bibliographic findings reveal that many European institutions have called for the immediate attention by member states to issues of increasing racism, the rise of populist parties and intolerant political discourse, reaffirming the fundamental importance of freedom of expression and opinion, tolerance and respect for equal dignity of all human beings for a democratic and pluralistic society (ECRI, 2016). At the same time research is piling up evidence on continuous racist attacks increase in xenophobic sentiments and discrimination against migrants and refugees across Europe (RVRN, 2022). Data show that there is an increase in racially motivated crimes in EU Member States, with racially motivated hate crimes on the rise. Racist violence and hate speech are normalized, while the political polarization that occurs in a wide part of society, creates social climate that provides fertile ground for the development of extreme attitudes and intolerant behaviors (ENAR, 2019).

Within this context, desk research findings have reaffirmed that in times of social and political polarization, populist groups and parties capitalize on this intolerance, especially among young people. Young people, in the process of identity building, are extremely vulnerable and sensitive to campaigns by populist groups and parties, which tend to simplify complex realities, spread political cynicism, and increase racial stereotypes. Thus, they become supporters and representatives of their values, not only in the context of the neighborhood or face-to-face communication, but also in digital worlds, in the field of the media, where racism, sexism, xenophobia and hate speech are easily disseminated (Zaimakis, 2018).

Furthermore, in recent years radicalization leading to violent extremism has also evolved both internationally and within the EU, as it is acknowledged by multiple international and regional organizations such as the United Nations and its agencies, the Council of Europe and the European Union institutions. «The world

has witnessed new waves of violent extremism that have taken the lives of many innocent people. Whether based on religious, ethnic or political grounds, extremist ideologies glorify the supremacy of a particular group and oppose a more tolerant and inclusive society. [...] Young people are an important focus in the prevention of radicalization as they can be both the perpetrators and the victims of violent extremism. Because of their adolescence, they constitute a very vulnerable "at-risk" group. When societies fail to integrate youth in meaningful ways, young people are more likely to engage in political violence» (UNDP, 2016).

Physical education and sports as tools to promote diversity and social inclusion

Bibliographic findings confirm the rising need to address racism, intolerance and xenophobia, especially among young people, through educational initiatives in the context of formal, non-formal and informal education. As UNESCO points out «informal and non-formal educational initiatives complement formal education. Such inter-group interactions organically broaden youth's understandings of other belief systems and help confront prejudices and assumptions. [...] sports can build bridges between diverse cultures and religions. Sports activities can be used to promote intergroup cooperation and unite diverse individuals in achieving a common goal. Repeated experiences of intergroup contact or, more simply, interactions with the "other" contribute to building more inclusive societies and more empathetic, mindful citizens. They foster values such as teamwork, leadership, and goal setting. [...] Participation in sports provides young people with a sense of inclusion and purpose, reducing isolation from the larger community. In addition to building stronger communities, sports provide benefits to the individual, including improved self-esteem, leadership skills, greater academic achievement, and longer attention span. Such advantages improve the resilience of young people and increase the probability that they will better handle challenges, rebound more quickly from disappointments, and maintain a healthy sense of community engagement» (UNESCO, 2017).

The potential of physical education and sports to create a climate of tolerance and respect for diversity has long been confirmed by academics, researchers, educators, sports professionals and a plethora of international organisations. Sport plays an important role in building cohesive societies and can be a driving factor in the development of tolerant attitudes and democratic values. Sport can be a means of transmitting positive values and developing a climate of tolerance and mutual understanding. It teaches respect and understanding of diversity, while promoting social skills in young people. Sport provides positive experiences such as a sense of belonging, belief in achieving a common goal, trust and mutual support, cooperation, understanding, tolerance and acceptance among participants from different backgrounds. Sport can become a powerful tool for promoting the social inclusion of marginalized or at-risk young people, strengthening social cohesion.

The Council of Europe recognizes that sport and physical education have great potential to educate respect for diversity and mutual understanding of diversity and that physical education and sport have real potential to engage young people, provide easily accessible learning opportunities and develop social skills. «Physical education and sport policies can include learning objectives that support the development of an inclusive society which respects diversity and improves tolerance and mutual understanding of its members. Diversity is a natural aspect of human communities and modern societies, and physical education and sport can play an important role in supporting people to learn how to live together in different communities» (Council of Europe/EPAS, 2015, 2018).

It has long been recognized that physical education and sports can be used as a vehicle to promote the social inclusion of marginalized populations. Moreover, sport can play an important role in reducing social tensions and conflicts at the community and national level by addressing the sources of this exclusion and providing an alternative entry point into the social and economic life of communities. At the most fundamental level, well-designed activities that incorporate the core values of physical education and sport — self-discipline, respect, fair play, teamwork, and adherence to mutually agreed upon rules — help individuals to build the values and communication

Source: UNESCO (2015), Quality Physical Education
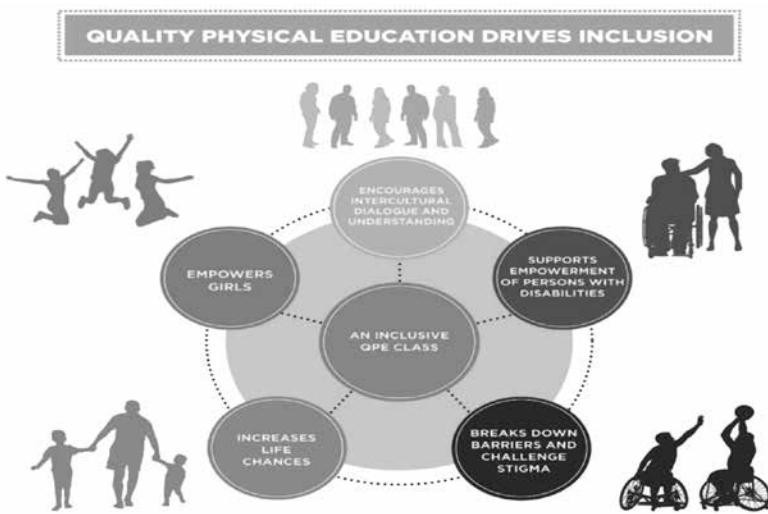
skills necessary to prevent and resolve conflict in their own lives (UNESCO, 2015).

The literature review confirms that sport can be used as a tool to promote tolerance and diversity since it enhances inclusiveness, regardless of gender, ability, age or origin and it enhances respect for women and girls, gender equality, fair play, responsibility and accountability, participation in the community and digital worlds. It also develops critical thinking aiming to strengthen and promote democratic participation, fundamental rights and dialogue (UNESCO, 2017). Moreover, sport is an integration platform with real potential to engage young people and manages to integrate those who feel disconnected from the community or school system. It provides easily accessible learning opportunities, challenges stigma and transcends stereotypes and provides positive experiences such as a sense of teamwork and identity, a sense of belonging, belief in achieving a common goal, trust and mutual support, cooperation, understanding, tolerance and acceptance among participants from different backgrounds. It also enhances personality with self-esteem, leadership skills, and other life skills that improve young people's resilience and increase their likelihood of maintaining a healthy sense of belonging to the community. Sport also provides

opportunities to build collective identities and strengthen social cohesion, especially in times of uncertainty. Finally, it serves as a platform for integration, acting as a deterrent to polarization, violence and crime.

The power of sports to contribute to protecting and countering youth intolerance, radicalization and violent extremism has been emphasized in existing literature, policy papers and reports of European and international organizations. Sport and physical activity are vital to the development of young people as they foster their physical, social and emotional health. They can also provide positive experiences such as a sense of belonging, loyalty and support, and can promote positive changes in relationships by encouraging collaboration, understanding, tolerance and acceptance between participants from different backgrounds. What is more, sport has clear educational benefits, as it can help skills development to empower young people to make positive changes in their own lives and their communities. While sport alone cannot tackle crime prevention, it is recognized that sport-based approaches may offer an effective means of engaging youth in a meaningful way and building life skills that enhance protective factors and reduce risk factors linked to crime, violence and substance use. In addition, sport can help develop life skills to empower young people to make positive changes in their lives. Key life skills developed through sport, which can play an important role in strengthening young people's resilience, promoting tolerance and respect, and reducing their likelihood of engaging in risky behaviors, are coping with stress and emotions; critical thinking; decision-making and problem solving; effective communication and relationship skills; denial skills and self-awareness and empathy (UNODC, 2017, 2020).

Physical education and sports as tools to counter polarization and crime

The bibliographic findings also confirm that sports can be used as a tool to counter polarisation and crime, especially among young people. Polarisation is highlighted as a major risk factor for young

people's radicalisation. It is characterized by a division of identities "us" versus "them", leading to negative attitudes and hostility towards "other" groups. Young people are the largest group involved in violent radicalisation processes, and the number of women involved has increased. The use of sport has proven to be an effective tool to protect young people from a cycle of anti-social behaviour, violence and crime. Through sport, young people can gain greater self-esteem and confidence and acquire resilience skills to overcome adverse life experiences and reject polarization. Moreover, sport can be used as a means of halting polarisation, particularly in relation to marginalised young people and young people at risk, since it provides a useful space to engage children and adolescents outside their normal contexts (i.e., school, families, and communities).

Literature reveals that breaking polarisation through sports relies on the power of sport "to change perceptions, combat prejudice and improve behaviour, as well as inspire people, break down racial and political barriers, promote gender equality and combat discrimination" (UN, 2020). By promoting mutual respect and tolerance, sport teaches important social and interpersonal skills. The use of sport to help people, especially young people, has proven to be an effective tool to protect them from the cycle of anti-social behaviour, violence, crime and drug use (UNODC, 2018). In this way young people can gain greater self-esteem and self-confidence, acquire resilience skills to overcome adverse life experiences and reject polarization. Sport disseminates and shares a universal framework of values: honesty, fair play, respect for oneself and others, observance of rules and teamwork. Sport can teach values such as fairness, teamwork, democracy, diversity, tolerance, equality, discipline, empathy, inclusion, perseverance and respect, the dissemination and adoption of which is more important today than ever in a world that seems to be becoming increasingly polarized (UNESCO, 2018· Council of the European Union, 2018· UNODC, 2020).

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) emphasizes that sport is increasingly used as a means of preventing crime, violence and substance use, especially among young people. «Crime prevention requires promoting inclusion and social cohesion, and

Violent Extremism Prevention Scheme

Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

sport can play a unique role in this respect, creating social capital and helping to mobilize communities and promote social inclusion and solidarity. Sport promotes important human values and can be used as a tool to promote, among others, respect for rules and others, teamwork, a sense of belonging and community, tolerance and empathy, which are important elements of youth violence and crime prevention efforts. In addition, sport can help develop skills to empower young people to make positive changes in their lives and communities» (UNODC, 2021).

Physical education and sports as tools to prevent youth radicalization and extremism

Desk research also reveals that young people are more exposed to abuse, exploitation, manipulation or recruitment by violent or criminal groups, and intense radicalization towards violent extremism, for religious, ethnic or political reasons. Adolescents are a vulnerable group at risk and at the same time are in an important position to

prevent radicalization. They may become equally perpetrators or victims of violent extremism and are easily drawn into more radical ways of thinking. The vulnerability of young people increases as family control over their education and lifestyle decreases, especially when young people leave the family home. When societies fail to integrate young people in meaningful ways, the more likely they become to engage in political violence. Young people are the largest group involved in violent radicalization processes, and the number of women involved has increased (RAN, 2021).

According to the EU Recommendations on preventing radicalization leading to extremism, young people need to be reached through innovative tools in education and training and sport, beyond formal structures. Sports interventions promote a sense of teamwork and identity and manage to integrate those who feel disconnected from the community or school system. With the aim of preventing intolerance and xenophobia at the local level, strengthening community cohesion is based on the same tools that are often used to radicalize young people: sport, especially football, and social media. Special emphasis is placed on dialogue and conflict resolution that allows players to understand the power of consensual decision-making and bridge cultural and other differences (European Commission, 2016· European Parliament, 2022).

Literature review reveals that one of the ways to prevent youth from entering extremist groups is to strengthen the role of education through sport. Especially during childhood and adolescence, sport can play an important role in the development of personality and abilities and can enhance social and cognitive skills. Sport is a social space where community and identity building are of great importance to youth. Sports communities provide opportunities to build collective identities; especially in times of frustration and uncertainty (e.g., in times of increased migration, economic crisis, pandemic). «Sport can make a substantial contribution to preventing radicalization and violent extremism. [...] Studies suggest that participating in sports can improve self-esteem, strengthen social bonds and give participants a sense of purpose. Sport can boost their self-confidence and offer young people opportunities to meet and make friends with other young people. This can lead to positive

identity development and a sense of belonging – two protective factors when it comes to preventing violent extremism. In this way, playing sport could help reduce the risk of radicalization leading to violent extremism» (RAN, 2021).

Negative side effects and prevention policies

Concluding this article, it is important to note that, according to literature findings, in addition to the positive points mentioned above regarding the value of sport in empowering young people and maintaining social cohesion, sports initiatives do not automatically lead to positive results. Sport is not a panacea. The literature identifies possible negative side effects, especially when sports initiatives are not accompanied by social protective prevention interventions aimed at enhancing tolerance, collectivity and social cohesion. «The uncomfortable truth about all these positive factors is that, as is often the case with many supposed protective or 'resilience' factors, they can also turn out to be negative factors, depending on the social context and individual needs of each individual. First, "performance" as a category of success in sports can lead to a "body cult," where performance enhancement is the only focus. Second, the dynamics of sports competitions can create a "cult of victory," where winning and defeating opponents is the main concern. The consequences are usually excessive ambition, overestimation and hostile attitude towards opponents. And third is the "cult of violence", where the dynamics of competitive sports lead to verbal and physical violence, both between competitors and in the social context of the struggle. These negative aspects in sport offer potential entry points for recruitment strategies by violent groups of hooligans and extremists» (RAN, 2021).

Concluding remarks

Desk research and literature review show that the potential of physical education and sport in creating a climate of tolerance and respect for diversity has been confirmed by academics, researchers,

sports professionals and numerous international organizations. Physical education and sport play an important role in building and cohesion of society and can be a factor in promoting tolerant attitudes and democratic values. At a time when discrimination, intolerance and social and political polarisation are a fact, leading people, especially young people, to extreme behaviour and extremism, physical education and sports can become tools for strengthening social cohesion and respect for human rights. In conclusion, physical education and sports have an important role to play in the development of a world where no one is left behind and where citizens are healthy, resilient and equipped with the socio-emotional skills needed to navigate life transitions.

References

Collison, H. (2021). *Preventing violent extremism through sport. Practical Guide.* United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM THROUGH SPORT: Practical Guide (unodc.org)

Collison, H. (2020). *Preventing violent extremism through sport. Technical Guide.* United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Preventing Violent Extremism through Sport; Technical Guide (unodc.org)

Council of Europe, European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (2022). *ECRI Report on Greece.* ECRI - Country monitoring in Greece - European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) (coe.int)

Council of Europe (2018). *Good practice handbook for the sports movement. Inclusive and innovative approaches to physical education and sports training.* Inclusive and innovative approaches to physical education and sports training (coe.int)

Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly (2016). *Sport for all: a bridge to equality, integration and social inclusion.* Resolution 2131/12.10.2016. http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-DocDetails-n.asp?FileID= 23155&lang=en

Council of Europe (2015). Report of the Conference "*Tolerance and Diversity through Physical Education and Sport*" EPAS (2015) 69, 1680737882 (coe.int)

Council of the European Union (2018). *Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the*

Council on promoting the common values of the EU through sport. 9016/18 24.5.2018. https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/EU/XXVI/EU/02/26/EU_22641/imfname_10811469.pdf

Council of the European Union (2018). *Promoting European values through sport-Discussion paper.* 5149/18 11.1.2018. http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-5149-2018-INIT/en/pdf

European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (2017). *The contribution of youth work to preventing marginalisation and violent radicalisation: a practical toolbox for youth workers & recommendations for policy makers: results of the expert group set up under the European Union Work Plan for Youth for 2016-2018.* https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/32369

European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (2016). *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions supporting the prevention of radicalisation leading to violent extremism.* COM/2016/0379 final. EUR-Lex - 52016DC0379 - EN - EUR-Lex.

European Commission/EACEA (2013). *Physical Education and Sport at Schools in Europe. Eurydice Report.* Physical education and sport at school in Europe - Publications Office of the EU (europa.eu)

European Parliament (2022). *Preventing radicalisation in the European Union. How EU policy has evolved.* Preventing radicalisation in the European Union.

FRA - European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2013). *Racism, discrimination, intolerance and extremism: learning from experiences in Greece and Hungary.* Thematic Situation Report. Vienna: FRA. https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra-2013-thematic-situation-report-3_en_1.pdf

Gazakis, A., Syrri, D., and Takis, A. (2014). *Racism and discrimination in Greece today.* Heinrich Böll Stiftung Greece. https://gr.boell.org/sites/default/files/report_racism_and_discrimination.pdf

Handle, J. and Scheuble, S. (2021). *The role of sports in violent right-wing extremist radicalization and P/CVE.* Radicalization Awareness Network, European Commission. The role of sports in violent right-wing extremist radicalisation and P/CVE, 2021 (europa.eu)

Lenos, S., and Jansen, A. (2019). *The role of sports and leisure activities in preventing and countering violent extremism. RAN EX Post Paper.* RAN Centre of Excellence and the RAN YF&C Working Group, Radicalization

Awareness   Network.   RAN-Centre-of-Excellence-_2019_The-role-of-sports-in-preventing-VE.pdf (allianceofsport.org)

McLennan, N. (2021). *Making the case for inclusive quality physical education policy development: a policy brief*. Paris, UNESCO Publishing. Making the case for inclusive quality physical education policy development: a policy brief - UNESCO Digital Library.

Nordbruch, G. (2016). *The role of education in preventing radicalization*. Radicalization Awareness Network, European Commission. files_en (europa.eu)

Nwabuzo, O. (2019). *Racist crime and institutional racism in Europe. ENAR shadow report 2014-2018*. European Network Against Racism (ENAR). 2014-2018 ENAR Shadow Report on racist crime and institutional racism in Europe. European Website on Integration (europa.eu)

Racist Violence Recording Network (RVRN) (2022). *Annual Report 2021*. Athens. ETHSIA-EKTHESH-2021_ENG_fn.pdf (unhcr.org)

Radicalization Awareness Network (December 2021). *Inclusion through sports. Conclusion paper*. RAN Youth & Education (Y&E). RAN Y&E Inclusion through sports, online meeting 30 November – 01 December 2021 (europa.eu)

Radicalization Awareness Network (May 2020). Violent right-wing extremism in focus. *Spotlight*. Violent right-wing extremism in focus, May 2020 (europa.eu)

Radicalization Awareness Network (2019). *Preventing Radicalization to Terrorism and Violent Extremism. Approaches and Practices*. files_en (europa.eu)

Samuel, K., L.H. (2018). *Desk review on sport as a tool for the prevention of violent extremism*. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Desk review on sport as a tool for the prevention of violent extremism (unodc.org)

Sanders, B. (2020). *Youth crime prevention through sport. Insights from the UNODC "Line Up Live Up" pilot programme*. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). LULU Insights report cover (unodc.org)

Sieckelinck, S. and Gielen, A-J. (2018). *Protective and promotive factors building resilience against violent radicalisation*. European Commission, Radicalisation Awareness Network. ran_paper_protective_factors_042018_en.pdf (uva.nl)

United Nations (2020). *Recovering better: Sport for Development and Peace. Reopening, Recovering and Resilience post Covid-19*. Final-SDP-recovering-better.pdf (un.org)

United Nations, General Assembly (2015). *Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism: Report of the Secretary General*. A/70/674. (PVE Action Plan). Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. Office of Counter-Terrorism.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2016). *Preventing violent extremism through promotion inclusive development, tolerance and respect for diversity: a development response to addressing radicalization and violent extremism*. New York. Discussion Paper - Preventing Violent Extremism by Promoting Inclusive Development.pdf (undp.org)

UNESCO (2021). *Quality Physical Education Policy Project: analysis of process, content and impact*. Promoting Quality Physical Education Policy. UNESCO.

UNESCO (2020). *Global Education Monitoring Report 2020: Inclusion and education: All means all*. Paris, UNESCO. Global education monitoring report, 2020: Inclusion and education: all means all - UNESCO Digital Library.

UNESCO (2018). *The question of Values Education through Sport*. https://2018.cfmunesco.it/media/uploads/ckeditor/2018/10/05/UNESCO-The%20Question%20of%20Values%20through%20Sport.pdf

UNESCO (2017). *Preventing violent extremism through education: a guide for policy makers*. Paris: UNESCO publishing. Preventing violent extremism through education: a guide for policy-makers - UNESCO Digital Library

UNESCO (2015). *International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport*. International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport - UNESCO Digital Library.

Van der Kreeft, P. (2017). *Life skills training through sport to prevent violence, crime and drug use. Trainer Manual.* United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). LULU_Manual_EN.pdf (unodc.org)

Zaimakis, Y. (2018). Football fan culture and politics in Modern Greece: the process of fandom radicalization during the austerity era. *Soccer and Society*,19(2),pp.252-270.https://doi.org/10.1080/14660970.2016.1171214

FOOTBALL3 RATIONAL AND METHODOLOGY

Ioanna Papadopoulou[*]

The origins of football3 date back to July 2, 1994, when Andrés Escobar, a Colombian national team player, was tragically shot by a fan in a parking lot after scoring an own goal during the 1994 FIFA World Cup, which led to Colombia's early exit from the tournament. This act of violence and hatred sparked Jürgen Griesbeck, a PhD student in Medellín, and others to create the "Fútbol por la paz"(Football for Peace) movement. The initiative aimed to use football as a tool to bridge divides, prevent violence, and foster peace. Since then, football3 has evolved through the efforts of various football-for-good organizations, becoming a global methodology designed to promote teamwork, fair play, and peace.

A game of three halves

A football3 match is guided by a mediator and consists of three halves:

First Half: A pre-match discussion where the teams agree on the rules they will play by.

Second Half: The match itself, during which players are responsible for adhering to the agreed-upon rules.

Third Half: A post-match discussion where the two teams reflect on how well the rules were followed and assign fair play points, which are added to the match points to determine the final score.

* Action Aid Hellas (AAH).

At the heart of football3 are values of dialogue and mutual understanding. Through the game, players learn to express their opinions in front of a group, listen to others, and respect differing perspectives. Football3 provides a platform to address social issues and teach life skills using both fixed and flexible rules. In the following sections, we will explore how to incorporate key values and skills into football3, helping players combat racism, xenophobia, and exclusion, both on the field and in their communities.

When football3 is practiced consistently, alongside educational materials focused on relevant social topics and life skills, it can have a lasting positive effect on young people and the communities they belong to.

Rules of the game

Football3 has a specific rules system that differs from conventional football. There are fixed rules and open rules.

FIXED RULES

Fixed rules are determined by the organizers of the match, tournament, or league. They are the same for all matches played during that event. Fixed rules can concern the size of the teams, the duration of the match, but also the gender split in the teams, or specific behaviours (e.g. clapping hands every time a goal is scored).

EXAMPLES OF FIXED RULES

› When a foul occurs, the fouled player raises her or his hand to indicate a foul and receives a free kick.
› Matches are 12 minutes long – no breaks and no change of ends.
› Two boys and two girls must be outfield players at all times (or, if teams have an even number of players, then an equal number of boys and girls must be on the pitch at all times).
› If a player goes to ground, the match is stopped and the opposing player should give them a hand up.
› The offside rule does not apply.

> Matches are five-a-side.
> If the ball goes out the teams must decide who has possession.
> Fair play is a must – no fouls, no slide tackles and no insults; respect for teammates, opponents and the mediators is key.
> All free kicks are indirect.
> Substitutions are unlimited and can be made at any time.

OPEN RULES

Open rules differ from match to match, depending on what the teams agree upon, and are a powerful tool to emphasise fair play and specific social topics. Encourage players and mediators to be creative in selecting the open rules and develop new rules that will enrich the game.

EXAMPLES OF OPEN RULES

> Both teams celebrate when a goal is scored, regardless of who scored it.
> An assist has to come from a player of the opposite gender for a goal to count.
> Throw-in, kick-in or roll-in to restart play when the ball goes out.
> Goals can be scored from all over the pitch or only past the half-line.
> A girl has to score first for the other goals to count.
> The ball cannot be played above waist height.
> Each consecutive goal scored by a team must alternate between a girl player and a boy player.
> Both teams enter and exit the pitch holding hands.
> There is a fixed goalkeeper, no goalkeeper or the last defender can use their hands in the penalty area.
> The goalkeeper is rotated after each goal scored (e.g. between a boy and a girl).
> All players must pass the ball at least once during the match.
> There are corner kicks or no corner kicks.
> There is a special joint celebration or ritual after the completion of the match.

Point system

In football3, teams can win match points for a win (3 points), a draw (2 points) or participation (1 point). On top of that, they can win fair play points for how they behave on the pitch and during the discussions in addition to how they respect the rules that were agreed upon in the pre-match discussion. Depending on the emphasis trainers wish to give to fair play, they can vary the number of fair play points. For example, trainers can decide that the teams attribute 0 - 3 fair play points, 0 - 4 fair play points or 0 - 6 fair play points. In the latter two examples, a team that plays very fair, but loses, may beat a team that wins the match by goals but plays unfairly.

Mediators

Mediators are fundamental to the success of football3. They facilitate the discussion between the two teams during the pre-and the post-match discussion, resolve conflicts and support the teams in finding an agreement on rules and fair play points. Mediation is often done in pairs and, as such, the mediators should represent the diversity of the communities in which the football3 matches will be played. Mediators are typically 16-30 years old, but older participants are also welcome. Ideally, there should be a gender balance. A mediator doesn't need to possess strong football skills, although experience leading groups is useful. 1. Preparing and facilitating football3 sessions with participants, 2. Facilitating the pre- and post- match discussions, 3. Monitoring the football3 match and mediating between the players if any issues arise, 4. Completing a match form and evaluating their sessions, 5. Being a positive role model for players and the community.

THEIR ROLE INCLUDES: The role of the mediator can be undertaken by social workers, educators, or coaches in the community. Young leaders that have come through the organisation as well as experienced football3 players can also act as mediators. Like any skill though, mediation requires training and development. It is

important to provide ongoing training so mediators can continue to practice and develop their skills.

Trainers

Trainers play an important role in football3. These are the people who implement sessions, tournaments, programs, run workshops and support ongoing training and education of mediators.

TRAINERS ARE ROLE MODELS

Youth who lacked accessible role models also reported increased levels of psychological distress in comparison to youth who described having affirming in-person role models or no role models at all. (National Mentoring Resource Center). The football3 trainer can be a role model for young people who lack role models in other areas of their lives. In order to increase identification, it is important to engage football3 trainers with which young people can identify. Make sure to recruit trainers that represent the diversity of the participants (in terms of origins, religious belief, gender, etc.). Successful trainers are people who have a detailed knowledge of football3 – as players and as mediators of football3 matches. They also possess an understanding of the unique needs of their community and understand the power of football3 for creating personal and collective transformation among their peers and community. Trainers also can communicate clearly, listen attentively, and are able to facilitate learning in an open dynamic and interactive way for groups of young adults. football3 trainers are crucial for the implementation of a successful football3 programme. They implement regular football3 sessions with players in which they address social topics and train specific life skills. They accompany their teams to football3 tournaments and are an important person of trust for the players. In the following section, we will present inclusive recruitment strategies as well as a selection of life skills and social topics relevant to anti-racist education for youth through football. We will provide a football3 session plan template as well as various activity plans.

Target group

Because of the nature of this project, special care should be taken to ensure that players represent the diversity of the community. Specifically, players should be aged 12-18 and from both migrant, non-migrant and disadvantaged groups. Teams should include girls and boys alike. Inclusive recruitment strategies should also focus on ensuring there is representation from different religious denominations, socio-economic backgrounds and gender balance.

PLAYER PROFILE

› Youth aged 12-18
› Represent the diversity of the community
› Migrant and non-migrant and marginalised youth
› Different religious denominations
› Different socio-economic backgrounds
› Gender balance.

TIP: INCLUSIVE RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES When recruiting players it's important to be inclusive in the search to ensure there is diverse representation football3 is a flexible tool that can be used to address social topics and life skills.

Evaluation of football3 sessions

To monitor player progress and evaluate the impact of the sessions and program, ensure that player feedback is collected at the end of each session. For one-time sessions, the basic session template can be found in the manual. For long-term football3 programs, it's recommended to design the program and establish the evaluation strategy using the logic model. Additional information on the logic model is available in the football3 trainer manual and the football3 handbook.

Concluding remarks

DIALECT project's results have evidenced that *Football3 is a unique way of playing football that is changing lives across the world. It is based on the principle that the basic values of fair play, gender equality, teamwork and respect are just as important as football skills.* Named after its *"three halves"* - a pre-match discussion, football game, and post-match discussion - football3 incorporates key life lessons into every match. In mixed-gender and ethnic/nationality teams, players collectively decide on the rules before the game. Following the match, they reflect on their behavior and the behavior of their opponents, with points awarded for goals as well as for fair play. As football3 is played without referees, players must learn how to resolve conflicts themselves through dialogue and compromise. Football3 has a unique basic concept *"inspired by street football. Across the globe, players meet, form teams, agree on rules and play football. Football3 harnesses the educational potential of street football by ensuring that dialogue and fair play are integral to the game. It can be played by anyone, anywhere and it can be used to address any social topic. There are no referees. Instead, mediators facilitate discussions between the two teams and monitor the match".*[1] *In the context of the DIALECT projects, we have envisioned to adapt the football3 methodology to address the most burning social challenges of the targeted communities: xenophobia, racism and social exclusion".*

---

1. Football3 handbook. How to use football for social change, published by Streetfootballworld gGmbH Berlin – Germany.

References

Horne, M., and Thiele, V. (2020). *Dialect toolkit disrupting polarisation: Building communities of tolerance through football*. streetfootballworld.

Fox, L., Hebel, M., Meijers, B., and Springborg, G. (Eds.). *football3 handbook: How to use football for social change*. streetfootballworld gGmbH.

Moustakas, L., and Springborg, G. (nd.). *football3 trainer manual*. street footballworld gGmbH.

PLAYING FOR CHANGE: EXPLORING INTERSECTIONAL DISCRIMINATION IN YOUTH COMMUNITIES THROUGH PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Christina Botsou[*], *Anna Daskalaki*[**]*, Dimitra Kalampaliki*[***]*,*
Ioanna Kourou[****]*, Maria Malainou*[*****]

Introduction

Sports play a pivotal role in adolescent development, offering opportunities for physical, social, and emotional growth. However, participation in sports is shaped by broader social structures, reflecting patterns of inclusion and exclusion that extend beyond the playing field. This study, conducted within the framework of the DIALECT3 project[1], titled *"ADdressIng intersectionAL stEreotypes,*

* Associate Researcher of National Centre for Social Research, PhD in Communication, Media and Culture, Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences.

** Associate Researcher of National Centre for Social Research, Sociologist, MSc in Public Health & Health Policy, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

*** Associate Researcher of National Centre for Social Research, MA in Analysis & Implementation of Social Policy, Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences.

**** Associate Researcher of National Centre for Social Research, PhD student of Psychology, Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences.

***** Associate Researcher of National Centre for Social Research, MSc in Political Science and Sociology, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens.

1. The project aims to prevent and combat intolerance and discrimination in lower secondary schools through physical education, with a particular focus on integrating the football3 methodology developed under the DIALECT1 project. Using an intersectional approach, the project seeks to develop an action plan that empowers youth in marginalized communities through football, fostering resilience against racism and xenophobia.

building sChool communities of Tolerance through physical education", examines how gender and migrant background influence adolescents' engagement in school and extracurricular sports. Importantly, adolescents' identities were approached through an intersectional lens, acknowledging that they interact in complex ways rather than functioning as independent variables.

Sports: a social exercise for inclusion

Although commonly understood solely as a means of entertainment and physical activity, sports form a significant social, economic, and cultural phenomenon, influencing and influenced by societal structures and values. They hold a unique role in young people's lives globally (both children and adolescents), taking into consideration that nearly all school-aged pupils follow a physical education curriculum, through their mandatory education (DfEE, 2000). Nevertheless, despite the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans' (Physical Activity Alliance, 2024) recommendation of 1 hour of physical activity every day for children and youth ages 6 - 17, only 20% to 28% of youth meet this suggestion, while 66% participate in sports 4 times per week. As for Europe, evidence from the Eurobarometer study (European Commission, 2022) regarding sport and physical activity in the general population, underscores that only 6% of Europeans exercise on a weekly basis. In Greece, the percentage score is 4%. Meanwhile, 45% of Europeans and 68% of Greek people never exercise or play sports (European Commission, 2022). Simultaneously, European and Greek students distance themselves from physical activities and sports with 30% and 39%, respectively, being inactive (European Commission, 2022). The above introduces alarming questions as to the quantity and quality of physical activity, both in children and the general population.

In particular, the issue of insufficient physical activity participation among youth that was first stated almost 20 years ago (Health Education Authority, 1998; Department of Health, 1999) is still being observed to this day (Physical Activity Alliance, 2024), and exacerbated issues of gender and ethnicity in sports (YRBSS, 2023).

There is a noticeable gender gap in youth physical activity levels, with males consistently being more likely to be involved in all sports than females. Physical activity levels vary by gender, with 23% of males and 17% of females aged 6-17 within the U.S.A. meeting the recommended guidelines for 1 hour of daily activity (Physical Activity Alliance, 2024). Likewise, among high school students, 32% of males and 17% of females meet these standards (YRBSS 2023). In Europe and Greece, the rate of those who do not exercise sports varies, depending on gender and age, with 27% of European males 15-24 years old and 29% of Greeks being inactive (European Commission, 2022). At the same time, 42% of European females, and 66% of Greek women in the same age group, are inactive in physical activity. Past research evidence from Greece indicates that boys favor team sports while girls prefer individual activities or certain team sports (Kelperis et al., 1985). Additionally, the variable of gender influences the viewing of sports, with boys engaging more frequently (Kelperis et al., 1985). Illustratively, in football matches, most viewers were men under 35 years old, while women attended to accompany their male counterparts (Konstantopoulou, 2010). Historically, women were excluded from sports due to societal norms. In Ancient Greece, sports were a male-dominated space, linked to war preparation, (Konstantopoulou, 2010). In the 19th century, concerns over femininity further discouraged female participation (Hult, 1994). Women were excluded from the Olympic marathon until 1984 (Mertens, 2024) and banned from baseball until 1952, as it was viewed as "too strenuous" for them (Mannion, 2016).

Despite the societal changes and institutional efforts for women's inclusion in sports, disparities remain. Women's sports have received alarmingly low media coverage in the past (Rowe and Silva, 2023) reinforcing perceptions of lesser significance. Recent findings demonstrate a limited increase in women's visibility in sports, rising to only 4% of ESPN's total sports coverage (Yingnan and Gualiang, 2023). Additionally, when covered, the reporting tends to be briefer and less detailed than that of men's sports. A global study analyzing sports news in newspapers from more than 20 countries found that just 11% of the coverage is focused on women's sports (Yingnan and

Guoliang, 2023). Meanwhile, the gained visibility of female athletes in sports is mainly emphasized in their appearance or personal life, rather than their performance (Yingnan and Gualiang, 2023), which further discouraged their participation (Schmalz, 2006).

Ethnic minorities also face barriers, with lower participation rates due to cultural factors, discrimination, and lack of role models (Rowe and Chapman, 2000; SportScotland, 2001). Specifically, studies from the U.S.A. show that among children and youth, 23% of non-Hispanic White individuals engage in at least 60 minutes of physical activity daily. In comparison, participation rates are lower for Black and Hispanic youth at 17% and Asian youth at 14% (Physical Activity Alliance, 2024). Similarly, only 16% of disabled youth engage in extracurricular sports, versus 45% of their non-disabled peers (Finch et al., 2001), hindered by self-consciousness, low confidence, and negative school experiences (EFDS, 2000). In the Eurobarometer's question regarding barriers to sports participation, the third most common response between Europeans and Greek people was the existence of a disability or illness (European Commission, 2022). The most common factor (41% for Europeans and 46% for Greeks) was the lack of free time, while the lack of interest and the expensive sports fees were also raised as issues that distance people from physical activity.

However, as societies become increasingly diverse due to various socio-economic, demographic, and cultural factors, a new reality is reflected in classrooms where students from different ethnic backgrounds engage in education. Diversity affects both tangible and intangible attributes, such as behaviors and perceptions, shaping identity groups based on perceived differences. Understanding the fluidity that surrounds children's identities supports more inclusive education. While diversity was once seen solely as a challenge, nowadays, global efforts are being made to value it as a strength in schools and society (Brussino, 2021). Efforts for inclusion and participation for migrants and refugees can be located all around the E.U. through various projects, such as the "Level Playing Field" and "Social Inclusion and Volunteering in Sports Clubs in Europe (SIVSCE). These projects focus on enhancing the participation and inclusion of marginalized groups, including refugees and migrants,

through sports. Initiatives as such, aim to create equal opportunities, promote social integration, and address barriers that refugees and other disadvantaged groups face in accessing sports (European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, 2016).

While Inclusive Physical Education (PE) is a continuously evolving research field, studies on student engagement in learning and participation within this context remain limited (Bertills et al., 2018b). A study using time sampling found engagement highest in lessons with skilled teachers employing structured educational formats and strong teacher-student communication (Bertills et al., 2018b). Close communication with teachers fosters inclusive learning, benefiting students with disabilities and lower academic performance. However, access alone does not ensure inclusion. Individualized support and adaptive teaching strategies are essential (Myklebust, 2006). Autonomy-supportive environments enhance motivation and learning (Furrer and Skinner, 2003; Reyes et al., 2012), yet non-inclusive methods undermine disabled students' identities (Loja et al., 2013; Giese and Ruin, 2018). Adapted strategies, such as modified sports, improve participation and outcomes (Tant and Watelain, 2016; Bertills, Granlund and Augustine, 2019).

Ultimately, sports can foster personal growth and social inclusion, but access, quality instruction, and inclusive policies are crucial (Donnelly and Coakley, 2002; Long et al., 2002). Addressing gender and race disparities, socio-economic barriers, disability inclusion, and structural inequalities is key to ensuring sports that promote development rather than reinforcing divides.

Methodology

Aim

As part of this initiative, researchers from the National Centre for Social Research (EKKE) conducted a needs analysis involving multiple stakeholders to assess the challenges and requirements for effectively integrating anti-discrimination strategies in Greek lower secondary schools through physical education. This needs

analysis aimed to identify key areas where intervention is necessary to promote inclusivity and combat discrimination within school settings. The project was funded by the European Union's Citizens, Equality, Rights, and Values Programme (CERV) and implemented in Greece by ActionAid Hellas (AAH), Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH), and the National Centre for Social Research (EKKE).

Research objectives

Within this broader framework, we conducted a needs analysis with adolescents with migrant and non-migrant backgrounds aged 12-15, which sought to achieve several key objectives. First, it aimed to identify the existing values, framework, beliefs, and attitudes of both migrant and non-migrant adolescents, with a particular focus on their level of intolerant beliefs and how these are expressed within the school context, especially in physical education and sports. Second, for adolescents from migrant backgrounds, the research examined their experiences with discrimination in the school environment, including the challenges they face regarding racist incidents and the nature of their relationships with non-migrant peers and educators. Third, for non-migrant adolescents, the study explored whether and how they contribute to or challenge the persistence of stereotypes and discrimination in sports and school settings, offering insights into the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion within these environments. Together, these objectives aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing tolerance and discrimination among adolescents in Greek lower secondary schools.

Research design

This study adopted a qualitative approach, utilizing structured interviews to explore participants' perspectives on sports, socialization, discrimination, and inclusivity, allowing for an in-depth exploration of adolescents' lived experiences, values, beliefs, and attitudes. The research design was developed by the National Centre for Social Research (EKKE) under the scientific supervision of Joanna Tsiganou and Natalia Spyropoulou. Building on the experience and insights gained

from the DIALECT1 and DIALECT2 projects, which also involved conducting interviews with students, the methodology incorporated child-friendly research methods, prioritizing participant comfort, ethical considerations, and engagement strategies tailored for adolescents.

Before conducting the interviews, a comprehensive literature review was undertaken by EKKE researchers to examine the correlation between physical education and the formation of stereotypes related to ethnicity, cultural diversity, and gender roles. This literature review informed the design of the interview guides and the selection of key areas of investigation. Two distinct interview guides were developed to align with the study's objectives, differentiating between migrant and non-migrant adolescents. The research also involved selecting three geographical areas of intervention, including both urban and rural settings. These areas were chosen based on specific socio-demographic characteristics, such as high poverty and unemployment rates, weak social networks, limited opportunities, increased support for political extremist parties, and incidents of racism and intolerance. This selection ensured a diverse range of socio-demographic backgrounds among participants.

Participant selection and sampling

A total of 24 adolescents participated in the study, consisting of 12 participants of Greek origin and 12 participants with a migrant background. The sample included 15 boys and 9 girls, ensuring representation of different perspectives based on gender, ethnicity, and social context.

Participants with non-migrant backgrounds

The 12 participants of Greek origin were between 12 and 15 years old, with an equal split of 6 girls and 6 boys. Four participants lived in the center of Athens, two in Chalandri—a middle to upper-class suburb—one in Neos Kosmos, and five in working-class neighborhoods of Attica, such as Kamatero, Peristeri, and Nikaia

in Piraeus. Another participant resided in the center of Corfu. All students lived with their families, except one who came from a single-parent household. Most parents were employed in various professions, ranging from manual labor to scientific fields, including roles such as administrative officer, university professor, and director of a prison school. One father owned a locksmith shop, where the mother also worked, as mentioned by the interviewee. Only two mothers were unemployed.

Participants with migrant backgrounds

The 12 participants with migrant backgrounds were aged 12 to 16, with most living in Athens. Their fathers primarily worked in manual labor, while their mothers were largely unemployed. The group included children of Egyptian, Albanian, Congolese, Pakistani, and Armenian origin. Most of these participants had a social life involving both migrant and non-migrant friends from school, neighborhoods, and sports activities.

Participants were recruited through purposive sampling, with priority given to adolescents actively involved in physical education and extracurricular sports activities. Many of the participants from migrant backgrounds were beneficiaries of ActionAid Hellas and had previous exposure to the DIALECT1 methodology, making them well-positioned to provide insights into the role of football and sports in social inclusion. The geographical distribution of participants was carefully structured to include both urban and rural areas, ensuring a mix of different social and economic backgrounds. The selected locations included neighborhoods of Athens, Thessaloniki, and Corfu, incorporating areas known for their socio-economic challenges and diverse student populations.

Data collection

Interview process

The structured interviews were conducted in May 2023 and lasted between 20-30 minutes. They were carried out in ActionAid's Community Center in Kolonos (Athens), individual settings

convenient for participants in Athens and Thessaloniki, and one online interview with a participant from Corfu. The interviews were conducted in Greek and followed a structured format based on predefined research questions. Visual stimuli were integrated into the interview process to enhance engagement and ensure clarity in responses. Participants were presented with images depicting sports activities and social interactions, helping them articulate their perspectives on abstract concepts such as fairness, inclusivity, and discrimination. This approach, in line with child-friendly research methods, facilitated a more natural and open discussion.[2]

Data analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the structured templates developed by the scientific supervisors of EKKE. The analysis aimed to identify recurring themes and patterns in participants' responses, particularly concerning their values, beliefs, attitudes, and experiences with sports, socialization, and inclusivity. The first stage of the analysis involved coding the interview transcripts using a combination of inductive and deductive techniques. Initial codes were developed based on the literature review, research questions, and interview guide, while additional codes emerged from the participants' narratives. The second stage involved theme development, where coded data were categorized into broader themes, including "sports and physical activities in school and after school", "beliefs about sports", "values in sports and general attitudes", and "discriminatory behaviors in sports and school". The analysis was conducted manually by the research team, ensuring consistency in interpretation.

---

2. Regarding the ethical considerations of the study, ethical approval for the research was obtained by the European Commission, the Ethics Committee of EKKE, and the DIALECT3 Project Steering Committee. Informed consent was obtained from both participants and their legal guardians through an *informed consent form*, ensuring that participants were fully aware of the study's objectives and their rights. Confidentiality was strictly maintained, with all participant data anonymized to protect identities. Audio recordings of interviews were only made with participants' consent, and all data was securely stored by the research team at EKKE.

Results

Sports participation and preferences

Both groups (migrant and non-migrant adolescents) described active social lives, forming friendships through school, neighborhoods, and extracurricular activities. The role of sports in socialization was evident, as many participants mentioned that sports provided them with opportunities to meet new people, strengthen friendships, and feel part of a team. Specifically, participants from both groups engaged in physical education and extracurricular sports, with football, volleyball, and basketball emerging as the most popular.

In physical education classes, students reported that physical education teachers offered both mandatory and optional "free" sports activities, which were also affected by the weather conditions, with the latter being the most popular suggestion. While most students enjoyed participating in physical education classes, some expressed neutral to negative feelings about physical education for various reasons, including lack of equipment, exclusion by peers, lack of motivation, or disappointment with their physical education teachers. Extracurricular sports were highly valued by both migrant and non-migrant students, with many participating in local teams and clubs, athletic tournaments, or informal play in public spaces in neighborhoods, such as parks and community courts.

A key difference between the two groups was the long-term value placed on sports. Several migrant adolescents, especially boys, expressed a strong desire to pursue professional athletic careers, reflecting the role of sports not only as recreation but as a potential pathway to professional career and social mobility. In contrast, most non-migrant adolescents, while valuing sports and engaging in extracurricular sports, prioritized school performance over athletic excellence, viewing sports primarily as a hobby rather than a career option. This difference may reflect the broader socio-economic realities shaping each group's opportunities and aspirations.

Discrimination and inclusion in sports

While most participants supported the principle of equality in sports, emphasizing mutual respect, their experiences suggested that inclusion was not always fully embedded in their everyday lives. Migrant students generally felt integrated into school and community sports, with most stating that they had not personally faced discrimination in sports settings. However, Roma students were sometimes perceived differently, with some participants of both migrant and non-migrant backgrounds expressing concerns or being reluctant to engage with them in sports. This suggests that while multicultural environments foster inclusivity, certain ethnic biases and deep-seated stereotypes persist.

Non-migrant students generally expressed acceptance toward migrant peers in sports and vice-versa, though some non-migrant adolescents acknowledged that casual jokes about ethnicity were common. While these remarks were often dismissed as harmless teasing, they could still contribute to subtle forms of discrimination. A few participants noted that sports could sometimes reinforce existing social divisions, as teams were often formed based on friendship groups rather than skill or diversity. Notably, participants reported that schools did not actively encourage deeper relationships through sports, and teachers often did not engage with students in this context. Students had the autonomy to choose sports and form teams, usually based on gender and existing friendships.

Participants rarely discussed disability inclusion during the interviews, highlighting a lack of awareness about how to integrate students with disabilities into sports. Schools did not appear to have systematic initiatives to promote inclusive physical activities for students with disabilities.

Remarkably, gender norms played a crucial role in shaping adolescents' sports participation patterns, interactions, and perceptions of ability. Boys were more likely to dominate and opt for traditionally male sports such as football and basketball, while girls were often encouraged, both socially and structurally, to engage in volleyball or individual activities such as rhythmic gymnastics. However, regardless of gender, participants reported that the choice of sport, especially as an extracurricular activity, often depended on

other factors like the proximity of the facilities, convenient practice schedules, or influence from relatives.

Several female participants expressed frustration over being excluded or underestimated in male-dominated sports. Indicatively, a non-migrant girl who played football recounted how she was initially discouraged from joining boys' teams, but later became the first girl to integrate into football groups at school, paving the way for others. However, she described that direct exclusion remains common, as boys frequently refused to select girls for teams or reacted negatively to female participation. Additionally, one migrant girl recalled that when she attempted to play football, she was maltreated by her male peers, and only after a teacher intervened to encourage her participation did attitudes begin to change.

Male perspectives on gender inclusion varied. Some boys acknowledged that girls could be skilled athletes, yet others upheld stereotypical assumptions about male physical superiority. One non-migrant boy remarked, "Boys are stronger, run better, they can lift more weight and have more stamina", reinforcing the assumption that male athleticism is inherently superior. Another participant justified the exclusion of girls in football by stating, "It is unfair for both girls and boys to play football, as girls will lose the game". These attitudes reflect the deep-rooted nature of gendered divisions in sports and highlight the need for more proactive interventions to foster gender inclusivity.

Sportsmanship, conflicts, and hooliganism in sports

Both migrant and non-migrant students recognized sports as an important tool for personal development, socialization, and emotional well-being. Most participants valued the joy of the game over winning, emphasizing teamwork, fair play, and companionship as core values. One participant highlighted how sports helped her develop friendships across different regions and countries through tournaments, while another noted that playing with friends made the experience more meaningful than just competition. However, some students, particularly those in competitive sports, viewed winning and personal improvement as equally important.

Participants generally believed that sports could increase self-confidence and emotional well-being, though some noted that negative experiences, such as exclusion or criticism, could discourage participation. While sports were widely regarded as a positive force, some students expressed concerns about competitiveness leading to exclusion or aggression and reported that conflicts during sports were not uncommon. Boys, in particular, noted that competitive games could lead to tensions and verbal disputes, often as a result of frustration over losing or perceived unfairness in the game. Participants described how stronger players often dominated games, which could either motivate or discourage less skilled teammates. A few participants mentioned that aggressive behavior sometimes occurred, but it was usually temporary and resolved after the game ended.

Teachers' responses to sports-related conflicts varied. Some students reported that teachers intervened to separate fighting students, but did not address the root causes of disputes, leaving tensions unresolved, while others described teachers as indifferent to tensions within teams. This lack of proactive engagement left students to navigate conflicts on their own, reinforcing existing power imbalances within sports environments, as well as a lack of accountability in managing aggressive behavior.

Despite the above and although most boys reported being fans of specific sports teams, both migrant and non-migrant students universally condemned hooliganism, recognizing it as a destructive force in sports culture. However, discussions on sports-related discrimination and violence were rare in schools. The murder of Alkis Kampanos, a 19-year-old Greek student who was killed in 2022 in an attack resulting from football hooliganism, was one of the few instances that sparked wider discussions on the dangers of fanaticism and aggression in sports. Beyond such isolated instances, schools did not systematically integrate discussions on discrimination, inclusivity, or fair play into their curricula, demonstrating that schools tend to address these issues reactively rather than proactively.

Conclusions

The findings from both groups highlight patterns and variations in adolescent experiences and perceptions of sports participation in school. Across both groups, participants generally recognized the social and emotional benefits of sports, emphasizing team bonding, cooperation, and the joy of participation over competition. However, both groups of adolescents raised concerns about gender-based exclusion and stereotypes. Notably, adolescents from migrant backgrounds seldom reported experiencing discrimination based on their origin. However, challenges were observed in interactions with Roma children, while discrimination based on disability was also noted, though primarily as an issue witnessed rather than personally experienced. These findings reflect broader societal inequalities in sports participation. Although restricted, findings regarding gender segregation and bias in sports were evident in both groups, with girls in both cohorts expressing frustration over being underestimated or excluded from male-dominated sports like football and basketball. The fact that some teachers actively intervened to counter discrimination among migrant students suggests a role for institutional support, but the lack of systematic discussions on hate speech and inclusion highlights gaps in school-based efforts to foster equality in sports. Crucially, both groups identified a lack of proactive engagement from teachers and schools in fostering inclusive sports environments, despite recognizing sports as a vehicle for socialization, respect, and solidarity.

Overall, despite the globally low participation and engagement rates of adolescents in sports, the qualitative approach employed in this project revealed that participants exhibited a positive outlook on sports, reflecting an encouraging attitude toward physical activity, even in the face of existing barriers. Notably, no extremist views or strongly exclusionary ideologies were detected. This underscores the potential for developing more inclusive sports settings, provided that schools take a proactive role in addressing inequalities and facilitating discussions on discrimination and extremism in sports. These findings reinforce the argument that structured, equity-driven physical education programs can serve as crucial spaces for promoting social cohesion and challenging exclusionary practices in youth sports.

References

Bailey, R., et al. (2009). The benefits of physical education and engagement. *Research Papers in Education*, 24(1). https://doi.org/10.1080/02671520701809817

Bertills, K., Granlund, M. and Augustine, L. (2018b). Inclusive teaching skills and student engagement in physical education. *Frontiers in Education*, 4. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2019.00074

Bertills, K., Granlund, M. and Augustine, L. (2019, August). Inclusive teaching skills and student engagement in physical education. *Frontiers in Education*, 4, p. 74. Frontiers Media SA.

Brussino, O. (2021). Building capacity for inclusive teaching: Policies and practices to prepare all teachers for diversity and inclusion. *OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 256, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/57fe6a38-en.

Corso, Bundick, M. J., Quaglia, R. J. and Haywood, D. E. (2013). Where student, teacher, and content meet: Student engagement in the secondary school classroom. *American Secondary Education*, 41(3), 50-61. http://www.jstor.org/stable/43694167

DCMS (Department for Culture, Media and Sport) (1999). *A sporting future for all*. HMSO.

DCMS/DfES (Department for Culture, Media and Sport/Department for Education and Skills) (2002). *The Government's Plan for Sport*. HMSO.

Department of Health (1999). *National Service Framework for Coronary Heart Disease*. HMSO.

De Vroey, A., Roelandts, K., Struyf, E. and Petry, K. (2016). Inclusive classroom practices in secondary schools. Towards a universal teaching approach. In B. De Wever, R. Vanderlinde, M. Tuytens, A. Aelterman (Eds.), *Professional learning in education. Challenges for teacher educators, teachers and student teachers* (pp.179-202). Ghent, Academia Press. http://www.oapen.org/search?identifier=639595

DfEE (Department for Education and Employment) (2000). *Physical education: The national curriculum for England*. HMSO.

DfEE/Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (1999). *The national curriculum: Handbook for primary teachers in England*. HMSO.

Donnelly, P. and Coakley, J. (2002). *The role of recreation in social inclusion. Leisure Studies*, 21(1), 1-19.

EFDS (English Federation of Disability Sport). (2000). *Disabled people's participation in sport: A national survey*. Sport England.

European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Ruitinga, C., Diep, M., Fox, T., Pelka, V., Sennett, J. and Bertram, C. (2016). *Mapping of good practices relating to social inclusion of migrants through sport: final report to the DG Education and Culture of the European Commission*, Publications Office. https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/158610

European Commission (2022). Eurobarometer survey on sport and physical activity. European Union. https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2668

Finch, N., Lawton, D., Williams, J. and Sloper, P. (2001). *Disability Survey 2000: A survey of young disabled people and sport in England.* Sport England.

Furrer, C. and Skinner, E. (2003). Sense of relatedness as a factor in children's academic engagement and performance. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 95(1), 148-162. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.95.1.148

Giese, M. and Ruin, S. (2018). *Challenging ableism in Physical Education.* Routledge.

Health Education Authority (1998). *Young people and health-enhancing physical activity: Evidence and implications.* Health Education Authority.

Hult, J. S. (1994). A history of women in sport prior to Title IX. *The Sport Journal.* https://thesportjournal.org/article/a-history-of-women-in-sport-prior-to-title-ix

Imms, C., Granlund, M, Wilson, P. H., Steenbergen, B, Rosenbaum, P. L. and Gordon A. M. (2017). Participation, both a means and an end: a conceptual analysis of processes and outcomes in childhood disability. *Developmental Medicine & Child Neurology*, 59(1), 16-25. https://doi.org/10.1111/dmcn.13237

Kelperis, H., Mouriki, A., Myrizakis, G., Paradellis, T., Gardiki, O. and Teperoglou, A. (1985). Νέοι: διάθεση χρόνου, διαπροσωπικές σχέσεις: προκαταρκτική έκθεση. *The Greek Review of Social Research*, 57, 83-144. (in Greek).

Konstantopoulou, C. (2010). *Ελεύθερος Χρόνος: Μύθοι και Πραγματικότητες.* Παπαζήσης (in Greek).

Loja, E., Costa, E. Hughes, B. and Menezes, I. (2013). Disability, embodiment and ableism: stories of resistance. *Disability & Society*, 28(2), 1-14. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2012.705057

Long, J., Welch, M., Bramham, P., Butterfield, J., Hylton, K. and Lloyd, E. (2002). *Count me in: The dimensions of social inclusion through culture and sport.* Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

Mannion, A. K. (2016). Play like a girl: An analysis of media representation of female athletes. *Proceedings of GREAT Day*, 2015 (17). https://knight scholar.geneseo.edu/proceedings-of-great-day/vol2015/iss1/17

Maxwell, G., Granlund, M. and Augustine, L. (2018). Participation and academic outcomes for students with special needs. *Front. Educ.*, 3. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2018.00041

Mertens, M. (2024, August 10). A dam-break moment for women in Olympics. *The Atlantic.*

Myklebust, J. O. (2006). Class placement and competence attainment among students with special educational needs. *British Journal of Special Education*, *33*(2), 76-81.

Reyes, M. R., Brackett, M. A., Rivers, S. E., White, M. and Salovey, P. (2012). Classroom emotional climate, student engagement, and academic achievement. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 104(3), pp. 700-712. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0027268

Rowe, D. and Silva, K. K. P. (2023). Women's sport and media: a call to critical arms. *Feminist Media Studies*, 23(2), 729–733. https://doi.org/1 0.1080/14680777.2023.2201663

Rowe, N. and Chapman, L. (2000). *Sport and physical activity: The participation landscape.* Sport England.

Schmalz, D. L. and Kerstetter, D. L. (2006). Girlie girls and manly men: Children's stigma consciousness of gender in sports and physical activities. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 38(4), 536- 557.

SportScotland (2001). *Sport and minority ethnic communities: Aiming at social inclusion.* SportScotland.

Tant, M. and Watelain, E. (2016). Forty years later, a systematic literature review on inclusion in physical education (1975-2015): A teacher perspective. *Educational Research Review*, 19, 1-17.

Yingnan, S. and Guoliang, W. (2023). Gender disparities in sports media coverage: Phenomenon, analysis, and transformation. *Frontiers in Sport Research*, 5(9), 20-25.

Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) (April 2023). *2021 YRBS Data User's Guide.* Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

IDENTIFYING THE NEEDS OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHERS FOR COMBATING RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION THROUGH PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOLS

*Natalia Spyropoulou**

Introduction

It is commonly acknowledged that sports have the potential to become a vehicle for positive social change and social cohesion. Sports can teach values such as fairness, teambuilding, democracy, diversity, tolerance, equality, discipline, inclusion and respect (UNODC, 2020; Council of the European Union, 2018; UNESCO, 2018).

Similarly, in the context of formal education, Physical Education (PE) can play a significant role in fostering social inclusion and promoting values such as respect, teamwork, and accepting diversity among students. When implemented effectively, PE can be a powerful platform for challenging stereotypes, building intercultural understanding, and encouraging cooperative learning environments (Bailey, 2006). It can provide opportunities for students from different cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds to interact in meaningful ways, helping to reduce prejudices and promote mutual respect. On the other hand, PE classes can sometimes be characterised by discriminatory attitudes, exclusionary practices, and unequal access to participation, mirroring broader societal inequalities (Munk and Agergaard, 2015; Thorjussen and Sisjord, 2021).

* Researcher, National Centre for Social Research.

The role of the PE teacher is fundamental in this respect for promoting inclusion[1] and combating intolerance and discrimination among students. In order to do this, the PE teacher should have the capacity, the knowledge, the skills and the tools for inclusive teaching strategies.

This paper presents the views of the PE teachers as regards the current situation of racism and discrimination prevailing in lower secondary schools in Greece and asks for their needs self-assessment in order to better respond to phenomena of racism and discrimination and to effectively promote social equality and inclusion through PE classes.

It is based on the outcomes of the Report titled "Assessment of the needs to combat racism and discrimination through physical education in schools", which was produced in the framework of the EU co-funded DIALECT3 project.[2] The current paper focuses on the research results that refer to the identified needs of the physical education (PE) teachers in lower secondary schools.

Methodology

The paper relies on a synthesis of primary data deriving from both quantitative and qualitative research methods and tools, which were used in the framework of the EU co-funded DIALECT3 project.

Firstly, quantitative data were collected from an online survey addressed to PE teachers of public secondary schools in Greece. In order to reach the PE teachers, a formal letter explaining the purposes of the research and providing the link to the on-line questionnaire was sent by e-mail to public lower secondary schools and to organisations representing PE Professionals, inviting their PE teachers to participate in the survey. The online survey was

---

1. In the framework of this paper, the term inclusion and inclusive education is not used for students with special education needs, but for all students, including vulnerable and disadvantaged student groups.

2. For the full Deliverable, please see: https://dialectproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/dialect3_d2.1-needs-assessment-report-for-fighting-and-discrimination-in-schools-through-physical-education-1.pdf

conducted through self-completion by PE teachers, anonymously, of an electronic questionnaire which was built through google form. The aim of the online survey was to assess the existing level of competencies and practices in promoting tolerance through physical education. In addition, Physical Education teachers were asked to provide information with regard to phenomena of intolerance and discrimination that prevail in schools today.

Secondly, qualitative data were collected from four focus groups discussions with members of the school community, mostly PE teachers but also school directors and other members of the school community. Focus group discussions were conducted face-to-face in the four intervention areas of the project (Athens, Thessaloniki, Igoumenitsa and Chalkida). Here again, we tried to engage PE teachers and members of the school community to participate in the focus groups discussion through multiple ways, including formal letters, telephone calls and networking. A common focus group guide for all 4 areas of intervention was prepared. The aim of the focus group discussions with representatives of the school community was to identify relevant day-to-day challenges faced by physical educators and school' directors concerning racism and discrimination in the school environment, and ways employed so far for handling such cases.

Both the quantitative and the qualitative research were approved by EKKE's Research Ethics Committee.

The population of the study

The quantitative data come from a total of 78 Physical Education (PE) teachers working in secondary schools who responded to the on-line questionnaire, out of whom 42.3% men and 57.7% women. More than half of them (53.8%) work in schools in the wider Athens area, in Attica prefecture. Most of them are over 51 years old (66.7%), hold a bachelor's (48.7%) or a master's degree (46.2%), and have more than 11 years of experience in the education field (84.6%). Most respondents work as permanent staff (70.5%) in general schools (91%), with 300-500 students (57.7%).

The qualitative data collected from the four focus groups come from twenty-nine (29) participants of the school community (secondary school principals, physical education professionals, school psychologists etc) out of which 16 were female and 13 males. More than half of the participants (17 persons) were older than 51 years, 9 aged between 41 and 50 and 3 aged between 31 and 40. As to their educational attainment, 16 were graduates and 13 were post-graduates.

Research findings

The findings presented in this section refer to four thematic areas: namely the views of the PE teachers in relation to the existence of racism, discrimination and intolerance in the school environment, the existence of such phenomena in PE classes, their competencies and skills in order to deal with such phenomena and finally, barriers identified for combating intolerance and discrimination in PE. Quantitative and qualitative data are used in this paper in a complementary manner so as to give a more comprehensive picture of the issues analysed.

The school environment

In the school environment, incidences of intolerance and indirect discrimination exist among students, while any intervention is still a matter for school administration and teaching staff at the micro level. In particular, with regard to the presence of phenomena of intolerance and inappropriate behaviour at school, 86% of PE teachers who responded to the on-line questionnaire have witnessed such incidents between their students. It is interesting that female PE teachers seem to notice such incidents more often than their male colleagues. In particular, 11.1% of female PE teachers responded that they often see such incidents against 6.1% of male PE teachers, while 21.2% of male PE teachers reported not to having noticed such incidents at all against 8.9% of female PE teachers. These incidents involve mostly verbal teasing, mockery, and bad language (88.1%,

N = 59). The main reason of discriminatory behaviours, according to PE teachers, is discrimination because of origin/nationality (32.8%) and because of gender, sexual orientation (31.2%).

Participants of focus groups also mentioned that adolescents are often engaged in competition among themselves that can sometimes be intensified by ethnic differences but not only, leading to micro-conflicts in school. According to their sayings, when adolescents are asked to justify an incident of conflict at school, they usually attribute it on "*just having fun*" covering up in this way different kinds of abusive behaviours. Also, PE teachers underlined the fact that in many cases students use discriminatory linguistic discourse or words. In their opinion, this is a result of different influences coming from the internet/social media that are commonly used by youth.

Discriminatory behaviours in school are more readily recognised among children with different skin colours. These behaviours are typically not articulated openly, but are enacted through subtle and systematic practices. For instance, during group formation activities, certain students are persistently overlooked. Such patterns of exclusion contribute to the marginalization and eventual social withdrawal of these children. Also, in the case of refugee children, teachers' individual actions to include them in the school environment have been unsuccessful. Most refugees remain "invisible" at school, hanging out with each other. Factors that go beyond the school environment such as frequent changes of schools and the transitional character of their stay in the country have also a bearing on that. As a teacher noted, this is a complex issue deriving mostly from "...a political exclusion, not social, nor educational". Finally, Roma children were also mentioned by the teachers, with most of them facing problems in participating on an equal basis in school activities.

Physical education classes

Focusing on the quantitative data for PE classes, in half of the respondents' classes (53.8%), there are students who inexcusably don't participate, while 46.2% of PE teachers report that they have

noticed phenomena of exclusion of pupils when groups are formed "sometimes" (64.1%) and "often" (9%). The main reasons for exclusion reported are: capabilities (63.8%), appearance (12.1%) and origin/nationality (8.6%). However, there is also a 25.6% of PE teachers who have not noticed such phenomena in their classes. Here again, male physical education professionals notice less "exclusion" compared to females (39.4% of male PE teachers have not noticed such exclusions against 15.6% of female PE teachers).

As it has been mentioned in the focus groups, the physical education class is, for most refugee students, their favourite class. The students that PE teachers consider as more difficult to participate in physical education classes, are girls wearing headscarves (hijabs) "... *their culture does not allow them...*". Gender inequality was evident in some cultures, when a brother and a sister were in the same PE class. An example was provided in which a teacher encouraged a male student's sister to participate in football, only for the male student to respond, *"My sister should not be playing football"*. Roma girls in this age also participate less in PE classes, while there are still phenomena of them dropping out of school due to the Roma culture of "early marriage" which, although illegal, persists in many cases.

Nevertheless, most teachers try to include all students in their classes. Physical Education teachers believe that PE offers flexibility in its structure and delivery. Some of them reported using alternative versions of sports in order to create groups and rules that promote cooperation in a 'diverse environment'. For example, it was mentioned that in collective sports teachers can shape the rules in a way so as to promote gender equality.

In addition, when forming teams, the teachers themselves decide the composition of the team, in order to avoid the exclusion of children who are not particularly "popular" or "able" to play the game. In most cases, *"the obese, the very tall and the very thin are always chosen last, while girls are never chosen"*. According to them, the key to success is to find "the appropriate balance" among the team, so that students who are more "competent" in sports do not get "bored" while the ones less "competent" are not reluctant to participate. However, all PE teachers agree that when a student is very good at

sports, then no other personal characteristic or condition is taken into consideration by its classmates. As stated, "*nothing else matters during the game, because the main goal for them is to win*".

PE teachers' competences and skills in promoting tolerance and social inclusion

In terms of their own competences and skills, measured on a four-level scale, the majority of PE teachers who responded to the online survey believe that, in general, they have "much" (51.3%) or "very much" (38.5%) the necessary skills to promote tolerance. However, there is also a 10.3% that feels it possesses "a little" of the necessary skills for promoting tolerance.

Asking about the acquisition of their skills, 1 in 3 PE teachers reports that these skills were mainly acquired through their practical experience in schools (34.5%) and another 1 in 3 through personal involvement and reading on these subjects (30.8%). This can be partly explained by the fact that according to PE teachers' responses, in more than 1 out of 3 schools, no PE-specific training programme (37.2%) and no general training programme (35.9%) on social inclusion and tolerance has been conducted in their schools over the past five years. As a result, 42.3% of the PE teachers have not attended any training seminar.

Figure 1: PE teachers' satisfaction with the skills they possess in relation to:

	Very much	Much	A little
The way the course is conducted	34.6	60.3	5.1
Crisis/conflict management	34.6	56.4	9
Communication with students	56.4	41	2.6
Strategy regarding discipline	38.5	53.8	7.7
Personality of the students	23.1	69.2	7.7
Diversity of students	20.5	62.8	16.7
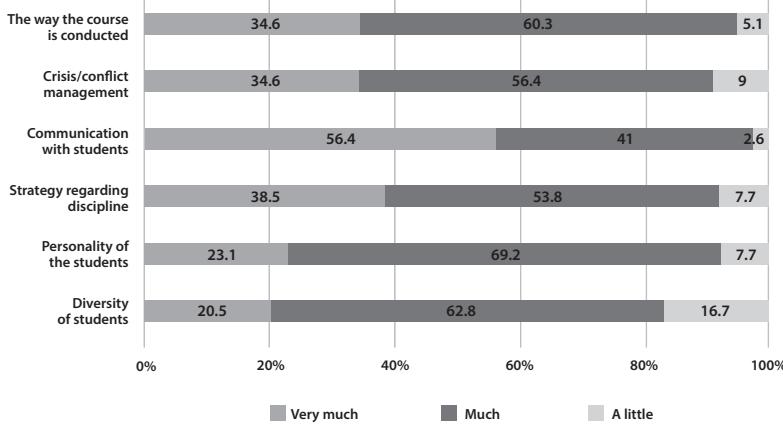
Evaluating their own skills and knowledge, from a given list, PE teachers feel "very much" confident with their skills for "communication with their students" (56.4%), while they feel less confident with the skills they have for "dealing with student diversity" (16.7%) and for "crisis/conflict management" (9%) as shown in Figure 1 (p. 97).

Barriers to promoting tolerance and combating discrimination at school

Asking PE teachers about the most significant barrier to an inclusive school promoting tolerance and equality for all students, they opted for: a) the entrenched stereotypical perceptions of society (about gender, diversity) that are reproduced in the school environment (32.1%) b) the lack of a supporting framework for the integration of new techniques and activities by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs (32.1%), and c) the lack of specialised knowledge on inclusion issues (24.4%).

With regard to the entrenched stereotypical perceptions of society, the role of the family was particularly highlighted at the focus groups. For teachers "...*the problem nowadays is parents. It is not the children*!". According to the teachers of the focus groups, parents hold many stereotypes and are more difficult to deal with, while they sometimes generate issues at school through their behaviour.

With regard to the framework and the guidelines provided by the Ministry of Education for inclusivity in schools, these are considered not enough. In fact, as it was mentioned in the focus group discussions, each school decides by itself depending on the culture at the microlevel, namely the director along with the teachers' association, how issues will be resolved and what policy the school will follow for the interventions in this respect. The same applies for the guiding implementation of the principles and good practices of the syllabus for promoting inclusive physical education. According to the on-line survey results, more than half of the PE teachers (52.6%) believe that these are "a little" adequate.

Nevertheless, physical education class is characterized as "...*a tool for pupils to relax, but also an opportunity to get activated within certain limits and discipline*". In particular, all respondents agree that PE

classes have the potential to effectively incorporate both prevention actions -such as strengthening children's self-control, mutual respect, and empathy- and intervention actions, such as addressing incidents of discriminatory behaviour, promoting conflict resolution, and facilitating inclusive group activities. However, in order for that to actually happen, a lot of things need to be further elaborated.

The abolition of the school championships is considered a negative development by the PE teachers that needs to be reconsidered by the State, because in many cases it has left children with no upper motive for their participation in class. In other words, the school championship used to function as a "tool" for the PE teachers because it gave them the power to set rules and discipline for the students in order for them to participate in the championship.

Similarly, the reduction of teaching hours in Physical Education in lower secondary schools significantly reduces opportunities for action to enable children to accept the 'other' in terms of race, gender, disability, sexual preference and also to become resilient to the risks they face. It takes time to invest systematically in empowering young people, to bond with children, to observe their needs, to trust and be trusted. And time is missing. Following from that, the teachers who participated in the focus groups appear to be quite skeptical about the ability to achieve multiple objectives exclusively through the PE class when it is offered only twice a week. They conclude that, under these conditions, despite good intentions, the only realistically attainable goal in class is the development of certain motor skills.

Data from the on-line survey to PE teachers, shows that 59% believes that the physical education class today contributes "very much" (and 33.3% "much") to the promotion of equality, the inclusion of diversity, and the fight against discrimination. In addition, in a question on how much emphasis they give in their PE class, "the development of teamwork cooperation, respect, and acceptance of diversity" (82.1%) and "the creation of positive attitudes towards lifelong learning" (70.5%) had the most PE teachers' responses in placing "very much" emphasis.

The third barrier, namely the lack of specialised knowledge of PE teachers on social inclusion issues was also found during our research.

Indeed, as already mentioned earlier in the competences and skills section, PE teachers feel less qualified to address students' diversity and to promote the "development of teamwork cooperation, respect, and acceptance of diversity". Following from that, PE teachers feel less satisfied with their information on inclusive education (48.7%), with the school's inadequate infrastructure (48.7%) and with the frequency of training seminars (46.2%).

The importance of training teachers through hands-on seminars was emphasized also in focus group discussions as a way to support inclusive education. However, as focus group participants mentioned, *"just learning the theory isn't enough",* because without practical experience, it's hard to apply it in the classroom or adapt it to specific situations that require flexibility and creative solutions.

Another barrier which was highlighted by both the quantitative and the qualitative data, was the lack of appropriate spaces for practicing physical education. Indeed, in the on-line survey, 47.4% of PE teachers were "a little bit" satisfied with the school's sports facilities, and 6.4% "not at all" satisfied. As mentioned in the focus group, there are schools with a large number of students, most of them located in disadvantaged and crowded neighbourhoods in central Athens, that suffer from inadequate infrastructure. In some instances, the conditions are so poor that there isn't even a proper schoolyard for students to use during breaks, let alone facilities for organizing sports activities. It has been quoted that "...*even prisons have larger courtyards for prisoners to exercise in*", while another participant of the focus group commented about vulnerable students who live in disadvantaged areas and go to deprived schools "*they are children of a lesser God, they are abandoned. These schools… should have been strengthened, instead, they have been abandoned".*

Discussion

The findings of our research activities agree, to a large extent, with those from previous studies that have investigated the perspectives and competencies of teachers (Brussino, 2021) and, in particular, of Physical Education (PE) teachers regarding the issues of racism,

discrimination, and intolerance in school settings in Greece (Dagkas, 2007; Aslanidou and Derri, 2013; Karamesini et al., 2024).

Aslanidou and Derri (2013) literature review study, examining teachers' perceptions of racism and intolerance in schools, concluded that, although PE teachers often express a willingness to support all students, their understanding and practices regarding cultural diversity and intercultural pedagogy are often inadequate, while their knowledge of the social challenges that immigrant children face is limited. This limited awareness can undermine their capacity to implement inclusive pedagogical practices and effectively identify and address discriminatory behaviors within the school environment. Many educators enter the profession without having received sufficient preparation on how to address the diverse cultural, social, and educational needs of their students, particularly those from immigrant or minority backgrounds (Aslanidou and Derri, 2013; Ntina, 2002).

On the other hand, it seems that the years of experience of PE teachers and their personal pursuit of for knowledge in the pedagogical context have helped them to deal with the arising needs for teaching practices that promote the inclusion of all and support the diversity of the student population (Papageorgiou et al., 2021).

Indeed, most PE teachers claim to have the necessary skills and competences to deal with phenomena of intolerance, discrimination and exclusion in their classes; however, these are mainly acquired through personal involvement, effort and years of experience. Our findings comply with other studies that stress the need to strengthen PE teachers' intercultural skills in order to effectively respond to the promotion of wider inclusion of students (i.e. Chepyator-Thomson, 2006; Dagkas, 2007; Papageorgiou et al., 2021).

As to the barriers faced by teachers, here again, our findings are consistent with those identified in relevant studies, the most frequently cited being: specific student characteristics, inadequate professional development, and limited resources and support (Karamani et al., 2024).

According to PE teachers, the inclusion of muslim girls in PE classes is an indicative example of students with specific characteristics that hinder their participation due to primarily

cultural factors. Furthermore, parental influence plays a significant role in this context (Patsiaouras, 2008). The absence of ongoing professional development opportunities related to inclusive and anti-discriminatory education leaves educators unequipped to adapt to the evolving needs of increasingly diverse student populations (UNESCO, 2018).

Finally, inclusion was also found to depend on factors such as school culture (supportive school environment), policies (consistency and clear targeting), and adequate resources (in terms of equipment, space, class size but also in terms of adequate time) (Karamani et al., 2024, p. 14).

The fact that the PE class in Greece is rather autonomous and flexible regarding the curriculum allows PE teachers to follow alternative practices in class. Indeed, it was mentioned that various creative interventions are being promoted by many PE teachers who try to become aware and inventive, even when the conditions are not met and the infrastructure for sports is insufficient or completely missing. The latter is considered a big problem especially in densely populated schools without suitable and free spaces and equipment.

Conclusion

In our view, PE teachers are not simply implementers of specific educational policies, but active agents of change within the school system. Their role in combating intolerance and discrimination is considered therefore crucial. Despite their willingness and openness to addressing these issues, several barriers hinder the effective combat of intolerance and discrimination in physical education (PE) classes in Greece, posing challenges to the creation of inclusive and equitable learning environments. One of the primary obstacles is the lack of professional training among PE teachers in the areas of diversity, inclusive education and intercultural competence. This deficiency can result in uncertainty or discomfort when addressing issues related to discrimination, racism, or social exclusion within the PE class.

In this respect, PE teachers have emphasised the importance of ensuring that the provision of training seminars is promoted

through an institutional framework and in a systematic way for all, but equally important is the content of these seminars. According to them, the state should offer experiential rather than theoretical content seminars as a means of meeting the needs for inclusive education. The findings confirmed that there is a need for training actions addressed to PE teachers to promote equality, tolerance and inclusion for all students, as participants felt that they lacked comprehensive knowledge about such practices.

Another critical barrier is the limited institutional support provided to PE teachers by the broader educational system. Schools and educational authorities often fail to offer the necessary resources, structured programs, or policy frameworks that would enable the effective implementation of inclusive pedagogical strategies. As a result, teachers are frequently left to navigate these challenges independently, without adequate guidance or tools. The role of PE coordinators is characterised by most participants as "absent". This lack of systemic backing can lead to fragmented and inconsistent practices that fall short of fostering a truly inclusive environment.

In light of these challenges, PE teachers believe that addressing intolerance and discrimination in PE requires a comprehensive and sustained approach that includes responding to the above-mentioned barriers. Targeted and systematic teacher education, institutional commitment, and policy-level interventions designed to support PE teachers and promote equity and inclusion in the school context should be among the top priorities.

Research limitations

A limitation of the paper relates to the representativeness of the PE teachers engaged in our research activities, who may not reflect the broader population of PE teachers, but rather those mostly interested on issues of social inclusion and familiarity with online completion of questionnaires. As a result, findings may be influenced by a degree of self-selection bias, potentially limiting the generalisability of the results to the wider PE teachers' population.

References

Aslanidou, M. and Derri, B. (2013). Attitudes, knowledge and practices of classroom teachers and physical education teachers to the otherness and culturally relevant pedagogy and teaching. *Inquiries in Physical Education and Sport*, *11*(1), 8-19. https://doi.org/10.26253/heal.uth.ojs.ispe.2013.1390

Bailey, R. (2006). Physical education and dport in dchools: A review of benefits and outcomes. *The Journal of School Health*, 76, 397-401. 10.1111/j.1746-1561.2006.00132.x. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/6816341_Physical_Education_and_Sport_in_Schools_A_Review_of_Benefits_and_Outcomes/link/5668509608ae7dc22ad212b1/download?_tp=eyJjb250ZXh0Ijp7ImZpcnN0UGFnZSI6InB1YmxpY2F0aW9uIiwicGFnZSI6InB1YmxpY2F0aW9uIn19

Brussino, O. (2021). Building capacity for inclusive teaching: Policies and practices to prepare all teachers for diversity and inclusion. *OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 256, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/57fe6a38-en.

Chepyator-Thomson, J., You, J. and Russell, J. (2006). In-service physical education teachers: Background and understanding of multicultural education. *Journal of In-Service Education*, 26, 557-568. 10.1080/13674580000200127, https://www.researchgate.net/publi cation/232913371_In-service_physical_education_teachers_Background_and_understanding_of_multicultural_education

Council of the European Union (2018). *Promoting European values through sport - Discussion paper,* https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-5149-2018-INIT/en/pdf

Dagkas, S. (2007). Exploring teaching practices in physical education with culturally diverse classes: a cross-cultural study. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, *30*(4), 431-443. https://doi.org/10.1080/02619760701664219

EKKE (2023). Deliverable D.2.1. Needs Assesment report for fighting racism and discrimination in schools through physical education, DIALECT3 Project https://dialectproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/dialect3_d2.1-needs-assessment-report-for-fighting-and-discrimination-in-schools-through-physical-education-1.pdf

Karamani, M., Makopoulou, K., Mansfield, S. and Herold, F. (2024). The complex journey towards the enactment of inclusion in physical education: a scoping review of the literature on teachers' perceptions

and practices. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 1-23. https://doi.org/10.1080/17408989.2024.2374263

Mouratidou, K. and Barkoukis, V. (2018). The role of implicit and explicit gender stereotypes in physical education teachers' expectations for students' performance in physical education. *The Physical Educator*, 75(3), 459-480. https://js.sagamorepub.com/pe/article/view/7105

Munk, M. and Agergaard, S. (2015). The processes of inclusion and exclusion in physical education: A social-relational perspective. *Social Inclusion, 3*(3), 67-81. https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v3i3.201

Papageorgiou, E., Digelidis, N., Syrmpas, I. and Papaioannou A. (2021). A needs assessment study on refugees' inclusion through physical education and sport. Are we ready for This challenge?. *Physical Culture and Sport Studies and Research*, 91(1), 21-33. https://doi.org/10.2478/pcssr-2021-0016.

Patsiaouras, A. (2008). Racism and xenophobia in society, education, and sport settings. *Inquiries in Physical Education and Sport*, 6(3), 290-302. https://doi.org/10.26253/heal.uth.ojs.ispe.2008.1283

Thorjussen, I. M. and Sisjord, M. K. (2021). Structural discrimination in physical education: The "encounter" between the (white) Norwegian teaching content in physical education lessons and female students of color's movements and expressions. *Frontiers in Sports and Active Living, 3*, 769756. https://doi.org/10.3389/fspor.2021.769756

UNESCO (2018). Sport values in every classroom: teaching respect, equity and inclusion to 8–12-year-old students toolkit, in the framework of the UNESCO (2017) *"Values education through sport"* initiative. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000371303

UNODC (2020). *Preventing violent extremism through sport. Technical Guide.* UN:Vienna,https://www.unodc.org/documents/dohadeclaration/Sports/PVE/PVE_TechnicalGuide_EN.pdf

DESIGNING THE DIALECT3 TOOLKIT: ADVANCING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION THROUGH FOOTBALL AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Maria Nikopoulou*, Yiannis Michailidis**, Eleni Semaltianou***

Inclusive education should be a priority in educational policy. According to Physical Education teachers, there is an urgent need for educational initiatives, as the guidelines in the curriculum are minimal. Within the framework of the DIALECT3 project, an educational tool was developed that utilizes football and Physical Education to promote inclusive learning. The toolkit not only provides knowledge but also inspires educators to reflect on their pedagogical and teaching approaches. The goal is to create a learning environment free from stereotypes, where free expression, inclusion, and acceptance are not just concepts but fundamental values.

Introduction

The desk research carried out in the framework of the DIALECT3 project revealed that racism is largely based on values of intolerance defined as the unwillingness or refusal of individuals to accept beliefs, opinions, practices, or behaviors that are different from their own. As revealed, intolerance can take various forms of expression, ranging from avoidance of interaction to acts of hatred and physical

---

* Laboratory and Teaching Staff, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.
** Special Scientific Personnel, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.
*** Special Scientific Personnel, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

harm. At the same time, xenophobia, as a form of intolerance, entails strong negative emotions, such as hostility or hatred, and is most often directed against members of other ethnic, religious, cultural, or sexual orientation.

The use of sport to promote mutual respect and tolerance between individuals, particularly young people, has proven to be an effective tool for preventing anti-social behavior, violence, crime, and drug use (UN Office for Drugs and Crime, 2018). Football can inspire people, break down racial and political barriers, promote gender equality and combat discrimination (UN Digital Library, 2019). It is much more than just a game, it manages to connect the world and delivers important lessons about cooperation, mutual understanding, and societal change. Initiatives such as "football3"[1], "Kick It Out"[2] and "Show Racism the Red Card"[3] have highlighted the role of football in combating racism, encouraging stakeholders to act against discrimination and promote tolerance and equality both within football and beyond.

The findings of the needs analysis confirmed the necessity of addressing such phenomena through sports in general, and football in particular, due to its power to change perceptions, confront prejudice, and improve behavior.

In addition to sport, education and the school environment are key areas for addressing racism and discrimination. According to physical education professionals, the two most significant barriers to creating an inclusive school that fosters tolerance and equality for all students are the deep-rooted societal stereotypes – particularly around gender and diversity – that are often reflected and reinforced within the school setting and the lack of a structured support framework from the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports for implementing new, inclusive methods and activities.

While the first issue requires long-term, global societal change, the second represents a more immediate and achievable goal.

---

1. Football3 handbook. How to use football for social change. https://morethanprojects.actionaid.it/en/projects/dialect-community-building-through-football/
2. https://www.kickitout.org/
3. https://www.theredcard.org/

Establishing a comprehensive support system and providing educators with professional tools and training are feasible issues toward building a truly inclusive and equitable school community that can and should be addressed.

In this direction, the national Physical Education curriculum should be enriched with appropriate materials focusing on inclusive education and the promotion of tolerance. An analysis of the current lower secondary school Physical Education curriculum[4] revealed significant gaps and highlighted the urgent need to emphasize inclusive education, intersectionality, and pedagogical practices that foster tolerance.

At present, the focus of the new Secondary Physical Education curriculum is on promoting lifelong physical activity for health and quality of life. While Physical Education teachers are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to teach physical education and coach athletic and motor activities, they are not trained in strategies or practices for handling complex situations or addressing intercultural issues such as understanding and accepting diversity, fostering respect, and encouraging mutual support.

By integrating these elements, both the curriculum and educators would be better prepared to meet the diverse needs of students and promote an inclusive and safe learning environment. This integration could be achieved both intersectionality by incorporating students' experiences into the educational process and pedagogically, using practices that promote intercultural dialogue, meaningful communication, constructive cooperation, teamwork, and the management of racist incidents.

Enhancing teachers' knowledge, developing their skills, and fostering a positive attitude toward inclusive teaching should be a central pillar of educational policy. Teachers, as the primary actors of student education, must be equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills, and educational tools to incorporate inclusive pedagogical methods and teaching strategies into their instruction, as well as techniques for addressing issues of racism and resolving conflicts peacefully.

---

4. https://iep.edu.gr/el/nea-ps-provoli

According to lower secondary school Physical Education teachers who participated in the study, there is an urgent need for the organization and implementation of training initiatives and informational seminars. They reported that the guidance and examples of best practices provided in the current Physical Education curriculum are virtually nonexistent. Their responses highlighted a critical need for proper training and resources, as many feel unprepared to address the diverse needs of their students or to manage crises and conflicts in the classroom and school environment. As they described, their reaction to student altercations was often limited to breaking up the conflict without engaging in further discussion, helping students process their emotions, preventing future incidents, or fostering a sense of group responsibility and cohesion.

In conclusion, what teachers teach (curriculum), how they teach (pedagogy), and how they monitor student learning (assessment) are key factors in either promoting or hindering diversity and inclusion in the classroom. Pedagogical practice, lesson content, and the method of assessing both the goal and outcome are the three core components in designing and implementing inclusive teaching. It is essential that teachers understand the importance of these elements to foster harmonious coexistence and effective collaboration among students within the school environment.

Recognizing this need, the DIALECT3 project developed a handbook aimed at providing Physical Education teachers with an innovative educational tool to support the development of students' social and life skills, while also combating racism and deconstructing stereotypes in education. Through playful and modified football-based activities, the handbook seeks to help students understand the negative impact of stereotypes and discrimination, the importance of meaningful communication, and the need to develop respect for others' differences. At the same time, it promotes the enhancement of students' self-esteem and self-confidence, while encouraging them to experience trust and respect from their classmates. Although the handbook was designed for use in lower secondary education, its activities can be adapted and effectively applied in primary schools as well.

Aims

The aims of the toolkit were based on those of previous DIALECT projects[5], which focused on the development of specific social issues and life skills. However, in this case, a combination of the two was made. Thus, the social goals were defined as the main ones, while the life skills were integrated as sub-goals within each of them.

Specifically, the social goals include:

Privileges: A set of unearned benefits society gives to people based on certain aspects of their identity including race, class, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, language, geographical location, ability, and religion, among others.

Inclusion/Exclusion: Individuals may experience exclusion in various ways and at different levels, such as unemployment or underemployment, and discrimination based on race, religion, ethnicity, gender identity, national origin, etc.

Interculturalism: Focuses on bringing together individuals from different groups to foster a sense of belonging and social integration at the community level.

Othering: This emerges when societies undergo major rapid changes in a short period of time (e.g., sudden influx of migrants). The process of defining who belongs and who does not within a group of people is known as "the sense of the other." It is important to understand that the perception of the other is not about liking or disliking someone, but is based on conscious and unconscious beliefs that certain social groups are a threat or not, due to nationality, religion, gender, etc.

Stereotypes: These are mental shortcuts used by the brain to help individuals process incoming information. When encountering someone for the first time, the brain automatically generalizes and categorizes that person as part of a group. The problem with

---

5. DIALECT TOOLKIT. Disrupting polarization: building communities of tolerance through football. https://www.actionaid.gr/ta-nea-mas/dialect-htizontas-anektikes-koinotites-meso-toy-podosfairoy

stereotypes is that people judge others based on the characteristics of the group they belong to rather than on their individual traits. Stereotypes can only be eliminated when individuals start seeing and treating others as people, not merely as members of a group.

Life skills include:

Conflict resolution: Conflicts may arise when people disagree, do not share the same values, or interpret situations differently. Conflicts are a part of everyday life and stem from human interaction and relationships. Especially among different ethnic and social groups, conflicts may emerge due to differing customs, traditions, and worldviews. They often appear through the differing perception of the "other," resulting in discrimination and exclusion.

Communication: This is an important skill in combating racism, discrimination, and xenophobia. The ability to have constructive discussions about differences, beliefs, and values is essential in all areas of daily life - from sports to personal relationships - to remove barriers to tolerance and inclusion. Good communication involves both the ability to clearly express one's ideas and opinions to others, and the capacity to discuss and negotiate a variety of diverse issues.

Reflection: This refers to reflecting on prejudices and stereotypes. Individuals may hold negative beliefs and be biased against certain groups due to racist and xenophobic statements or actions by their parents, friends, politicians, or other adults. Practicing reflection is important for gaining a deeper understanding of the causes behind such attitudes and behaviors toward others, as well as their impact.

Active listening: This involves listening and responding to the speaker with the goal of achieving mutual understanding. Specifically, active listening refers to a person's ability to stay attentive to the speaker, understand, and convey non-verbal messages.

Teamwork: This is important for social inclusion, as it involves participating in group efforts to achieve common goals in the most effective way. Teamwork is connected to many interpersonal skills such as communication, cooperation, respect, fair play, and more.

Social sensitivity: This is the ability to perceive and understand the feelings and viewpoints of others. It is a critical skill for individuals

as they navigate social interactions and contexts, interpret messages, and process information. It is often linked to empathy, as it includes the experience of understanding another person's thoughts, feelings, and perspective.

The combination of the goals mentioned above is illustrated in the figure below (Figure 1).

Figure 1: The aims of the DIALECT3 toolkit

Privileges:	Inclusion/Exclusion:	Interculturalism:
• Self-reflection • Social sensitivity • Conflict resolution	• Teamwork • Active listening • Self-reflection	• Teamwork • Social sensitivity • Communication

Othering:	Stereotypes:
• Teamwork • Social sensitivity • Self-reflection	• Self-reflection • Conflict resolution • Active listening
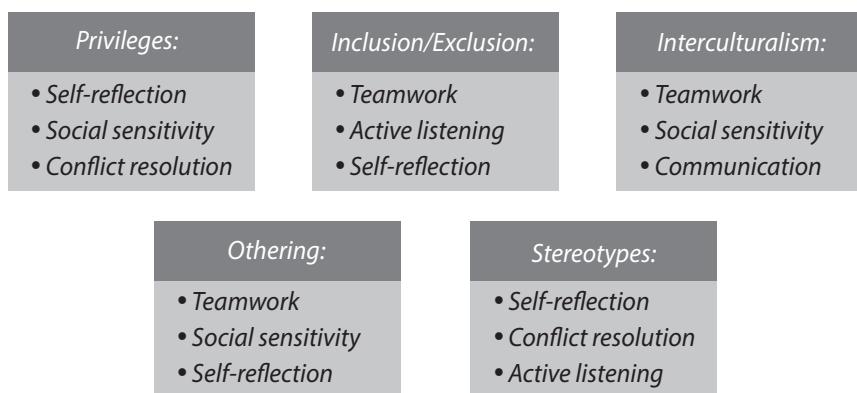
Content

As mentioned earlier, football was chosen as the means to achieve the goals of the educational tool. The activities indicated involve adaptations of the sport aimed at developing students' specific social skills and life skills. The content was developed in accordance with the new structure of didactic scenarios that will be implemented in education.

A didactic scenario is a learning framework with specific goals, sub-goals, learning outcomes, learning theories, and teaching strategies. Compared to a lesson plan, it spans more than one teaching session, approaches the subject matter more broadly, emphasizes the active participation of students in the learning process, and focuses on more complex objectives. Students' experiences are typically utilized, and events from their everyday lives are incorporated, making the learning process more accessible, engaging, and effective.

Additionally, the didactic scenario is tailored to specific subjects and units of the curriculum. It supports learning through exploration and discovery, and encourages the development of social skills such as problem-solving, decision-making, critical thinking, and communication.

Physical Education offers a favorable environment for the implementation of didactic scenarios due to the nature and flexibility of the subject. The active participation of students in group activities and games requires the demonstration of various skills such as cooperation, communication, decision-making, conflict management, etc., to achieve a common goal by all students. Moreover, lack of knowledge of the dominant language does not pose a barrier to participation and learning.

For the purposes of this toolkit, five didactic scenarios were designed, each targeting one of the five social skills. Each scenario included activities aimed at developing the respective sub-goals.

Learning outcomes

By using the toolkit, physical education teachers will be able to:

› Modify football activities and games to serve the goals and needs of their students.
› Implement adapted activities and games using modern pedagogical methods and educational strategies.
› Create new games and activities aimed at developing students' social and life skills.
› Evaluate the effectiveness of the goals and sub-goals.
› Incorporate student feedback into their lesson to ensure that all participants understand the objectives.

Pedagogical practices

To create an environment that promotes open dialogue, active listening, and respectful communication among students, educators should implement specific pedagogical practices. These practices not

only enhance learning but also foster empathy and understanding. Specifically, educators should:

Establish clear expectations and basic rules in collaboration with students to ensure a safe and inclusive learning environment where everyone feels valued and respected. Expectations regarding behavior, respect, and participation should be clearly communicated to students at the beginning of the academic year.

Foster a safe atmosphere where everyone is open to sharing opinions, can assert their views respectfully, and treat others as they wish to be treated. To support this, educators should set rules for equal participation in discussions, promote active listening, and encourage the respectful exchange of diverse perspectives.

Use inclusive language that acknowledges and respects the diversity of students in the classroom, considering factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, abilities, and other identities. Inclusive language uses welcoming words and expressions, avoiding generalizations about specific groups (e.g., "Muslims" or "girls") that may lead to unintentional exclusion. While such phrases may not be intentionally harmful, they can often have a negative impact on students. Equally important is the recognition and incorporation of students' personal experiences into the learning process, which promotes participation and emotional connection with the content.

Promote positive and meaningful relationships with students. Educators must cultivate a supportive environment by showing genuine interest, respect, and care for the personal well-being of their students. It is important to establish a climate of trust where students feel comfortable seeking guidance, expressing their concerns, and speaking freely without fear of criticism.

Address undesirable behaviors promptly, establishing clear protocols for handling incidents of bias or discrimination that may arise in the classroom. Taking appropriate actions to manage and resolve such incidents reinforces a sense of accountability among all involved students and contributes to the creation of a safe and effective learning environment.

Incorporate collaborative learning, including activities that encourage teamwork, empathy, and appreciation of different perspectives. Group composition should vary, giving different students the opportunity to collaborate each time. This facilitates interaction and strengthens understanding among a wider range of students.

Facilitate reflection and student self-assessment, helping students explore their own biases, opinions, and experiences related to diversity and acceptance. To achieve this, educators can integrate self-assessment activities, allowing students to evaluate their learning outcomes, analyze their personal beliefs, and consider alternative perspectives.

Encourage the expression of different perspectives and value the contributions of students with diverse backgrounds and experiences. Special importance is given to creating opportunities for students to share their cultural traditions, experiences, and knowledge, thereby enhancing mutual understanding and inclusion.

Additionally, it is widely known that personal biases and beliefs can influence and distort an individual's perception. For this reason, educators must ensure that every speaker has completed their thought and that all students have correctly understood the information. This can be achieved through clarifying questions or expressions such as: "To make it clearer, do you mean..." or "If I understood correctly, you are saying that...", thus facilitating accurate understanding and meaningful communication in the classroom.

Another important factor in meaningful communication is body language. Therefore, educators must give equal importance to both verbal and non-verbal communication, ensuring that the interlocutor fully understands the information. To achieve this, they should maintain eye contact with the speaker, stay focused, avoid side conversations, and use body language - such as facial expressions and gestures - to encourage students to actively participate in the discussion.

Learning strategies

For the purposes of this toolkit, Universal Design for Learning (UDL)[6] has adopted an educational framework that ensures equal learning opportunities for all students. UDL strategies include teaching methods and tools that help educators create an inclusive learning environment. The UDL framework is based on three fundamental principles: engagement, representation, and action & expression. Each principle is accompanied by a set of guidelines that offer evidence-based approaches to optimize the learning experience. The goal is for educators to improve how they present information, enhance students' learning engagement, and expand their opportunities for expression and participation. The UDL principles can be applied both in the overall course design and in individual teaching units.

Specifically, the principles focus on the following:

Engagement: This refers to the "why" of learning. Students are motivated and actively involved when there is interest and intrinsic motivation to learn. For this reason, educators should discover students' motivations, explore their interests and needs, and set engaging and meaningful learning goals.

Representation: This refers to the "what" of learning. Presenting the subject matter in varied and flexible ways is critical for successful learning. Educators need to recognize how students best process information - whether verbally, visually, or through a combination of both - and use different media and presentation techniques to facilitate understanding.

Action and Expression: This refers to the "how" of learning. Students express their knowledge and skills in different ways. For this reason, educators should provide them with a variety of alternative forms of expression, demonstration, and assessment, tailored to their individual needs and abilities.

The integration of specific strategies such as collaborative learning, group work, and problem-solving activities can help educators create an inclusive and cooperative learning environment, where students

6. Universal Design for Learning (UDL). https://udlguidelines.cast.org/

from diverse cultural backgrounds, genders, and other identities work together, learn from one another, and develop essential teamwork and collaboration skills. Specifically, educators should:

Form mixed groups that include students with diverse backgrounds, genders, abilities, and skill levels, and encourage students to collaborate with classmates they may not usually interact with. This promotes intercultural understanding and cooperation.

Incorporate fun team-building activities to foster trust, cooperation, and effective communication among group members. These activities may include problem-solving challenges, trust-building exercises, or collaborative games that require teamwork.

Apply the jigsaw method, where students are divided into smaller "expert" groups to study specific topics or skills and then reassemble into their main groups to share what they have learned. This approach promotes interdependence, collaboration, and the exchange of diverse perspectives and expertise.

Enhance learning by presenting students with real-world problems or scenarios that require group collaboration and teamwork to solve. Encourage students to analyze the issue from multiple angles, consider different viewpoints, and work together to develop creative and inclusive solutions.

Assign students the role of teaching a specific skill or concept to their peers within the group. This approach not only strengthens collaboration but also promotes the exchange of knowledge and perspectives among students.

Assign group tasks that require students to work together toward a common goal, allowing them to draw on their diverse backgrounds, skills, and experiences to contribute to the overall outcome.

Engage students in role-playing or simulation activities that require collaboration to solve problems or make decisions. These activities can simulate real-life situations and encourage students to consider different perspectives and develop empathy.

Acknowledge and highlight group achievements, emphasize the value of teamwork, diverse contributions, and inclusive practices.

The role of the physical education teacher in the implementation of the toolkit

Teachers play a dual role in applying the manual during physical education classes. On the one hand, they are responsible for the planning and proper execution of the activities; on the other, they act as a facilitator, guiding student discussions before and after the lesson. They monitor the progress of the activities, intervene in cases of disagreement, record and assess the learning objectives and desired outcomes. At the same time, they serve as a role model, upholding the agreed principles and rules within the class.

Focusing on the facilitator's role *during the lesson*, the teacher should:

> Maintain consistent eye contact with all students.
> Speak with a slow, steady, and calm voice.
> Remind students of the rules in the event of any violations.
> Ensure that all students understand the rules.
> Make calm and discreet remarks to students showing negative behavior, without publicly exposing them. They should be asked to identify and name the rules they have violated.
> When necessary, apply the time-out method, giving the student exhibiting persistent negative behavior space and time to step back from the situation and reflect on their behavior.

At the end of the lesson, the teacher should:

> Reward and reinforce positive behavior, both verbally and non-verbally.
> Speak privately with students who display recurring unwanted behaviors.
> Encourage students to evaluate their own behavior through self-assessment processes.
> Facilitate discussion on alternative behaviors when negative ones are observed, thereby promoting student awareness and responsibility.

Conclusions

The goal of this manual is not only to equip educators with the necessary knowledge and tools to cultivate students' social and life skills. It also aspires to provoke reflection and inspire them to deeply reconsider their pedagogical approach, teaching methodology, and the way they build relationships with their students. Through this process, it aims to foster an educational environment free from stereotypes - where free expression, inclusion, and acceptance are not merely concepts, but fundamental values that shape the learning experience.

References

UN Digital Library (2019). Integrating sport into youth crime prevention and criminal justice strategies: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly. https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3847653.

UN Office for Drugs and Crime (2018). Sports, keeping youth away from crime, Doha Declaration. https://www.unodc.org/dohadeclaration/en/news/2018/02/sports--keeping-youth-away-from-crime.html.

THE IMPACT OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION INTERVENTIONS: INSIGHTS FROM TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES

Katerina Vezyrgianni[*]

1. Introduction

Within the framework of the DIALECT3 project, funded by the European Commission's CERV (Citizens, Equality, Rights, and Values programme), the primary objective was to address racism as a component of intersectional stereotypes within educational settings. The project sought to promote the inclusion of migrant, refugee, and Roma adolescents —both boys and girls— by fostering tolerant and inclusive school communities. This was achieved through the Physical Education (PE) curriculum, which emphasized anti-racism and non-discrimination.

Among the key research questions explored in the project were the extent to which Physical Education, as an integral part of the school curriculum, can contribute to challenging stereotypes and the extent to which behavioural change can be fostered through the development of lifelong social skills within this educational framework.

This chapter presents the findings of the impact assessment conducted following a seven-month intervention in lower secondary schools across four selected areas, focusing on Physical Education (PE) classes from the perspective of PE teachers. Specifically, it explores how PE teachers —after receiving training and implementing

* Researcher, National Centre for Social Research.

a specialized methodology developed within the project— perceive themselves, observe and interpret behavioural changes among lower secondary students, and how these changes were reflected in the final tournaments that marked the completion of the interventions in the participating schools.

General overview

1.1. Role of Physical Education (PE) teachers

Physical Education (PE) teachers play a pivotal role in promoting students' physical, mental, and social well-being, despite the marginalisation of PE within school curricula. Beyond teaching sports, they act as facilitators of social inclusion, fostering respect, teamwork, and acceptance among students from diverse backgrounds, abilities, and identities. By mediating connections with broader social networks, PE teachers enhance students' access to educational and social opportunities, supporting the development of social capital, which Coleman (1988) identifies as essential for learning outcomes and engagement.

Bridging social capital, which connects individuals from diverse backgrounds and enables the flow of information and trust (Putnam, 2000), is particularly critical in reducing prejudice and promoting inclusion. Recent studies demonstrate the mechanisms through which PE teachers contribute to this process. Nasri and Souid (2024) highlight that teachers act as socializing agents, fostering cooperation, trust, and cohesion among students. Marqués-Sánchez et al. (2024) show that participation in teacher-guided team sports increases adolescents' centrality in social networks, enhancing their sense of belonging and bridging connections. Complementing these socialization processes, Ribeiro, Farias, and Mesquita (2024) demonstrate that equity-driven pedagogical scaffolding further reduces participation disparities by adapting instruction to students' individual strengths, promoting fairness and engagement for all.

In parallel, the development of basic physical competence through high-quality PE programmes enhances students' self-esteem, confidence, and peer acceptance (Bailey, 2005), providing

a foundation for meaningful social engagement. Such outcomes are vital for fostering inclusive environments where all students feel valued and motivated to participate. By collaborating with families, the school community, and local organizations, PE teachers extend students' social networks and access to resources that support both personal growth and social inclusion. Ultimately, their work demonstrates that PE contributes far beyond physical skill development, serving as a key arena for promoting equity and building social capital.

1.2. Polarization, differentiated teaching in PE and football3

Differentiated teaching in PE allows for flexible instructional methods, enabling students to develop their skills individually. By focusing on personal strengths, students can be better prepared to integrate into groups where they can perform effectively. This approach fosters an inclusive environment where all students, regardless of gender, have the opportunity to succeed. Additionally, adapting rules in collegiate sports can promote gender equality by ensuring fair access to resources, facilities, and opportunities for all participants.

To counter the rise of phenomena —where populist groups shape adolescents' identity during periods of social and political polarization by reinforcing stereotypes and prejudices that may influence how they perceive and act upon the world— experience has shown that fostering greater inclusion and tolerance within communities can lead to more effective governance of diversity and strengthen societies against violent extremism (United Nations Development Programme, 2016).

The use of sport as an intervention to reduce intolerance, racist violence and crime in the community and to reduce radicalisation of young adults has become a common practice. Studies suggest that participating in sport may improve self-esteem, enhance social bonds and provide participants with a feeling of purpose (Council of the European Union 2018, Radicalization Awareness Network –RAN, 2021).

Also, research indicates that football can disrupt societal polarization by leveraging the transformative power of sports to

alter perceptions, challenge prejudices, and enhance behaviours. Sports can break down racial and political barriers, promote gender equality, and combat discrimination. In fostering mutual respect and tolerance, sports impart essential social and interpersonal skills (UNESCO, 2018). Utilizing sports as a tool for youth development has proven effective in steering young individuals away from antisocial behaviour, violence, crime, and substance abuse.

To this respect, football3, as an alternative model of football, targets to promoting key life skills and empowering youth to become leaders, as well as to providing both players and mediators with knowledge and life skills (football3 Handbook, 2024). It aims not only to increase willingness to include others, regardless of gender, ability, age or background, increase communication, decision-making and conflict-mediation skills, improve respect for women and girls, and appreciation of gender equality, enhance a sense of fair play, responsibility and accountability, increase desire to become a role model for others and increase participation in the community, but also to increase social participation.

2. Overview of project processes during the pilot phase

During the pilot testing phase, the project's activities focused on enhancing the pedagogical and educational approaches of participating PE teachers by adopting the DIALECT methodology into school curricula, for a specific period (7 months), and utilizing the educational scenarios developed thoughout the project's activities and football3. These efforts targeted lower secondary school students (aged 12-15) in four selected intervention areas.[1]

Within the context of physical education classes in the intervention schools, the project aimed to support vulnerable adolescents in improving their multicultural understanding and sense of belonging

---

1. The selection of intervention areas was based on socioeconomic characteristics, as well as criteria related to accessibility and network availability. Schools were selected from two urban areas (Athens and Thessaloniki) and two rural areas (the prefectures of Evia and Thesprotia).

within the school environment, fostering intercultural bonds with their peers. Specifically, through the principles of football3 and the experiential learning activities introduced in the educational scenarios, the project emphasized the development of a sense of belonging, alongside the promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination in the school setting.

These activities culminated in the organization of local football3 tournaments in each intervention area, where participating teams were mixed in terms of both gender and school affiliation, with the primary objective of promoting fair play.

Furthermore, the intervention's impact was assessed through a comprehensive evaluation, employing a multifaceted approach that combined qualitative and quantitative assessment tools, providing an in-depth understanding of the initiative's effectiveness.

3. Impact assessment research: objective and methodology

3.1. The objectives

The impact assessment research aimed to evaluate learning outcomes related to the project's activities, assess its influence on trained PE teachers and adolescents—focusing on behavioural change, tolerance, and non-discrimination—and analyze pre- and post-intervention data while ensuring gender mainstreaming.

For PE teachers, the study explored their role as agents of behavioural change through the adoption of the DIALECT3 methodology. Research questions were designed to examine the challenges educators face regarding racism and discrimination in schools, their existing strategies for addressing such issues, and the impact of DIALECT3 on their approach (Tsiganou and Vezyrgianni, 2024).

3.2. Research tools

As mentioned above, both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed to measure the impact of Physical Education (PE)

and football programmes in promoting inclusion, tolerance, and non-discrimination among students. Accordingly, two distinct questionnaires were designed for self-completion by PE teachers implementing DIALECT3 activities in schools across the four areas, before and after the students' training phase. The aim was to assess the improvement in competencies and empowerment practices that foster tolerance, social inclusion, and behavioural change.

In the first questionnaire, administered before the start of the pilot testing phase, PE teachers were asked to rate their level of agreement on a 5-point scale regarding various aspects of students' behaviour in their classes. These included participation in group activities, the presence of discriminatory behaviours, and their perspectives on inclusivity and the promotion of tolerance through physical education. Additionally, teachers were asked about their views on using educational scenarios or interventions to foster tolerance and inclusivity in PE lessons.

The second questionnaire, distributed to participating teachers upon completion of the pilot testing period, aimed to assess their experience with implementing the football3 methodology alongside the developed educational scenarios. Using a 3-point scale, teachers indicated their level of agreement on various aspects of the intervention. The questionnaire covered their satisfaction with the project, the extent to which it met their expectations and their observations of students' behavioural change. Particular emphasis was placed on the potential strengthening of students' teamwork skills, acceptance of diversity, cooperation, tolerance, and resilience against discriminatory behaviours.

In this context, a qualitative study was also conducted using a focus group technique involving PE teachers implementing DIALECT3 activities, particularly the football3 methodology, in the schools of the four intervention areas. Additionally, an observation and impression-decoding technique was applied to capture the views, experiences, and insights expressed by PE teachers during ongoing mentoring sessions conducted throughout the pilot testing phase.

4. Outcomes in the four intervention areas: pe teachers' views

4.1. Findings from quantitative data analysis

A total of 14 PE teachers in lower secondary schools across the four intervention areas of the project (i.e., two schools in Athens, five in Evia, three in Thesprotia, and four in Thessaloniki) responded to the first questionnaire, i.e. before pilot testing phase.

When asked about students' behaviour in their schools, the majority of teachers acknowledged that adolescents tend to avoid participating in group activities within the classroom and the broader school community to some extent. Additionally, most respondents reported having observed some or minor instances of discriminatory behaviour among students—based on ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or disability—either in class or in school life. Only a few teachers characterized such behaviours as widespread within their schools.

Although the vast majority of teachers participating in the project's intervention believed that the PE course provides a strong opportunity to promote tolerance, diversity, and anti-discrimination through its activities, fewer than half reported frequently incorporating educational scenarios for this purpose in their lessons. Instead, most teachers stated that such scenarios were used only occasionally or minimally in their classes. Regarding the effectiveness of these interventions, half of the teachers considered the applied scenarios to have had a significant positive impact on promoting tolerance, inclusion, and non-discrimination among students. The remaining half, however, felt that while the interventions had some positive effects, their impact was more limited.

Upon the completion of the pilot testing phase—namely, the adoption of the football3 methodology and the integration of the developed educational scenarios into school curricula, with a particular focus on Physical Education (PE) courses—13 PE teachers from the participating schools in the four intervention areas (i.e., two schools in Athens, five in Evia, two in Thesprotia, and four in Thessaloniki) responded to the second questionnaire.

The vast majority of respondents reported a high level of satisfaction with the project's activities during the pilot testing phase. Furthermore, they indicated that their expectations had been largely met through their engagement with these activities. Overall, most teachers perceived the project's intervention as having made a significant contribution to promoting equality, fostering inclusion, and addressing discrimination among their students.

With regard to the specific contributions of the DIALECT3 activities, the majority of respondents asserted that these activities played a crucial role in enhancing students' teamwork skills. Similarly, most participating teachers concurred that the intervention substantially strengthened students' ability to collaborate and demonstrate mutual respect. However, a smaller proportion of teachers —just over half— indicated that the implementation of the football3 methodology and the use of the teaching scenarios had a considerable impact on fostering students' acceptance of diversity. The remaining teachers were less convinced, suggesting that while these activities had some positive influence, their overall contribution was more moderate.

Through students' participation in mixed football teams, two-thirds of the teachers reported that the sense of belonging among students of migrant origin was significantly enhanced. In contrast, the remaining teachers were more hesitant, indicating that this factor contributed only to a limited extent.

A similar trend is observed regarding gender equality through the implementation of educational scenarios and participation in football3 games. Specifically, two-thirds of the teachers reported that gender equality was significantly reinforced, while the remaining teachers indicated that this was achieved only to a limited extent within their classes.

A comparable pattern emerged concerning students' resilience in addressing racist comments and behaviours. More than two-thirds of the teachers stated that, upon completion of the pilot testing phase, students had developed significantly greater resilience in confronting such issues. In contrast, less than one-third of the teachers believed that the intervention contributed only moderately to strengthening students' resilience in responding to racist remarks and behaviours.

Finally, more than half of the teachers who participated in the project's intervention activities perceived a significant enhancement in students' social skills across various aspects of their lives. These included increased opportunities for self-expression and a stronger sense of personal progress in both their academic and personal development. In contrast, the remaining teachers believed that such improvements were achieved only to a limited extent upon the completion of the pilot testing phase.

4.2. Mentoring PE teachers during the pilot phase: challenges, reflections, and key insights

To ensure the smooth implementation of the pilot phase, three monthly mentoring sessions[2] were conducted among project partners and PE teachers implementing the football3 methodology in schools. These sessions addressed challenges encountered in the course of the pilot phase, proposed solutions, and examined early behavioural changes in adolescents resulting from the educational scenarios and football3 methodology.

Initially, teachers expressed concerns about overcoming entrenched stereotypes in football as a male-dominated sport, as well as practical issues such as team formation and scheduling constraints. They debated optimal group sizes, leadership roles, and whether team compositions should remain fixed, with many emphasizing the need to avoid the perception that team formation was imposed by teachers. It soon became clear that successful implementation required heterogeneous, leaderless groups with balanced dynamics to foster inclusivity and prevent discouragement among children with varying skill levels. While this approach did not fully align with the expectations of football academy students focused on competition, the project prioritized inclusion and collaboration across gender, background, and ability. Despite occasional challenges, educators remained committed to integrating the football3 methodology.

---

2. A Monitoring Team was established to support the trained PE teachers with the application of the project's methodology.

Time constraints emerged as a significant issue, with limited PE hours and shortened class periods leading to rushed implementation. Teachers found it difficult to introduce new rules and complete the football3 process, often neglecting the provided teaching scenarios due to insufficient time.

Another concern was the mediator role —whether it should be assigned to a single student or rotated. Mediators were often perceived as biased, facing resistance or attempts to undermine their authority, though interest in the role increased over time. Teachers also observed excessive self-centeredness among adolescents, sometimes manifesting as aggression or rule-breaking. Gender dynamics remained a challenge, as girls feared exclusion and discrimination, while boys prioritized competition over collaboration, often sidelining weaker players.

Teachers recognized their own need to shift mindsets, acknowledging that they, too, internalized societal norms emphasizing winning. Substitute teachers faced additional difficulties due to frequent rotations, disrupting methodological continuity. While football3's flexibility allowed for adaptation, self-exclusion persisted, particularly among students with low self-esteem who feared peer criticism.

Despite these challenges, the project fostered positive behavioural changes. Initially hesitant —especially girls— students became more engaged, with girls gaining confidence and boys demonstrating greater inclusivity and cooperation. However, while gender-based exclusion decreased, ability-based discrimination persisted.

Overall, teamwork improved, with fewer instances of individualistic play. Adolescents gradually understood that success required adherence to rules, and participation in football3 encouraged responsibility and fair play, particularly among previously aggressive students.

To enhance effectiveness, it was suggested that football3 be implemented within a standardized framework with consistent rules. Additionally, introducing the methodology in primary schools could help instill cooperative attitudes from an early age, reinforcing inclusion and gender equality.

4.3. Understanding PE challenges and opportunities: focus group findings

As previously mentioned additional qualitative data were gathered through a focus group discussion with PE teachers after completion of the pilot testing phase. In total, ten (10) PE teachers from schools located in the four intervention areas (Athens, Thessaloniki, Evia, and Thesprotia) participated in the discussion. The focus group was aimed at having in-depth feedback from participants on the two key dimensions: benefits accruing to the PE teacher and changes in their perception of stereotypes and modification in their educational approach post-piloting along with changes observed at the student level after the intervention. In specific terms, this finding, implicitly, is supporting the issues and challenges identified during the mentoring sessions.

4.3.1. For PE teachers: skill development and implementation challenges

From the outset, PE teachers admitted that the project, through its teaching scenarios and football3 sessions, significantly improved their skills. They were provided with key resources to enable them to manage critical issues concerning gender relations in the school environment. In return, this project opened up several alternative methods for teaching football to them, diversified their instructional methods, and brought new perspectives to the teaching of physical education.

One of the major challenges encountered was the time constraint. Physical Education classes were just two hours a week, and trying to fit all three game periods into the weekly schedule proved to be difficult. In some schools, the students were not very cooperative because they viewed the structured nature of the programme to restrict their spontaneity. The teachers faced problems trying to get students with a variety of characters to fit in as quickly as those who generally have difficulties sticking to any rule.

Stereotypes and discrimination presented more academic challenges. Understanding that the project intended to break down

gender and ability-based biases, one can see how many students, as usual, held stereotypical notions concerning gender roles in sports. In fact, the boys were very unwilling to include the girls in the game, and so, too, were the girls about playing alongside the boys. Such initial resistance only highlighted the gravity of changing long-established attitudes. Moreover, it was difficult for the students, especially the potential future professional players toeing the line with old, traditional football, to adjust their gaming approach to the innovations of football3.

The obstacles notwithstanding, the project proves engaging and contributes to inclusion in the future. Reports from teachers who used the teaching scenarios indicated that structured activities proved very effective in introducing the principles of the game in an engaging and reachable way. One of the scenarios, which involved the distribution of privilege through a variation of football based on preferential treatment using a handkerchief, became very popular. The students not only wanted to use the activity for relaxation but also requested to be repeated. On the whole, the scenarios were perceived to be well-designed, thus instrumental in creating an atmosphere where students could participate energetically and delve deep into the objectives of the project.

4.3.2. Enhancing the programme: training, communication, and long-term integration

There were several improvements that PE teachers came up with to further strengthen the impact and sustainability of the project. One major proposal was to incorporate the programme into the curricula of universities, which would ensure that future teachers of physical education went through the football3 methodology and applied it in their practice as well. A wider, more sustainable approach was to expand the methodology to other sports because easily adaptable principles exist beyond football, though the methodology can also be applied to other sports. The teachers also demanded that school championships be re-established through football3 tournaments, which would also increase the involvement of students and ensure their participation.

In light of the positive results of the project, the vast majority of the teachers were very willing to feature it in their work for the next academic year in the annual curriculum and apply it further beyond football. Yet, they also noticed that this should be accompanied by some other effort of stability and constant support because such initiatives were often fragmented in the recent past.

4.3.3. Regarding students

4.3.3.1. Students' reactions to DIALECT3's innovative approach

The students' first reactions to the new methodology ranged from those who welcomed the change to female students who were hesitant because of preconceived notions. On the basis of age or grade as well as gender, first-grade students were the most willing and involved while third-grade ones initially exhibited some resistance, particularly where girls' participation and conformity to the team rules were concerned. The latter may be a result of the prolonged exposure of these students to stereotypes and conventional representations of the game of football. Second-grade students showed initial resistance but became more involved when they understood the objectives of the project better. These findings align with quantitative data, which reflect similar patterns.

4.3.3.2. Behavioural shifts in equality, diversity, and inclusion

Teachers unanimously agreed that it was DIALECT3 that had effectively triggered equality and diversity. There were quite eminent behavioural changes among the students. The most significant change occurred between the two sexes. Initially, there were attitudinal differences when boys would ostracize girls, who would also not want to be associated with boys due to negative responses or rough games. With time, such barriers were removed and boys began helping and cooperating with the girls instead of excluding them. What is more, good male players cooperated actively with female students, indicating a changed attitude.

Although most schools lacked significant racial diversity, the project notably facilitated the inclusion of Roma children, ensuring

universal participation without issues. It went further to break stereotypes with DIALECT3 motivating students into an approach other than a win-at-all-costs, through the introduction of alternative roles such as mediators. It is these students who advance the necessary valuable conflict resolution and fairness skills, and all of them adjust the rules wherein that kind of activity has generated a real sense of them having some degree of influence and empowerment.

The project's impact was most evident during the final tournament, where students from different schools and backgrounds were blended into single teams. This reinforced the values of teamwork, collaboration, and inclusion, further solidifying the project's success in promoting equality.

4.3.3.3. Benefits of the intervention for students

The key advantage of the intervention amounts to an emphasis on acceptance and empowerment irrespective of ability or gender differences among students—in short, the setting of football apart from the earlier ways of doing things. By shifting the focus from winning to teamwork, diversity, and belonging, the programme fosters an inclusive environment. The students themselves change the rules actively and undertake mediator responsibilities and thus imbibe conflict resolution, communication, and responsibility skills, which are the very keys to character-building important areas for learning. These lessons are reinforced through interschool tournaments, where mixed teams collaborate, further strengthening social bonds.

The project increased student engagement with rules and cooperative behaviours. Male students became more supportive of their female peers and the females had much gain in confidence because they were very reserved at first. One teacher observed:

> "I witnessed a remarkable shift in girls' attitudes. They became more willing to play with boys, despite concerns about negative comments. Surprisingly, even my top soccer players showed exceptional cooperation with the girls, driven by their shared love for the sport".

While another teacher pointed out a major transformation in the following response:

"A single student was a hold-out, stating that the project would not coincide with how he saw football. He often was on the fringes and would prefer to work by himself with two other students. However, as he fathomed the concepts behind the project, his point of view changed. He would even open up to a reporter when we were at the matches and I couldn't believe the depth of his insights".

In addition to the competition that took place at the final tournaments, students who came from different schools also made valuable friendships. Even their teachers witnessed how, indeed, the students had developed a spirit of friendly rivalry, team play, and mutual support, rather than enmity. One particular teacher had this to say about the tournament held in Evia:

"Teams weren't divided by school, gender, age, or grade. Instead, students played alongside unfamiliar peers, yet they collaborated seamlessly. They even helped clean up afterward—demonstrating an impressive ability to interact, coordinate, and build relationships across diverse backgrounds..."

5. Key insights and future directions

The impact assessment results highlight the degree to which the DIALECT3 project affected both PE teachers and students. Despite initial difficulties such as existing stereotypes, time constraints, and resistance to 'new' rules, the outcomes seem to be changing positively toward inclusivity, collaboration, and social awareness in an educational setting.

The intervention has particularly enhanced PE teachers' development by acquiring innovative tools to address diversity and inclusion regarding anti-discrimination. The football3 approach, despite time constraints plus structural constraints, suggested a pedagogical shift from competition to cooperation which in turn implies the necessity of curriculum readjustments to implement this pedagogic approach.

The project further encourages teamwork among students, respect, and social cohesion. Although, initially there was bias

based on gender and ability, it progressively improved leading to more inclusive participation. The use of mixed teams and mediator roles improved conflict resolution skills and strengthened students' sense of belonging. Notably, gender relations evolved, with females becoming more participative and males being more supportive. However, some challenges remain; PE teachers reported the persistence of ability-based exclusion, while the sustainability of the intervention relies on continued training, structured implementation, and institutional support.

The further potential of its long-term impact is through the expansion of the football3 methodology on primary education and integration into teacher training programmes, enhancing thus the intervention's long-term impact. Since, it has shown impact for the use of sport-based pedagogical interventions in teamwork, inclusivity and resilience, efforts should focus towards this direction ensuring lasting improvements in PE education.

References

Bailey, R. (2005). Evaluating the relationship between physical education, sport and social inclusion. *Educational Review*, *57*(1), 71-90. https://doi.org/10.1080/0013191042000274196

Council of the European Union (2018). *Promoting European values through sport*. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX%3A32018H0607%2801%29

Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology, 94*(Suppl.), S95–S120.

Genesis BL. (2024). *football3 handbook*. Genesis BL. https://genesisbl.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/football3-Handbook.pdf

Marqués-Sánchez, P., Benítez-Andrades, J.A., Calvo Sánchez, M.D. and Arias, N. (2021). The socialisation of the adolescent who carries out team sports: a transversal study of centrality with a social network analysis. *BMJ Open,* 11(3), e042773. doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2020-042773

Nasri, B., and Souid, I. (2024). The socializing role of the physical education teacher at school: what can we learn from the purposes of socialization? *Frontiers in Sociology*, 9, 1377496. https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2024.1377496

Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. Simon and Schuster.

Radicalization Awareness Network – RAN (December 2021). *Inclusion through sports*. Conclusion paper. RAN Youth & Education (Y&E), Radicalization Awareness Network, European Commission.

Ribeiro, E., Farias, C., and Mesquita, I. (2024). "The game changers": How equity-driven pedagogical scaffolding reduces participation disparities in physical education. *Education Sciences*, 14(10), 1077. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14101077

Sportanddev.org. (2022). *football3: An interactive learning tool, both on and off the pitch*. sportanddev.org. from https://www.sportanddev.org/latest/news/football3-interactive-learning-tool-both-and-pitch (Accessed on March 7, 2025).

Tsiganou, J. and Vezyrgianni, K. (2024). Impact Assessment Report, research project ADdressIng intersectionAL stEreotypes, building sChool communities of Tolerance through physical education (DIALECT3). EKKE.

UNESCO (2018). *The question of values education through sport*.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2016). *Preventing violent extremism through promotion inclusive development, tolerance and respect for diversity: a development response to addressing radicalization and violent extremism*.

BUILDING RESILIENT AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES THROUGH SPORTS: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE DIALECT PROJECTS

*Dimitra Kondyli**

1. Introduction

We live in a constantly evolving world where technological advancements and natural disasters shape the ways individuals act and react within broader social transformations. These societal challenges have an intergenerational impact, presenting significant research opportunities for academic and scientific communities while also highlighting the necessity of research-based evidence for policymakers. To foster a more cohesive and resilient society, it is essential to prioritize youth education, instilling universal humanitarian values such as resilience, inclusiveness, and social equality.

For the past five years, the National Centre for Social Research has participated in three research projects coordinated by ActionAid Hellas, aimed at contributing to a more resilient society for children and adolescents in Europe through sports. Today, the need for positive paradigms and best practices that promote a more sustainable and inclusive society —rooted in humanistic and democratic values— is imperative not only in Europe but worldwide.

In the sections that follow, we build on the experiences gained over the past five years and propose policy recommendations for relevant stakeholders. These include government ministries, social

* Director of Research, National Centre for Social Research.

actors operating at the intersection of formal and informal sports education, and the broader educational ecosystem, along with the family and societal structures that shape contemporary youth.

To support our analysis, we have drawn on a range of primary and secondary sources, including relevant literature, policy guidelines, and resources (documents, videos, and podcasts) from international organizations such as the EU, UN, and UNESCO. Additionally, we synthesize the outcomes of the three projects, focusing on policy recommendations and implications for a more coherent and inclusive European society. This synthesis incorporates insights from a round table discussion[1] involving representatives from educational authorities, ministries, academic institutions, physical education teachers, trainers specializing in the football3 methodology, and researchers associated with the projects. These recommendations reflect the experiences and perspectives of key stakeholders at the national level.

For a more holistic approach, we also integrate policy outcomes from the two previous project, project DIALECT3[2], which collected empirical data through a roundtable discussion on combating youth radicalization. This discussion emphasized the role of community-building football, combined with media and digital literacy skills, in fostering resilience among European youth. In addition to leveraging insights from prior research, we include the Roadmap for Public Authorities and Guidelines for the Policy Decision-Making Process,[3]—a public policy recommendation report that

---

1. The transferability workshop was held in Athens on 12th December 2024, within the frame of DIALECT3 "ADdressIng intersectionAL stEreotypes, building sChool communities of Tolerance through physical education", WP5: – Dissemination and Sustainability, spreading the message of "Football for ALL-Changing the Game" addressing racism and intersectional stereotypes at secondary schools through physical education"

2. DIALECT3 "Combating youth raDIcalizAtion: Building communities of toLEranCe combining fooTball with media and digital literacy" within the frame of WP5: Dissemination, Sustainability and Exploitation, spreading the message of enhancing adolescents' resilience to extremist views and attitudes related to sports, through media and digital literacy in the context of football3 activities. The Erasmus project (101050782 Grant Agreement) has been implemented during 2023-2024.

3. The first project entitled DIALECT1: Disrupting polarIsAtion: buiLding

offers guidance on building tolerant communities and disrupting polarization among European youth.

The conceptual axes that cross the three projects seek to promote and facilitate the building of all-inclusive tolerant communities, through football and more specifically through football3. This chapter draws on insights from three projects that applied the football3[4] methodology—an innovative approach that uses sports to promote inclusion, dialogue, and conflict resolution.

The first project DIALECT1 sought to use football values to empower young people in the fight against polarization, racism, and xenophobia in European countries. The second project, DIALECT2, placed greater emphasis on implementing training activities and awareness campaigns aimed at enhancing adolescents' resilience to extremist views and attitudes related to sports, integrating media and digital literacy within the context of football3 activities. The third and most recent project, DIALECT3[5], capitalized on previous experiences and applied them to the national context, addressing the untapped potential of physical education professionals as agents of inclusive education. It specifically aimed to combat structural racism and intolerance in lower secondary schools in Greece, adopting an intersectional approach to fostering a comprehensive strategy for preventing and countering discrimination.

Building on the policy research results of the three consecutive **DIALECT** projects, this chapter presents a unified set of policy recommendations. Our goal is to outline a strategic pathway toward a more inclusive, resilient, and socially cohesive environment for young people in Greece and across Europe.

2. From research to policy: the DIALECT approach to combating discrimination and fostering social inclusion"

The existing literature underscores the persistent challenge of political polarization in Europe, which fosters an environment conducive to racism, discrimination, and intolerance. Social exclusion significantly contributes to these phenomena, with populist movements playing a key role in amplifying intolerance, particularly among youth. These groups exploit both physical and digital spaces to recruit and radicalize individuals, creating a sense of belonging to far-right affiliates who might otherwise experience social isolation. Digital platforms, especially far-right blogs, have facilitated the dissemination of extremist ideologies by leveraging fear and violence, often intertwined with religious narratives.

Conversely, sports, particularly football, serve as both a medium for political activism and a vehicle for fostering diversity and equality. Educational interventions within the football ecosystem aim to raise awareness of discrimination and integrate anti-discriminatory practices into organizational structures. The DIALECT projects contribute to these efforts by offering policy recommendations based on empirical findings.

2.1. DIALECT1: Fostering inclusive communities through sports

The DIALECT1 project developed a roadmap with policy recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of public authorities in fostering inclusive and tolerant communities through football-

based initiatives. This roadmap serves as an initial framework for countering intolerance and xenophobia through sports. Sustainable change requires long-term commitment, clear political will, and institutional mobilization at the local government level.

A related initiative, UNESCO's "Roadmap against Racism and Discrimination," emphasizes the necessity of action-oriented policies to combat rising discriminatory trends. Aligning with this, DIALECT1 underscores the importance of education grounded in solidarity and social cohesion, coupled with cultural shifts that promote gender equality and acceptance of diversity from early childhood. The football3 methodology is highlighted as a tool for fostering cultural collaboration and tolerance.

Research findings indicate that public authorities and local governments play a crucial role in driving change. However, structural weaknesses hinder their ability to promote inclusivity effectively. The key challenges identified include:

> Bureaucratic barriers: State bureaucracy complicates and delays cooperative initiatives between local governments and institutions. The severity varies depending on a country's degree of centralization.
> Weak stakeholder networks: Insufficient and unsustainable networking among key stakeholders at local and national levels impedes the implementation of innovative methodologies like football3.
> Limited and unstable funding: A lack of sustained financial support for initiatives addressing intolerance and xenophobia — especially in sports— reflects low governmental prioritization and the absence of long-term social cohesion strategies.
> Community mistrust: Disadvantaged minority populations, often facing discrimination and poverty, exhibit higher levels of mistrust and lower engagement in community-driven initiatives.
> Shortage of public sports facilities: The scarcity of freely accessible sports facilities, particularly in Italy and Greece, significantly hinders youth development and the implementation of inclusion-driven sports programs.

2.2. DIALECT2: Countering extremism through digital literacy and sports

The rapid digitalization of European societies, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has introduced new challenges in addressing discrimination and intolerance. Digital literacy (Nascimbeni and Vosloo, 2019) is increasingly critical, yet significant gaps leave young people vulnerable to online radicalization and exposure to extremist narratives.

Radicalization leading to violent extremism remains a pressing concern recognized by the United Nations and the European Union. Extremist ideologies —whether religious, ethnic, or political— threaten social cohesion by promoting exclusionary beliefs. While security measures are necessary for counter-extremism, long-term prevention strategies require fostering inclusivity, tolerance, and digital resilience.

DIALECT2 explores the evolving nature of digital literacy, shifting from a purely technical focus to a holistic approach that integrates cultural awareness and critical thinking. The project aims to empower youth with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate digital landscapes critically and responsibly.

Through four targeted workshops, DIALECT2 contributed to the development of anti-radicalization practices and media literacy interventions for football academies, focusing on:

> Strengthening youth resilience against extremist ideologies with participatory action plans.
> Encouraging inclusive digital engagement and democratic participation.
> Addressing barriers to sports participation, especially for migrant and refugee youth.
> Creating media literacy strategies to counter stereotypes and discrimination in sports.

The role of digital influencers was also critically examined, recognizing their potential to both challenge and reinforce stereotypes. Collaborative initiatives between media outlets and sports organizations were proposed to combat racism and

discrimination through targeted media campaigns. The integration of inclusive methodologies such as football3 was identified as a promising approach, particularly in amateur sports settings.

2.3. DIALECT3: Embedding inclusion in education and the role of physical education

DIALECT3 builds upon the football3 methodology by embedding it within the Greek lower secondary school curriculum to promote inclusive education and address systemic racism. With an intersectional focus, DIALECT3 targets migrant, refugee, and Roma adolescents, fostering their inclusion through community-building strategies in school settings.

The project has trained physical education professionals and university students in diversity-sensitive educational practices, equipping them with the skills to implement football3 methodologies effectively. By establishing mixed-football teams in four regions of Greece, DIALECT3 has contributed to enhancing multicultural understanding and fostering a sense of belonging among adolescents aged 12-15.

The key outcomes that can serve for policy implications are summarized below:

> Football3 as a social integration tool: The project demonstrated the effectiveness of football3 in fostering key life skills, leadership, and intercultural dialogue.
> Empowering educators: Training programs for physical education professionals have enhanced their capacity to address discrimination and promote inclusivity.
> Promoting gender equality: football3 has been instrumental in encouraging equal participation and challenging gender stereotypes in sports.
> Advancing democratic participation: The project encourages youth engagement in community-building, reinforcing democratic values through sports.

The DIALECT projects collectively highlight the intersection between sports, digital literacy, and policy interventions in fostering

inclusive societies. While structural barriers persist, evidence-based policy recommendations emphasize the importance of sustained commitment from public authorities, educational institutions, and civil society actors. By fostering cross-sectoral collaboration and ensuring long-term financial investment in inclusion-driven initiatives, policymakers can enhance social cohesion and counter rising trends of discrimination and extremism in Europe.

3. Shaping inclusive policies: strategic recommendations from the dialect projects

The policy recommendations presented in this section build on insights gained from the three consecutive DIALECT projects — DIALECT1, DIALECT2, and DIALECT3. These initiatives have explored the integration of the Football3 methodology in fostering inclusion, particularly among vulnerable social groups such as children and adolescents, including adolescents of migrant background. The projects align with broader European Union (EU) strategies aimed at enhancing digital literacy, fostering critical thinking, and promoting democratic values. The EU's commitment to tackling intolerance and discrimination is reflected in initiatives such as the White Paper on the Future of Europe (2017), the Paris Declaration (2015), the EU Anti-Racism Action Plan (2020–2025), and the EU Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online and related UNESCO documents (2015). These frameworks provide also a foundation for the policy proposals developed through the DIALECT projects, emphasizing the role of education, sports, and digital resilience in fostering social inclusion.

3.1. Integrating Football3 into public policy: DIALECT1 Recommendations

The DIALECT1 project has developed structured policy guidelines to institutionalize Football3 as a tool for social inclusion. The recommendations focus on:

> Institutional Support and Bureaucratic Efficiency: Public authorities must streamline administrative procedures to facilitate the adoption of Football3, overcoming bureaucratic barriers that hinder implementation.

> Stakeholder Collaboration and Networking: Strengthening partnerships between local governments, educational institutions, and civil society organizations can enhance the visibility and impact of Football3.

> Integration into School Curricula: Football3 should be incorporated into school education as a pedagogical tool to promote tolerance and intercultural dialogue.

> Monitoring and Evaluation: A systematic framework is needed to assess the impact of Football3 on social cohesion and diversity.

> Capacity Building: Public authorities should invest in training teachers, civil servants, and community leaders to implement Football3 effectively.

> Trust-Building Measures: Confidence-building initiatives should be introduced to foster trust between local institutions and communities, particularly among disadvantaged groups.

> Sustainable Funding: Long-term financial support must be secured to ensure the sustainability of Football3 initiatives.

By addressing these key areas, Football3 can be institutionalized as a mechanism for fostering inclusive communities through sports-driven social interventions.

3.2. Strengthening media literacy and digital resilience: DIALECT2 recommendations

The DIALECT2 project highlights the role of media literacy in countering stereotypes and promoting inclusivity in sports. The key policy recommendations include:

> Integration of Media Literacy in Education: Digital literacy should be embedded in school curricula to equip young people with critical thinking skills to navigate online spaces responsibly.

> Promotion of Positive Media Narratives: Public authorities should incentivize media outlets to highlight success stories that showcase sports as a driver of social inclusion.
> Support for Trainers and Coaches: Coaches and sports mediators should receive specialized training in inclusive methodologies and digital literacy.
> Recognition of Sports as a Universal Right: Policies should formalize equal access to sports opportunities for all social groups.
> Influencer Engagement: Adolescents should be educated about the impact of social media influencers on sports narratives and digital culture.
> Cross-Sector Partnerships: Synergies between public and private actors can enhance anti-radicalization efforts and promote inclusive digital practices.
> Awareness Campaigns on Digital Literacy: Targeted initiatives should raise awareness among adolescents about the importance of digital literacy and media consumption.
> Transnational Cooperation and Sporting Events: Cross-border collaborations should leverage football as a platform for fostering unity and diversity.

These measures aim to create a media landscape that supports diversity, combats discrimination, and fosters an inclusive sports culture.

3.3. Institutionalizing inclusion in physical education: DIALECT3 Recommendations

DIALECT3 focuses on embedding inclusion-oriented methodologies within the Greek physical education curriculum. The policy recommendations include:

> Prioritizing Values and Competencies: Physical education should emphasize respect, tolerance, and equity alongside practical sports skills.
> Recognizing PE as a Pillar of Inclusion: Physical education

should be elevated in educational policies as a primary vehicle for fostering social inclusion.

> Leveraging Best Practices: Successful initiatives, such as training students in Football3, should be expanded and adapted to different local contexts.
> Extending PE Hours and Cross-Disciplinary Approaches: Schools should allocate more time for PE activities and integrate them with subjects like social studies and arts.
> Addressing Gender Inequalities: Equal access to sports facilities and resources must be ensured for all students, regardless of gender.
> Infrastructure Investments: Public school sports infrastructure should be modernized, particularly in underserved areas.
> Early Interventions: Inclusive sports programs should be introduced at the primary education level to instill values of teamwork and diversity from an early age.
> Teacher Training and Professional Development: PE teachers should receive continuous training on diversity-sensitive education.
> Encouraging Non-Verbal Communication in Sports: Activities that foster collaboration and inclusivity should be integrated into PE programs.
> Supporting Refugee Students: Special initiatives should ensure that refugee children have access to sports programs that aid their social integration.
> Strengthening School-Community Partnerships: Local organizations, parents, and schools should collaborate on inclusive sports initiatives.

By institutionalizing inclusive sports education, DIALECT3 contributes to shaping a more equitable and diverse learning environment.

Policy recommendations raised from DIALECT projects

The DIALECT projects collectively emphasize the role of education, sports, and digital literacy in fostering inclusive societies. The overarching policy recommendations include:

> Embedding inclusion in education: Schools should incorporate sports and digital literacy as fundamental tools for social cohesion.
> Strengthening institutional support: Governments and local authorities should facilitate the adoption of inclusive methodologies through policy frameworks.
> Enhancing collaboration across sectors: Synergies between public institutions, civil society, and private stakeholders can drive impactful initiatives.
> Securing long-term funding: Sustained financial investment is essential to support inclusion-driven policies in education and sports.
> Encouraging Media literacy and positive narratives: Digital platforms should be leveraged to counteract discriminatory content and promote social inclusion.

4. Concluding remarks

Physical education and digital literacy are powerful instruments for fostering social inclusion and resilience. However, their full potential remains constrained by structural barriers, lack of teacher training, and insufficient intersectoral collaboration. Addressing these challenges through targeted interventions can unlock their transformative impact on education and community cohesion.

While improving infrastructure and accessibility is essential, combating racism and intersectional discrimination within education systems requires a deeper cultural shift. Sports, particularly through methodologies like Football3, provide a unique opportunity to challenge prejudices and foster mutual respect among young people.

Higher education institutions also have a role to play in advancing inclusive policies by integrating diversity-sensitive curricula and training future educators in equity-focused methodologies. The expansion of the DIALECT3 philosophy into teacher training programs can contribute to a long-term shift in how inclusion is embedded in school and community settings.

The adoption of the new National Physical Education Curriculum in Greece, with its emphasis on inclusivity, represents a step in the right direction. However, effective implementation will require ongoing professional development for PE teachers, systematic dissemination of information, and structured collaboration between families, schools, and governmental institutions.

By fostering a culture of inclusivity and promoting policies that support tolerance and equity, physical education can serve as a key driver of social cohesion. Investing in well-structured, inclusion-focused sports programs ensures that future generations grow up with the values of respect, diversity, and active citizenship —laying the foundation for a more resilient and united society.

References

European Commission (2020). A Union of equality: EU anti-racism action plan 2020-2025. available at: https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/beb25da4-e6b9-459e-89f7cdbd3a8f0c8_en?filename=a_union_of_equality_eu_action_plan_against_racism_2020_-2025_en.pdf

European Commission (2017). *White Paper on the Future of Europe: Reflections and scenarios for the EU27 by 2025.* COM(2017)2025 of 1 March 2017. https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/b2e60d06-37c6-4943-820f-d82ec197d966_en?filename=white_paper_on_the_future_of_europe_en.pdf

European Commission /EACEA/Eurydice, 2016. *Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education:* Overview of education policy developments in Europe following the Paris Declaration of 17 March 2015. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. doi: 10.2797/396908

Nascimbeni F. and Vosloo St., (2019). *Digital literacy for children: Exploring definitions and frameworks* (Scoping Paper No. 01). United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). New York. doi: 10.13140/RG.2.2.33394.94407

UNESCO ROADMAP AGAINST RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION (2022). https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000380821

UNESCO (2015). *UNESCO's role in promoting education as a tool to prevent violent extremism.* (Decision 197EX/46). available at Decisions adopted by the Executive Board at its 197th session - UNESCO Digital Library

UNESCO (2015). *UNESCO's role in promoting education as a tool to prevent violent extremism.* (Decision 197 EX/Decision 46) Decisions adopted by the Executive Board at its 197th session - UNESCO Digital Library

Digital sources

EU Portal url: https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/diversity
https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combatting-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/eu-anti-racism-action-plan-2020-2025_en
https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/digital-education/action-plan
https://youth.europa.eu/strategy_en

EPILOGUE AND BEYOND.
HORIZONS YET TO BE EXPLORED

Joanna Tsiganou*, Dimitra Kondyli**

As the international community grapples with growing social fragmentation, democratic backsliding, protracted conflicts, climate crises, forced populations' displacement, and rising online and offline hate speech, the importance of the DIALECT projects possesses a new urgency.

As research results of all DIALECT projects have shown, the fighting of structural racism and intolerance may be accomplished also through integrating an already tested *"community-building through football3"* methodology not only in local community level but mainly in the physical education curriculum. More specifically, as DIALECT3 project has shown, indeed, under the lens of intersectionality the implementation of innovative tools such as the football3 methodology in schools has contributed to the search for *"a more comprehensive and intersectional approach to prevent and fight against intolerance, racism, and discrimination"*. DIALECT2 has also indicated that tackling racism as part of intersectional stereotypes in schools is in accord to supporting the inclusion of migrant, refugee, and Roma adolescents, boys, and girls promoting the formation of school communities of tolerance through the physical education curriculum.

Summing up all research data, of all DIALECT projects, results are more than optimistic considering youths empowerment to combating

---
* Director of Research, National Centre for Social Research.
** Director of Research, National Centre for Social Research.

racism, hate intolerance on and off line and aspects of discrimination at community level. Research data have shown that behavioral changes emerge with a focus on aspects of *resilience* and particularly the dimension of *control* to overcome adverse conditions, while a noticeable increase in the level of *engagement* and interest, has been observed, as well as in the adherence to the established rules and values. Also, behavioral changes were observed in regards to stances towards fairness and respect to norms and *fair play;* the male youths have been observed to be more cooperative and supportive towards their female counterparts, and the girls have been observed to have a newfound confidence in their abilities, in contrast to their previous reluctance. Such research findings prove to be very important, also, since participating adolescents may have realized the purpose of football - through the implementation of football3 - is to develop a mutual understanding, to bond, to connect, to interact with others, rather than scoring to win the game.

Research data have also shown that as far as social inclusion is concerned, data showed an impact on aspects such as the *sense of belonging, self-efficacy and self-esteem* to participating adolescents. Data also suggest that through the participatory approach promoted by football3 methodology, not only improved youths' understanding of fairness and inclusion, but also equipped them with skills that transcended the physical education school courses such as teamwork and collaboration over individual differences, further reinforcing the importance of equality and inclusion.

The above results indicated that the good practice of football3 methodology implementation through school curricula should be continued and reinforced. Therefore the DIALECT team has currently embarked upon a fourth DIALECT project[1] which building on the robust legacy of the previous DIALECT projects turns attention to early childhood as a strategic and transformative entry point for countering polarization and fostering a culture of inclusion, mutual respect, and civic responsibility. In an era where youth are increasingly

exposed to divisive narratives and extremist ideologies—often amplified through digital media—early and holistic interventions become critical.

Anchored in proven methodologies such as football3, participatory learning, and digital and media literacy, DIALECT4 seeks to empower children with the social and emotional tools needed to navigate diversity, resist manipulation, and build democratic communities from the ground up. The project aligns with global agendas such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (particularly SDG4 on quality education and SDG16 on peace, justice, and strong institutions), and echoes UNESCO's call for intercultural competence and resilience in education systems. By embedding values of tolerance, cooperation, and fairness at an early age, DIALECT4 not only contributes to national cohesion but also to a broader transnational effort to safeguard democratic values and human rights. It affirms that in turbulent times, the most effective form of resistance to division is not reactive, but proactive: to educate, connect, and empower the next generation from the very beginning.

The DIALECT3 project is based on the idea that physical education and sport can be used as a vehicle to promote the social inclusion of marginalized populations, and to contribute towards a better understanding among communities. Tackling racism as part of intersectional stereotypes in schools, the project seeks to support the inclusion of immigrant, refugee and Roma adolescent students, boys and girls, by promoting the creation of school communities of tolerance through the physical education curriculum. DIALECT3 also seeks to harness the potential of physical education teachers to support inclusive education, and combat racism and intolerance in secondary schools (high schools) in Greece. The goal is to integrate in the curriculum of physical education in high school the already tested "football3" methodology that contributes to an integrated and cross-sectoral approach for preventing and combating intolerance, racism, and discrimination.

Football3 targets to promoting key life skills and empower youth to become leaders as well as to providing both players and mediators with knowledge and life skills, are enhanced. It is aiming not only to increased willingness to include others, regardless of gender, ability, age or background, increased communication, decision-making and conflict-mediation skills, improved respect for women and girls, and appreciation of gender equality, enhanced sense of fair play, responsibility and accountability, increased desire to become a role model for others and increased participation in the community but also to increased social participation. It is also aiming to advance creative skills of building interaction, engagement and participation in the economic, social and cultural aspects of society through sports, promoting democratic participation, fundamental rights and intercultural dialogue.

ISBN 978-960-6834-55-4

9 789606 834554

act!onaid
για έναν κόσμο πιο δίκαιο

EK
KE
ΕΘΝΙΚΟ ΚΕΝΤΡΟ
ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΚΩΝ ΕΡΕΥΝΩΝ

ΑΡΙΣΤΟΤΕΛΕΙΟ
ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ
ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΗΣ

Funded by
the European Union