

PREFACE

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 DIALECT2² 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. Tsevereni, 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: “Addressing 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

communities of Tolerance through physical education" (2022-24) was co-financed by the EU (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, EU GRANT AGREEMENT, Project 101084968 — DIALECT3 — CERV-2022 EQUAL). The project was coordinated by ACTION AID HELLAS (AAH), while the National Centre for Social Research (EKKE) together with the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH) - Department of Physical Education were the project's partners. Participants also included IEP (INSTITOUTO EKPEDEFTIKIS POLITIKIS - Institute of Educational Policy) and MINISTRY OF MIGRATION. To see more about DIALECT3 Project, <https://dialectproject.eu/dialect-3/project/>. The EKKE research team was comprised by: J. Tsiganou, N. Spyropoulou (Research Co-ordinators), and M. Tsevereni, Ch. Varouxli, K. Vezyrgianni (Members of EKKE's Research Team) along with the external research associates (E. Tsouparopoulou, D. Kalabaliki, Ch. Botsou, I. Kourou, A. Daskalaki, M. Malainou).

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 Conflict 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 playground. *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 *aspects of combating hate intolerance by the adolescents it was observed the development 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 football3 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. Indicatively, 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 Cyberspace*, 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://www.digitalcenter.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 skills²³ 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 skills, new

UNESCO Open Access Repository <http://www.unesco.org/open-access/terms-use-ccbysaen>. 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-use-ccbysaen>. 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 surveys³⁸ 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 project⁴⁰ 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.dqinstitute.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

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.