

Rise➤➤

Roma Inclusion through Sport in Europe

Handbook



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INTRODUCTION

THE PARTNERS OF THE PROJECT ARE:

Budapest Association for International Sports (Hungary)

TAKT (North Macedonia)

Champions Factory (Bulgaria)

ADEL (Slovakia)

Scout Society Association (Romania)

The RISE (Roma Inclusion through Sport in Europe) consortium is composed of carefully selected partner organizations that also work with young people from disadvantaged or fewer opportunities backgrounds. Partner organizations have already developed and implemented projects targeting youth with fewer opportunities on several topics, including social inclusion through sports and sports-based education. Accordingly, all of the organizations address issues relevant to social inclusion through sports and the project is mutually beneficial for all partners as it aims to build the capacity of these organizations, exchange good practices concerning a specific target group (Roma young people) who are largely present in all partner countries. The number of Roma people in most of the partner countries is above 500.000 people¹ while in North Macedonia their number is around 80.000² (non-official estimates, romnews.com) which is a significant portion of total population.

The RISE is a joint initiative of European sport and civil society organizations to tackle discrimination, social exclusion, and marginalization of Roma youngsters through exchanging good practices, capacity building activities, and the development and implementation of sport-based educational activities. The key objective of the project is to promote social inclusion, equal opportunities, and awareness of disadvantaged situations of the Roma minority through sport-based education activities. Therefore, RISE is an 18-month long Small Collaborative Partnership framed under the Erasmus+ Sport priority - encouraging social inclusion and equal opportunities in and through sports.

RISE is addressing the needs of underprivileged young EU citizens and organizations dealing with this target group. Complementary, the project also addresses the promotion of principles related to Health-Enhancing Physical Activity especially by supporting the implementation of the EU Physical Activity Guidelines.

¹ Roma Population on the Peripheries of the Visegrad Countries: Spatial Trends and Social Challenges,” ResearchGate, accessed September 7, 2020, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328841130_Roma_population_on_the_peripheries_of_the_visegrad_countries_spatial_trends_and_social_challenges.

² “The Only District in Europe Where Roma Are the Majority: A Day in Šuto Orizari | Euronews,” accessed September 7, 2020, <https://www.euronews.com/2018/07/05/only-district-in-europe-roma-are-majority>.

GENERAL GOALS OF THE RISE PROJECT

1. To promote social inclusion, equal opportunities, and sport-based education for underprivileged (especially Roma) young people, and raise awareness of the importance of health-enhancing physical activity through innovative cross-sectoral cooperation;
2. To empower and build the capacity of sport clubs, youth organizations, educational institutions to develop and deliver sport-based educational activities targeting underprivileged populations, especially Roma youngsters;
3. To collect, classify and promote European good practices in the field of social inclusion through sport and to develop a sport-based educational methodology to be introduced in an accessible handbook;
4. To up-skill trainers, coaches, youth leaders, and NGO staff with the necessary knowledge to realize sport-based educational interventions to underprivileged target groups, such as Roma youngsters.

CONTEXT

For more than a thousand years, Roma people have been an integral part of European civilization. Today, with an estimated population of 10-12 million in Europe, approximately six million of whom live in the EU, Roma people are the biggest ethnic minority in Europe. The available evidence suggests that many Roma live in overwhelmingly poor conditions on the margins of society, and face extreme levels of social exclusion. The EU's Fundamental Rights Agency³ surveys undertaken recently also found that prejudice, intolerance, and discrimination affect a large proportion of Roma living in the member states, most of whom are EU citizens. In recent years the situation of Roma has become an important issue on the agenda of the European Union, and in many of its member countries, but especially Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia, and Croatia.

As a result of low socioeconomic status and social exclusion, Roma people tend to participate less in non-organized and organized sport activities. Wide-spread discrimination, racism, and intolerance pose considerable obstacles for younger and older Roma generations alike to access sport clubs and sport facilities in their countries. According to the available data, the general health status of the European Roma population is far behind the average European population. Despite these circumstances, sport (especially football and martial arts) as a low-threshold social activity have always been attractive to young Roma people and several initiatives were aiming to use sport as a tool for their inclusion and education. Sport Plus and Plus Sport social development programs often aim to develop the skills and competencies of disadvantaged Roma youngsters who usually live in segregated settlements.

³. (Refworld | European Union: European Agency for Fundamental Rights)

INCLUSION THROUGH SPORTS

The significance of the sport and its role in social changes has been taking the attention of many organizations within societies. Besides being a tool for health and personal development, sport has been proven to be an effective tool for inclusion. Also, studies have shown that attending various sport events boosts the participant's mental health by reducing anxiety and depression which is a common phenomenon, especially among the excluded social groups.⁴ Regarding inclusivity, sports have affected the members of marginalized groups positively by giving them a sense of belonging, boosting confidence, helping them socialize, and even increasing their chances of employability and continuing with their education.⁵

Despite its inclusive nature, sport “in itself” is not able to achieve sustainable social change and sport as a tool for inclusion has limitations. The effective delivery of sport-based interventions depends on a number of factors, while it's also worth applying a basic distinction between ‘Plus Sport’ and ‘Sport Plus’ initiatives based on Coalter and Taylor's categorization (2010).⁶ Plus sport initiatives are led by social development organizations (e.g. education-focused NGOs) dealing with particular social issues. Sports activities are added to their programs as a way of achieving their broader social objectives. Sport Plus activities are led by organizations whose core activity is sport, where sport is used and adapted in various ways to achieve certain social development objectives.⁷

Sport-based educational interventions have given the possibility to approach tackling social issues within marginalized groups through sports. Within the context of RISE, members of Roma communities are among the many that are negatively affected within their societies due to their ethnic belonging. Hence, in this publication, key elements will be described through collected working practices from the partnering countries (Bulgaria, Hungary, North-Macedonia, Romania, and Slovakia). The goal is to inspire stakeholders within the fields of sports, education and youth to support and promote all-inclusive participation of deprived groups such as the Roma.

⁴ Laura Kelly, “‘Social Inclusion’ through Sports-Based Interventions?,” *Critical Social Policy* 31, no. 1 (February 2011): 126–50, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261018310385442>.

⁵ James Skinner, Dwight H. Zakus, and Jacqui Cowell, “Development through Sport: Building Social Capital in Disadvantaged Communities,” *Sport Management Review* 11, no. 3 (November 2008): 253–75, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1441-3523\(08\)70112-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1441-3523(08)70112-8).

⁶ Coalter, F. and Taylor, J. (2010) Sport-for-development impact study, A research initiative funded by Comic Relief and UK Sport and managed by International Development through Sport.

⁷ ECORYS (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. Available at: https://kics.sport.vlaanderen/Sporteneu/Documents/161101_EC_Mapping_of_good_practices_relating_to_social_inclusion£_of_migrants_through_sport.pdf

WORKING PRACTICES

The following section consists of the working practices collected by the RISE partners. The tables show the required details regarding the institutions and their on-going projects regarding Roma youth and sports that give an insight into the processes and important developments for successful implementation of inclusivity through sports. In the second part of the section, the overlapping patterns, challenges, and lessons learned from all the collected data are presented.

RISE GOOD PRACTICE #1

Name: The Sport Centre of the National Roma Council
Country: Hungary



Background of the initiative

The Sport Centre of the National Roma Council is a young and independent institution. It was established in May 2017 having the main seat in Budapest, but delivering activities in some of the most disadvantaged regions of Hungary. The Sport Centre serves as a “complementary”, supporting institution providing organizational, management and financial guidance to grassroots and competitive sport programs that involve Roma youngsters. The main idea of the center is to change the perception of Roma population through supporting role model Roma athletes and getting them to the highest possible sport competitions (e.g. Olympics). According to the director of the Centre, sport and physical activity are ultimate way to fight against the discrimination of Roma youngsters and the Roma population in general. Although there is a clear focus on supporting the most talented athletes, the Centre supports leisure/ grassroots sports activities too.

Main roles and responsibilities of the Centre:

- Organization of training camps, management of sports facilities,
- Organization, support and management of competitive sports activities, youth and educational activities and mentoring young Roma,
- Recognition of sporting achievements, providing grants and scholarships to talented Roma athletes,
- Delivering leisure and recreational sport activities and awareness-raising campaigns.

Main roles and responsibilities of the Centre:

Sports utilized and soft skills developed?

The Centre offers multi-sport activities. Grants aim to support talented Roma athletes in all sporting disciplines. So far, boxing and kick-boxing are the most popular disciplines, however, there are many Roma youngsters playing football as well. For now, grants are only available for talented athletes who take part in competitive sport activities.

Soft skills developed through sport-based activities and training: perseverance, discipline, modesty and respect of rules.

Categorization

Sport Plus

Impact/ Outcome

Since the Centre was established only in 2017, the director could not mention significant outcomes of their activities, however, he came up with several plans to develop the operations and activities of the institution. He spoke more broadly about the impact of sport on socially disadvantaged youngsters and brought up his example: taking part in boxing allowed him to get out of his comfort zone and attend championships and meet people. Following his boxing career, he continued as a coach and in 2017 he was appointed to lead the Sports Centre. He strongly believes that sport practice equips young Roma with the necessary skills to improve their life circumstances and to find meaningful occupations.

Cooperation and Partners

The Sport Centre intends to cooperate with the following entities:

- National, regional and local sport federations
- Sport clubs with high Roma participation

Funding partners, donors:

The majority of funding comes from the National Roma Council; however, the Centre is also active in applying for different grants offered by Ministries. According to the director of the Centre, they wish to involve the private sector in financing their activities, however, it is a great challenge.

Challenges and opportunities

Currently, the biggest challenge the Sport Centre is facing is the global pandemic. In March 2020, they shut down all sporting activities and only plan to relaunch them after the national regulations will allow them to do so.

Other key challenges involve finding the appropriate coaches who have the proper skills and competencies to work with youngsters from disadvantaged backgrounds. There is a high dropout rate of Roma youngsters and they also tend to be less mobile when it comes to attending training in another village. Therefore, the Centre wishes to hire coaches who have the willingness to reach youngsters in their settlements.

Concerning the development opportunities and directions the director mentioned the following points:

Challenges and opportunities

- there is a need for creating a “sports academy” system for Roma youngsters who could spend the majority of their time in the academy, practicing sports and engaging in learning activities,
- launching training and education for sport coaches,
- launching a public employment program that provides opportunities for these sport coaches in disadvantaged regions in Hungary.

Lessons learned

There is a need for a holistic approach to empower young Roma. Sport is an important element of this approach; however, education is the more important part. Although the Sports Centre aims to create a shift in the perception of Roma through the sporting success of Roma athletes, sport is much more than mere athletic performance. Sport can pass a lot of values to youngsters including discipline, perseverance, and respect of rules. Participation in sport can support disadvantaged children to develop their social network, break out from their isolated environments and show a life perspective. Even if youngsters do not become athletes, sport participation can give them a great amount of motivation to improve their living conditions.

RISE GOOD PRACTICE #2

Name: Élményakadémia (Academy of Experience)
public benefit organization

Country: Hungary



Background of the initiative

“Tőlünk Nektek” (From Us to You) program works with socially disadvantaged young people (mostly 13-20 years old Roma youth living in state-care institutions and Roma segregations, usually not all of the participants come from the same location). The program uses peer-based, non-formal and informal education as their main method.

The aim is to create “secure” and supportive frameworks for competence development, socialization. Participants come from childcare institutions, mainly Roma background. Participants create a volunteering project - kind of self-empowerment 3-day camp in order to create bonding, socializing amongst peers, preferably over 13 years to take part (cognitive abilities)

Structure of their program:

Each occasion lasts from 3 to 5 days. It involves sleepovers to create the required atmosphere and get used to the new camp-like structure. Certain days are dedicated to planning the places they want to visit and activities they want to do. The program also includes a field visit.

Sports utilized and soft skills developed?

Basic sports utilized that can also involve girls. These sports are “catch me if you can”, “capture the flag”, etc. They also have adventure-park-like activities - overcoming physical obstacles.

Football and dance are the most popular amongst these youngsters - they can show off their skills and abilities to others. They usually implement low-threshold activities and use sports as a platform to meet each other, introduce themselves and share social norms.

Categorization

Sport Plus

Impact / Outcome

Success can be measured by returning participants (the most important indicator).

Success in the realization of the volunteering programs.

Difficulties in measuring the outcomes as there are a number of variables in their family life.

Qualitative, interview-based measuring of impact, surveys are hard to fulfill. They also observe the participants during the program -

Impact / Outcome

and record small changes in behavior, skills, etc.

Recording interviews with children: easy questions in order to improve the content of the trainings. Small groups, focus group interviews. A method they use is to ask their participants that if they were the program coordinators, and they were the ones who write the project application, what would they write differently.

One of the key outcomes is the youth groups created through the camps. (Some participants stayed connected with the organization and now they applied - with the mentorship of the organization - to implement solidarity projects by themselves.)

Some of the participants even became employed by the organization later on as program facilitators.

Cooperation / Partners

Important to work with local social workers, the “Máltai Szere-tetszolgálat” (Nationwide-charity), Bagázs (NGO), state-care institutions

Funding: mainly public and private calls.

They apply for funds with almost the same program - however always developing it according to the experiences - and receive funds from different sponsors. Once the organization was able to finance the program themselves.

Challenges and opportunities

Hard to organize “mixed” camps with participants from Roma and non-Roma backgrounds.

Inclusion and outreach: Convince disadvantaged youngsters to take part in the camps.

It is appreciated if girls participate, but due to family reasons, it's more difficult to involve them.

Lessons learned

Sport can support those youngsters who struggle with verbal communication.

Physical Activity is a really important factor in their lives.

Trust: by trusting in the participants that they will come out with a solution and they will learn from their own mistake and not to take over the lead fully from them - it leads to successful project implication.

It means a lot for the participants that they create connections with people outside of their home location (segregation or institution).

The attitude is very important: that the participants are not the ones who receive humanitarian help, but they are empowered by the fact that they are the ones who do volunteer work and help others in need.

RISE GOOD PRACTICE #3

Name: Kacsakő Élménytábor (Duck Pebble Adventure Camp)

Country: Hungary



Background of the initiative

The “Kacsakő Élménytábor” (Duck Pebble Adventure Camp) initiative started in 2018. It came out of the idea to organize a one-week-long summer camp for underprivileged kids where they can come together and build a community together. The background of the target group is very diverse: coming from urban and rural areas, different class groups, and different ethnicities. The initiative has two settings: summer camp and team building sessions.

Sports utilized and soft skills developed?

It is a multi-sport initiative. The sports that were used during their activities were: fair play sports such as ultimate frisbee, quidditch, rugby, capture the flag. The choice of the sports was due to not having a court but rather only an open field. The sports also give the possibility to the kids to come up with their own rules. This process plays a crucial role when it comes to team-building among these kids. Soft skills developed through these sports:

- confidence,
- gaining a proactive mentality,
- speaking up for themselves.

Hard skills:

- improving employability by teaching them the importance of staying longer at school.

Categorization

Sport Plus

(However, due to involving additional tools in the project developments, the initiative can be perceived as a mixture of both Sport Plus and Plus Sport).

Impact / Outcome

To be able to identify the outcomes of their activities sociometric measurements were conducted throughout the settings where the kids had to answer 5 questions in the beginning (after the first day) and in the end of the summer camps/team building session (in the end of the week).

Impact / Outcome

The initiative could see that there was a difference in the kids' behaviors by having more positive attitudes towards the others. Empathy was developed among the kids towards the underprivileged ones.

Intercultural skills were improved, too. This was mainly towards the kids coming from different ethnic groups.

One of the important outcomes was mentioned to be social integration by giving different examples of how these kids had no problems building friendships after the summer camp/team building sessions in their daily lives.

Cooperation / Partners

The organization has a partner as a hosting organization, mainly helping them with funding applications and bureaucracy.

Funding partner:

- European Solidarity Corps
- Two Tailed Dog Party
- Crowdfunding
- Sponsorship (on-going process)

Challenges and opportunities

According to the interviewee their biggest challenges were:

- Handling and organizing the kids during the camp.
- Keeping out of bullying was a very common phenomenon among the kids.

It was managed by coming up with stricter rules.

Opportunities:

- To start a social enterprise and an after-school program.
- An alternative school is one of the main and big goals for the future.

Lessons learned

Through the initiative, they could conclude that Inclusive education works.

In addition to that, sport was perceived as the most effective tools since it was a guarantee that all the kids wanted to participate. Everyone could actively participate. The second most useful tool was the drama sessions.

Anything else

Giving out love to Roma kids had a very big influence.

The Roma kids told that the main thing they took with themselves from the camp and team-building session was love.

Knowing your target group beforehand is very important.

RISE GOOD PRACTICE #4

Name: Policy Center for Roma and Minorities

Country: Romania



Background of the initiative

Policy Center for Roma and Minorities (PCRM) is a non-governmental, non-profit organization founded in 2008 in Romania, which acts to empower Roma and other ethnic minorities so that they become active citizens of the society they live in and to stimulate the majority to actively participate in the social inclusion process.

Since 2008, PCRM has supported the Roma community either through direct intervention (especially through sport activities and alternative education programs for Roma and non-Roma children in poor communities), or by creating opportunities for dialogue and sensitization of public opinion on topics such as diversity vs. discrimination, respect vs. racism, and social inclusion vs. exclusion.

In 2010, PCRM initiated the Alternative Education Club, a comprehensive educational program dedicated to the Roma and non-Roma children in one of the most marginalized areas of Bucharest. The main innovative aspect of the project is the use of sports as a gateway to traditional education activities and ultimately, a better future.

In the past 10 years, more than 400 Roma and non-Roma children from marginalized areas of Bucharest benefited from the program and 50% of them were also actively engaged in the football empowerment program. The ages of the children are between 6 and 16.

PCRM chose this age range having in mind the most blatant indicator of potential disengagement in the community - the school dropout rate.

Sports utilized and soft skills developed?

Although the program started with basketball, it was obvious from an early beginning that the children in the community had an interest in football more than any other sport. Thus, the basketball sessions transformed into football sessions - every Saturday in the schoolyard. Eventually, as the relationship with the children grew, the program started redirecting them to attending the Alternative Education Club. Back then, a lot of the children coming to football had never been enrolled in school or had dropped out early on. Through the Alternative Education Club, they found a way back to school. Our sports portfolio was extended to street dance and volleyball.

<p>Sports utilized and soft skills developed?</p>	<p>The context was a wonderful way of keeping the children off the streets and away from drug consumption/trafficking which is a real and visible threat in the community.</p> <p>The NGO focused on developing the following skills: goal seeing, adaptability, self-confidence, willingness to learn, self- motivation, concentration, communication, reliability, self-control, social sensitivity, teamwork, conflict resolution, decision making, problem-solving, resilience, self-organization, self-reflection.</p>
<p>Categorization</p>	<p>Sport Plus</p>
<p>Impact / Outcome</p>	<p>Employability and social integration are strongly connected to several life skills that are looked to improve through the program (seeing goals, being adaptable, having the willingness to learn new things, being able to focus, being able to communicate efficiently, even with people who you don't like, being reliable, practicing self-control, social sensitivity, teamwork, etc.).</p> <p>Most people living in Ferentari are challenged by bureaucracy, having little to no education, sometimes being unable to read and write, these left them out of the loop altogether. The Alternative Education Club, The Sports Program, and The Mothers Club (a program addressed to parents in the community) are aimed at helping address these issues.</p> <p>In addition, during this last year, a series of workshops of vocational counseling addressed particularly to children enrolled in the sports programs were added.</p>
<p>Cooperation / Partners</p>	<p>Yes, here we are working with international partners and also with national ones. We have Streetworldfootball, Fedex, Uipath Foundation, Terres des Hommes, FRF and others.</p>
<p>Challenges and opportunities</p>	<p>Having worked in the community since 2010, The Alternative Education Club and the programs developed by Policy Center for Roma and Minorities had gained a lot of visibility outside of the community and a lot of trust inside the community. For several years, one of the programs, The Mothers' Club was battling authorities and helping adults have a voice in decision making on a local level. In addition to this, Valeriu Nicolae had been building a large volunteer community, which he had mobilized to cover basic needs for many families in the community. We believe this has been viewed as a threat by the political class.</p>

Challenges and opportunities

Having worked in the community since 2010, The Alternative Education Club and the programs developed by Policy Center for Roma and Minorities had gained a lot of visibility outside of the community and a lot of trust inside the community. For several years, one of the programs, The Mothers' Club was battling authorities and helping adults have a voice in decision making on a local level. In addition to this, Valeriu Nicolae had been building a large volunteer community, which he had mobilized to cover basic needs for many families in the community. We believe this has been viewed as a threat by the political class.

In the autumn of 2017, amid a political fight and with no proper justification, the NGO was forced to leave both schools where they were working to make room for a project with public funding, run by local authorities exclusively in the school they had developed programs for. This was both a major setback and a great opportunity.

After a long search for a new space and a lot of effort put into redirecting funds, they set up a new space for the Alternative Education Club. The change had turned into a great opportunity. The new space allowed work with children from all over the community and its compartmentalization allowed for classes to happen simultaneously with several groups of children. In schools, there were limitations regarding hours, which no longer applied in the new space.

However, together with the space that was created in schools, they lost access to the schoolyards - the spaces we were using to meet children at weekends. Although the training and meeting were ongoing with the children, their activities had been limited by the availability of a rented football pitch and the availability of responsible adults - needed to accompany the teens from one part of the city to another. Limitations in time and space have been difficult. The NGO is currently working with Valeriu Nicolae and Casa Buna in creating a space for football practice inside the community.

Lessons learned

Children can and want to change their community for the better.

Anything else

People need to understand that the challenges encountered while working with Roma youngsters are the same as working with youngsters from poor and vulnerable environments despite their ethnicity. Sport is a very good opportunity for all people to find their path in life and gain self confidence and to be able to create their future.

RISE GOOD PRACTICE #5

Name: Sportive School Club (Clubul Sportive Scolar)

Country: Romania



Background of the initiative

The NGO had agreed with the management of the Gymnasium School Nr. 161, from Bucharest - district 6, to develop and start the program named “Health through Sport” to raise awareness among the local community that sport and physical activities are beneficial for a healthy and active lifestyle.

At the same time, given the desire to create equal learning opportunities and the use of sport for disadvantaged young people, especially Roma, and taking into consideration the tendency of children to drop out of school and also accentuating divergences, especially in marginalizing some of them, this initiative came as a response to these aspects and fully contributes to the promotion of social inclusion through sport.

Our program uses wrestling which is addressed to all children and youngsters aged between 7 and 17 years from the local community ensuring inter-ethnic cooperation. 60 - 70% of the participants in our program are Roma.

Sports utilized and soft skills developed?

After the NGO realized that this Olympic sport, practiced by both girls and boys can be a useful educational tool in raising awareness on life and social values among youngsters.

The soft skills developed through this sport is: awareness of a healthy lifestyle with harmonious physical development, increasing immunity, self-confidence, respect, fair play, acceptance of victories but also failures and last but not least the positive involvement of the youngsters Roma in the community through social inclusion.

Categorization

Sport Plus

Impact / Outcome

The impact among the participants is very high both at the social level and also, at the level of sport performances. During the activities carried out with them, the NGO realized that the Roma youngsters are very well physically developed, they are talented and resistant to the physical efforts, having the assets to be selected in the national sport groups and even to become champions.

Impact / Outcome

Those who do not have the physical skills to reach the national wrestling teams are directed to different vocational schools. Hence, the program manages to reduce school dropouts and support social integration of young people.

The impact of the activities that are carried out are periodically evaluated, adapting the learning style according to the feedback of the children and the parents.

Annually, together with the leaders of the local community, the NGO organizes an appreciation of the performances obtained both at the level of sports competitions and on how their initiative achieves its social goals, the inclusion of Roma youngsters.

Cooperation / Partners

The partners of the programs are: The Sportive School Club number 4 from Bucharest, Gymnasium School no. 161 from Bucharest, the local authorities from district 6, and the Romanian Wrestling Federation.

Challenges and opportunities

The major problem is the deficiency of the sport equipment corresponding to the development of sport activities at highest standards.

The opportunities are open and vast around this program on both social and life perspectives the children and youngsters we work with being motivated to attend NGOs' activities.

Lessons learned

Children and youngsters are happy to be engaged in physical activities. Hence, sport represents their wellness, body, and mental health.

Anything else

Working with Roma youngsters helped the staff of the program to realize that besides the technical sportive aspect given by the specialization in a certain sport discipline, it is important to consider the interpersonal sensitivity that consists in the ability to listen, to understand and to respond to the concerns, interests and feelings of children and young people. In addition, the willingness to serve and help their families / communities. The desire to perform physical activities being innate in each individual, makes sport an excellent learning tool completely ensuring physical, emotional and mental health.

RISE GOOD PRACTICE #6

Name: Tang Ra
Country: Bulgaria



Background of the initiative

Tang Ra started in 2013 intending to help them start playing football, since the players were at such an age that they already had to be built players, so the organization decided to make its own team to include them in the futsal team. The main goal is to integrate the target group while building personal qualities in them such as discipline, teamwork and organization, disadvantaged young Roma people.

Sports utilized and soft skills developed?

The youngsters developed the number of activities and included sports educational activities with the method of suggestopedia, sports activities in the gym and with art to help them develop personalities qualities directed and supported by them. It is a multi-sport initiative.

Categorization

Sport Plus

Impact / Outcome

FC Tang Ra upgraded with some of the people who participated in the World Cup in Mexico managed to build leadership qualities that took 3 years. It was already clear that they could take responsibility and be leaders. One of the matchmakers had a real chance to join the national futsal team. Educational activities from the European Social Fund were funded also. Some of the boys managed to realize themselves in professional football.

Cooperation / Partners

Partners: Social Plus
Partly funding coming from: Sofia Municipality and Bestimex.

Challenges and opportunities

When you are in the football circles and you claim and demand results, the trainings should be on a level and be daily or at least 3 times a week. The lack of regular training for work, side activities or their parents was a problem Tang Ra encountered during the activity.

Lessons learned

There are two main things – One is that they are always dependent on something that happens to the organizers and the other is that they are dependent on the parents and that they have to work in parallel with both children and parents.

RISE GOOD PRACTICE #7

Name: Prerod
Country: Slovakia



Background of the initiative

The initiative started to work in Ružomberok, a town in Slovakia, in 2006. Their target group are individuals who are threatened by social exclusion and lack of opportunities, e.g. to spend their free time rationally during the school year but mostly over the holidays. In cooperation with different subjects and other volunteers, they offer these kids' summer camps and over the school year they also focus on their social contacts and help them to solve their issues in school and even in the streets. With time, football teams were successfully formed and it was seen to be played regularly on the streets.

Prerod also pays attention to the building of the training routine, in the winter months they ask the individuals to join them in the gym close to their locality that is rented by the NGO as a facility to train. In addition, they organize the local tournaments to offer the option to meet and greet with the others, where they get the chance to share their sports skills and abilities. At first, they organized these tournaments together with the facilities (diagnostic center, special needs school. These facilities also worked with kids that were threatened by social exclusion and slowly the elementary schools were asked to participate. The main goal is for them to support inclusion and present these kids in a positive light to others and show their talents, skills, abilities, and hobbies.

Sports utilized and soft skills developed?

Children and young people, while enjoying the activities, can develop and keep social relations and friendships that they have formed within their free time through sports activities. They also practice their communication skills and how to handle challenging situations, building their resistance, learning teamwork. Also, through the sport, they meet the majority of the population that can perceive them in a very positive light, such as the kids with their talents. It also supports their healthy self-evaluation and confidence when they are in contact with others.

Categorization

Plus Sport

Impact / Outcome

The outcome of the program impacts the individuals both on individual and societal level by allowing them to attend fun activities where they also get the chance to develop their physical and mental health.

Cooperation / Partners

The partners of the NGO are: The field workers of the town of Ružomberok, Community Center of Bratská jednota in Ružomberok and KC Úsmev ako dar (meaning: smile is a gift) and volunteers. The essential financing is provided on the support of the town of Ružomberok, established by the center and development activities while being supported by small targeted grants.

Challenges and opportunities

The kids are sometimes volatile in certain activities; the lack of support from parents, sometimes the kids are very impulsive and very fierce within their reactions, they also believe false information and news, which the organization takes as an opportunity to talk and communicate with parents, involve them again into activities and teach them how to solve the conflict situations by clearing out the air, forgiving and “staying together”, not “breaking up” with our activities.

Lessons learned

The personal relation of the worker with the kids, long-term horizon, flexibility, field working practice (start precisely at their place – the playground, the meadow)

RISE GOOD PRACTICE #8

Name: On Horse
Country: Slovakia



Background of the initiative

Project “Na koni - hravo a zdravo (On the horseback – fun and health)” was realized in 2019 thanks to the support of ACF Slovakia. Within this project, the kids of the clients of the crisis center of Arcidiecezna charita in Košická Nová Ves joined the training class with horses. The clients of the crisis center are mostly Roma. The program dedicates to the training of horse riding in our sports club. These children live in complicated situations; the families do have a complicated economic and social status. The usual free-time activities that the majority of society considers to be reasonable are something extra for them. Within the project, there were twenty kids actively and regularly participating in the training at the ranch CORNU in Janovik. They got the basics of vaulting riding; they improved their condition, courage and confidence. They got the essential knowledge and skills and abilities for working with the horses as this was the first project and the first experience working with the Roma youth. The kids were very eager, disciplined, and they were very grateful for the opportunity to spend their leisure time actively and with majestic animals such as a horse.

Sports utilized and soft skills developed?

Within the course, the kids improve their physical condition, flexibility and balance. It is considered to be even more critical when working with horses, the kids are learning the responsibility, tact, ability to react quickly, they boost their confidence because they are overcoming their natural barrier, and they also learned to believe in the other individual. The positive interaction with horses is generally well known. The experience also confirms the positive impact of these animals on the youth.

Categorization

Sport Plus

Impact / Outcome

Activities of the project were not targeted only on the training of the horses; the kids also learned how to clean the horses, how to prepare them for the training, how to lead them; therefore, they got the essential skill set on how to handle the animals. They can find this very useful when choosing a job in the future or when choosing a future high school. Thanks to this opportunity, they also can become horse careers, stable careers, vets, etc.

Cooperation / Partners

The course was implemented together in cooperation with the employees of the Crisis Center; the staff cooperated very closely with the social workers working with kids in the crisis center; they helped with the organization and communication with the kids and their parents. The project had to be stopped as it was financed from the grant program by ACF Slovakia. Unfortunately, after the program was finished, no further sponsorship was found.

Challenges and opportunities

The challenging part was seen in the background activities such as: the organization of the meetings, transportation, activities reporting. As everything was realized during the staff's free time while working in a full-time job the support of the volunteers helped. The challenge was overcome with the help of the positive feedback from the kids and also from our surrounding environment.

Lessons learned

The importance of working with people from the local community. The activities cannot continue with this group of kids, mostly due to the lack of financial support, but also the kids cannot join the training by themselves. As the distance between the crisis center and the ranch is almost 20 kilometers, the parents do not have the option, in certain cases, not a willingness, to accompany the kids and therefore without organized transportation and to accompany them they cannot meet anymore.

Another important factor on why the project was successful is the cooperation with the people that get to know the community and the kids very well. The collaboration with the social workers helped to choose the kids for which these activities will be beneficial; therefore, when approaching the local community, the staff recommend choosing the cooperation with the people who know very well the conditions in the community (mayor, teachers, etc.)

Anything else

"Sport is very beneficial for every young individual. I believe it is not important what kind of sport that is. What is more important is that the children or the young people spend their free time reasonably, overcome their barriers, learn how to persist and keep a discipline, build their relations within the team. The Roma youth should have the option to use their potential through sports activities even though our experience proves that these kids are physically talented and they like to move and practice sports. We believe that each child that can do sports will spend less time in adverse conditions and by unsuitable activities."

RISE GOOD PRACTICE #9

Name: Vermont
Country: Bosnia and Herzegovina



Background of the initiative

The project came into life in 2017 when the organizers realized that there are so many young people that have challenges. The goal of the project is to involve children that are coming from socially vulnerable groups so they can be included in their local communities.
More specifically, Roma children. The program has a multi-sport approach where the kids get the chance to play the sports they are genuinely interested in. Several sport clubs were also involved coming from different sports such as: football, martial arts, and dance. During the program the children also get the opportunity to work with a psychologist who tries to teach them the methods and the approach of how to be socially included in the community.

Sports utilized and soft skills developed?

Through these sports the program tries to educate the youth how to socialize with other kids outside of Roma community. Due to lack of educational attendance, the children do not have the opportunity to interact with others. However, the program had shown that they were able to be around other kids, to communicate with them. Through the above-mentioned sports they try to teach them social skills.

Categorization

Plus Sport

Impact / Outcome

The program had an impact on over 200 Roma children. Some of them were seen to continue to train in one of the sports that they were involved at the beginning. The program had a crucial impact on the parents, who play an important role in the development of the social skills of their children. The sports made it easier for the kids to start going back to school.
The project is believed to have more impact on social integration than employability levels.

Cooperation / Partners

The partners of the program are: the Government of Brcko district; several clubs and GIZ.

Challenges and opportunities

The biggest challenge during this implementation in the program was going in Roma community and convincing parents that the sport is good for their kids.

The biggest opportunity through such programs is by involving the children in the program of sport to help them go back to school.

Lessons learned

For a successful implementation of the program a lot of patience and hard work is required.

PATTERNS, CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE COLLECTED PRACTICES

The following section illustrates the overlapping patterns and challenges from collected working practices that are demonstrated in the previous section.

Patterns

The working practice collected show that the overlapping patterns throughout different organizations chosen by the partnering countries have the following overlapping patterns when describing their working environment:

- Their target group comes from disadvantaged regions, institutions and rural areas.
- They use multisport and team sports rather than individual sports indicating that the team-building spirit affects the members positively. Boxing has been used as an exception due to interest towards the activity.
- Beside focusing on their personal development (confidence, socializing, speaking out, etc.), most of the organizations aim for raising awareness towards their skills for employability and starting or continuing with their education.

Challenges

The overlapping challenges mentioned were:

- The pandemic being in the first place among all the organizations as the reason for canceling and postponing their weekly/annual events that is affecting their activities within their projects.
- Finding skilled coaches who are equipped to work with marginalized groups with the proper amount of sensitivity towards its members.
- Finding and obtaining facilities to organize their activities and events due to authority and politics. This also includes having adequate equipment required for fulfilling their activities.
- Reaching out to the Roma community.
- Convincing the parents and including their support towards their children.
- Financial difficulties in finding sponsors, including limited support from public institutions.

Lessons Learned

The organizations shared their experiences what they have learned throughout their projects and activities:

- Having locations such as sport facilities for conducting the activities in the regions where Roma people live is highly important and makes the process much easier.
- Building a trustworthy relationship between the organizer and the children is very important and sometimes more effective than the activity itself.
- Including the parents helps them move forward smoothly with their projects.
- The children will always be happy to participate and are excited to be part of such activities.
- Even though sports have been seen as a very effective tool it is obvious that the educational system has to support them as well for overall support.

PRACTICAL TIPS AND ADVICES FOR SPORT ORGANIZATIONS AND NGOS

The following section illustrates practical tips from project partners on how to involve young Roma in sport-based educational programs, which educational goals to set and methods to use, and which funding resources from the partnering countries of RISE to apply for.

Questions	Answers
<p>1. How to involve and keep on board young Roma in sport-based educational activities?</p> <p>(Tips and Tricks)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Maintaining their interest by introducing the sports and activities they like.2. Including successful Roma as role models so they can motivate and inspire a younger generation of Roma.3. Choosing a location for sport activities that is easy to access for Roma.4. Create a safe space where everyone feels supported and free to express their opinion.5. Offering additional workshops besides sport activities. This way, they will be able to develop extracurricular skills as well.6. If possible, offering scholarships for further development of talented Roma.7. Sharing useful information such as sport activities near or within their community. Very often, they are deprived of such information.
<p>2. What goals to set for the sport-based educational activity, and what educational methods to apply?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Develop life skills such as teamwork, problem solving, cooperation and communication.2. Establish positive social relationships.3. Develop entrepreneurial skills and increase individual employability.4. Empower young Roma participants, in particular girls.5. The main educational method can be based on the non-formal approach linked with scenarios from real life. Specifically, to the sport domain, you can apply with great success the Education Through Sport methodology.6. Do a lot of exercises that are tailor-made to develop soft and hard personal skills. Use educational resources from projects funded by the Erasmus+ Program!

3. Funding resources from your country or international/regional funds to run these kinds of activities?

HUNGARY:

1. National Cooperation Fund
<https://civil.info.hu/nea/kezdolap/bemutakozas/index.html>
2. Open Society Foundation Grants
<https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/grants>
3. Visegrad Fund
<https://www.visegradfund.org>
4. Roma Education Fund
<https://www.romaeducationfund.org/roma-oktatasi-alap-ref/>
5. National Roma Council's funding opportunities
<https://www.oronk.hu/category/palyazatok/>

NORTH MACEDONIA:

1. Civica Mobilitas
<https://civicamobilitas.mk/>
2. Foundation Open Society Macedonia
<https://fosc.mk/>
3. Kvinna Till Kvinna
<https://kvinnatillkvinna.org/>

ROMANIA:

1. Many activities are supported voluntarily by our friends of organisation and also we have accessed the European source of funding - ERASMUS + programme.
2. The source of funding are the international grants awarded by the organisation but also the partnership agreements with Uipat Foundation and Terre des Hommes.

SLOVAKIA:

1. National ministries and public institutions, Visegrad Fund
2. EU grants – Erasmus, European Solidarity Corps, Europe for Citizens, Interreg
3. EEA Grants/Active Citizens Fund
4. Various foundations – e.g. Open Society Foundation, Karpatska nadacia, Nadácia SPP, Nadácia VÚB etc.

BULGARIA:

1. Partly funding from:
<https://www.sofia.bg/web/sofia-municipality>
regarding “FC Tang Ra”

DISCLAIMER

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