



Handbook on good practices

# Sport in Post-Conflict Societies

Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport



Accord Partiel Élargi sur le Sport



COUNCIL OF EUROPE  
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

# **Targeting Social Cohesion in Post-Conflict Societies through Sport**

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and Jacco van Sterkenburg**

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## Foreword

Fostering Europe's social cohesion has become a priority for Council of Europe member states. In their New Strategy and Council of Europe Action Plan for Social Cohesion, approved on 7 July 2010, these states argued that the concept of social cohesion is essential for the fulfilment of the three core values of the Council of Europe: human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Social cohesion is crucial to human progress and development. Yet we are living in a time where the meaning of the term “progress” is changing. If in the past it equated a vision of prosperity, justice and freedom, today it also means protecting society from regressive trends.

Sport, when used as a vehicle for targeting and furthering social cohesion in post-conflict countries, is no different. Played and watched by millions of people from a variety of social backgrounds, it has an educational and socialising effect that makes it an ideal vehicle for intercultural dialogue and social integration. If we often speak about fighting discrimination, racism or homophobia *through* sport this testifies to the wide recognition of the positive contribution sport can make to social cohesion. People participating in sport are, for instance, more likely to meet individuals of other ethnic origins than people who do not participate in sport – it is an easy way to bring different people together. Hence, sport may further social cohesion by minimising disparities and avoiding marginalisation.

However, sport is not inherently good and will not automatically be a positive factor in regards to social cohesion, unless the “regressive trends” *in* sport are eliminated. History has shown how sport can equally be a setting for extreme nationalism, exclusion and discrimination. Sport does not in itself foster tolerance nor will it necessarily become an important aspect in social mixing and integration. Fully utilizing the potential of sport requires first and foremost a sincere commitment on the part of the associations, institutions and organisation that administer and support sport.

It is thus important to look beyond conventional wisdom and rhetoric in order to fully grasp how certain sport practices may contribute to furthering social cohesion in post-conflict societies. Any such assessment must not only look at the historical, political and cultural context but also identify specific target groups.

Stanislas FROSSARD  
Executive Secretary  
of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS)  
Directorate of Youth and Sport  
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The Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS) seeks to facilitate international discussion between various stakeholders, such as public authorities, policy-makers, researchers, non governmental organisations, sport clubs and associations in disseminating a collection of handbooks on good practices.

This handbook is the first number of a collection on good practices. It is dealing with the values and limits of sport-based interventions in post conflict societies from the Western Balkans and South Caucasus. The first part is more theoretical and conceptual, and focuses on sport as an added value for social integration and inclusion. The

second chapter gives examples of good practice initiatives and points out the strengths, weaknesses and obstacles of the projects which are presented in the handbook. The last part of the handbook presents some recommendations on sport as social cohesion and social integration which could serve as a guide for future policy.

This activity is wholly in keeping with the remit of the Council of Europe's Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport, which is to foster the sharing of experiences and develop standards that will help to unlock the potential of sport, not least as an instrument for promoting the Council of Europe's core values.

## List of Abbreviations

ATP	Association of Tennis Professionals	HNK	Hrvatski nogometni klub (Croatian Football Club) HNK Rijeka
AUNA	Armenian United Nation Association	IDP	Internally displaced persons
BAAP	Balkan Alpe Adria Project	NBA	National Basketball Association
ESPN	Entertainment and Sports Programming Network	NK	Nogometni klub (Football Club) NK Varteks
EURO	UEFA European Championships (UEFA EURO 2008™)	OFFS	Open Fun Football Schools
F4P	Football for Peace	PE	Physical Education
FA	Football Association	SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
FARE	Football Against Racism in Europe	UEFA	Union of European Football Associations
FC	Football Club	UMKI	Udruga za mlade Korak ispred (Step Ahead Youth Organisation)
FIS	International Ski Federation (Fédération Internationale de Ski)	VIDC	Vienna Institute for International Dialogue and Cooperation
FSE	Football Supporters Europe	WTA	Women's Tennis Association
hCa GNC	Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Committees – Georgian National Committee		





## I. Introduction

The present Handbook examines the role of sport in the context of social cohesion in post-conflict societies and focuses on the question of how sport as a mediating tool can help to strengthen social cohesion in communities that have been shattered by conflict and war. The authors chose to focus on the Western Balkans and South Caucasus regions, as these are European regions that have faced traumatic experiences of armed conflicts in the last decades and continue to deal with the consequences of these conflicts. Whilst a variety of studies focusing on sport and its contribution to social cohesion within the European Union (EU) is already available, the authors considered it necessary to broaden the scope and focus on Europe beyond the EU but within the borders of the member states of the Council of Europe's Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS) – not least because there is also a gap in the studies and works dealing with post-conflict societies and transition countries.

The first part of the Handbook consists of a chapter by Jacco van Sterkenburg dealing with the benefits and limits of sport for social cohesion and post-war reconciliation. In a critical examination, the value of sport for social inclusion as well as its intrinsic constraints through processes of exclusion are discussed. This more theoretical part aims at putting the good practice examples from Chapters 3 and 4 into perspective;

His major points are:

- Sport may be an *added value* for social integration and inclusion,
- but not *per se* and in itself.

- less in the realm of institutionalised and formalised competitive sport but rather in the realm of trainings, special events and/or non-competitive sports festivals that promote and put a shared set of social values to the fore.
- Such social initiatives using sport as a mediating tool need to be embedded into a broader and wider network beyond sport and require the serious involvement of different social partner organisations, political parties, municipalities as well as local, regional and national authorities and administrations.

The second part of the Handbook, written by Milan Hosta and Olga Dorokhina, presents a range of good practice initiatives from the Western Balkans (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”) and South Caucasus region (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia). The two chapters give a brief introduction on the geo-political history and the role of sport in these regions before introducing the selected examples of good practice.

The Handbook does not claim to present a comprehensive evaluation of the examined good practice initiatives. Instead it should be understood as a piece of field research. Whenever possible, the authors have tried to select these initiatives according to good practice criteria such as sustainability, anti-discrimination, effectiveness and impact, transferability, review and assessment and also the participation of the beneficiaries. In addition, the strengths, weaknesses and obstacles that might have emerged in the course of the projects were considered.

The Handbook concludes with a section on practical recommendations targeting various stakeholders in post-conflict regions, including public authorities, youth organisations and schools, Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs), sport clubs and sport associations. These conclusions are based on the observations from the presented projects as well as on findings from sociological literature.

## 2. The values and limits of sport-based social interventions in post-conflict societies

Jacco van Sterkenburg

### Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Issues of cultural conflict and interethnic tolerance have moved to the centre of political and public debate in many multiethnic European countries. This is especially the case in divided, post-conflict societies that have recently suffered from civil war and armed conflicts.

One of the cultural practices considered most promising both for enhancing interethnic contact and social cohesion and as a tool for peace and reconciliation initiatives is recreational sport. Sport is often identified by European and national policy-makers as the ideal field of action to enhance community spirit and promote intercultural understanding and mutual respect within and between communities.

The perceived social power of sport is evident from the fact that its benefit to interethnic relations has become an increasingly important factor in European sport policies.

For instance, on 9 and 10 September 2004, the Conference on the Contribution of Sport to Intercultural Dialogue in Istanbul,

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1. This chapter is based on a number of academic sources and reference works. In order to make the handbook more readable and accessible for non-academics, we will not use the academic system of citation consistently. All sources consulted can be found in the literature section at the end of the handbook.

Turkey, organised by the Council of Europe Sports Department in co-operation with the Economic Research Foundation of Istanbul and the Directorate for Youth and Sport of Turkey, recognised that “[p]roperly promoted and delivered, sport can constitute a first step in the efforts to achieve inter-cultural dialogue by bringing together different nationalities and cultures in a common game with common rules”. The participants adopted a number of recommendations for the areas of Sport for All and Elite Sport, as well as for spectators and fans (T-RV [2004] 13).

In a similar vein, the European Commission states on its website:

*“Sport provides citizens with opportunities to interact and join social networks; it helps immigrants to develop relations with other member[s] of society; and it constitutes a tool for reaching out to the underprivileged or groups at risk of or facing discrimination”.*<sup>2</sup>

The social value of sport is also recognised by the United Nations, which now have a Special Advisor with the task of using the social power of sport in the service of the UN’s Human Rights agenda. This recognition of the social value of sport was confirmed when the then Secretary General of the UN Kofi Annan launched the International Year of Sport and Physical Education in 2005, declaring that:

*“Sport is a universal language. At its best sport can bring people together, no matter what their origin, background, religious beliefs or economic status. And when young people participate in sport or have access to physical education, they can experience real exhilaration even as they learn the ideals of teamwork and tolerance”* (Annan, 2005).

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2. [http://ec.europa.eu/sport/what-we-do/doc35\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/sport/what-we-do/doc35_en.htm).

These statements show the high expectations of the potential of sport, particularly with respect to multiculturalism and overcoming ethnic divides. This role of sport has been expressed by policy-makers and scholars alike. According to Krouwel et al. (2006), several factors make recreational sport a promising social site for the enhancement of interethnic contact and tolerance. First, many people practice sport. This applies to all Council of Europe and EU member states, although participation rates differ from one European country to the other – with Scandinavian countries participating most followed by Western and Central European countries. The high participation rates mean that in addition to education, family and paid labour, sport has become a potentially important site for interethnic interaction and the transfer of social values. Second, the criteria for success in sport are different from those in other social practices such as education. The cultural practice of sport generally emphasises physical capabilities instead of cognitive capabilities, and as a result, patterns of social interaction are often less racially or ethnically stratified than the interaction patterns in other socio-cultural spheres. People participating in sport are, therefore, more likely to meet individuals of other ethnic origins than people who do not participate in sport. Third, and related to the second aspect, policy makers often see sport as a race-free arena in the sense that social distinctions do not play a major role in sport. With its appeal to a variety of ethnic groups, it is considered relatively easy to bring together people of various ethnic origins in sport.

At the same time, this positive approach towards sport as a social panacea is critically interrogated by other sport scholars who point to the darker sides of recreational and professional sport as encouraging racism, homophobia, nationalism and sexism. These

scholars point out that competitive sport can create a space with the potential of fostering racism and ethnic inequalities. In their view, sport should primarily be considered “a site of struggle” in which different dimensions of ethnic bonding and exclusion are performed, experienced and demonstrated. These scholars are sceptical of the commitment to anti-racism via written declarations and anti-racism charters, arguing that such declarations are too often mere rhetoric with only a symbolic function.

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the social function of sport and possible potentials in post-conflict societies in more detail on the basis of the scholarly literature on the topic. Apart from juxtaposing the ideology of sport as a positive social force, which emphasises the beneficial social function of sport with a more critical perspective, our aim is also to identify some common features of successful sport-based intervention programmes. But before this, the meaning of the concepts of *social cohesion*, *social integration*, *social inclusion* and *social capital* that are often used in scholarly discussions about the social function of sport will first be briefly explored.

### Social cohesion / social integration / social inclusion and sport

The concepts of social cohesion, social integration and social inclusion are all related to one another. As Van Bottenburg & Van Sterkenburg (2005) argue, these overlapping concepts refer to “feel-good” processes or states of being, which form the opposites to the “dark sides” of segregation, exclusion, isolation and fragmentation. The terms reflect the power of social interactions and the resulting individual and mutual benefits thereof. They refer, in other words, to

individual and societal advantages gained through *social connectivity*. The individual or societal advantages gained through social connectivity acquired in and through sport comprise, among other things, the development of reciprocity, the building of relationships and friendships, the building of mutual trust, and the development of personal and social skills. In a practical way, the utilisation of social connections acquired through sport can result in a variety of acts such as finding jobs, acquiring access to power or increasing the quality of life. For socially disadvantaged groups, it can result in enhanced self confidence and social empowerment.

In the sport sociological literature, the utilisation of social connectivity acquired through sport is often described with the concept of *social capital*. When discussing social capital, scholars usually distinguish between *bonding* social capital and *bridging* social capital. Bonding social capital refers to close ties between persons such as those between kin, close friends or neighbours, while bridging social capital refers to more distant ties with persons such as work colleagues or loose friendships. The world of sport is widely believed to be an important tool for the stimulation of these inter-related ‘feel-good’ processes of social integration, social cohesion and the building of social capital. The regular face-to-face interaction among individuals of various origins that is characteristically ascribed to sports, especially to team sport, are assumed to bring about an increase in social cohesion and social capital at both local and national levels. In their use of sport as a tool for inclusive social change, governments generally prefer to stimulate *bridging social capital* instead of *bonding social capital*. Stimulation of *bonding social capital* is often perceived as socially undesirable, since socially disadvantaged groups run the risk of becoming caught in self-imposed

isolation and of losing contact with the mainstream norms and values of society. An example of bonding capital can be found in the establishment of ethnically specific sport organisations. Bridging social capital, on the other hand, is assumed to reduce the prejudices that various groups hold towards each other.

### Social value of sport in divided post-conflict societies

The social functions of sport have been documented not only in relation to fostering interethnic tolerance in ethnically heterogeneous countries, but also in relation to peace and reconciliation initiatives in divided post-conflict societies. Drawing upon his personal experiences with sport-based intervention initiatives in Israel and Northern Ireland, the sport sociologist John Sugden (2010) came to the conclusion that “sport is intrinsically value neutral and under carefully managed circumstances it can make a positive if modest contribution to peace building”. Sugden illustrated this in the context of Northern Ireland, where mixed sport participation was successfully used to establish friendships across the Catholic-Protestant divide. In Israel, sport was likewise used to positively affect the relationship between Israeli and Palestinian youth, for instance in the Football for Peace project (F4P: [www.football4peace.eu](http://www.football4peace.eu)). The aim of the F4P project was to use football coaching to transfer values and build bridges between neighbouring Jewish and Arab towns in Israel. By providing participants with the opportunity to establish contacts across community boundaries, the project managed to contribute to the peace process in this otherwise divided region. Schulenkorf (2010), who had evaluated the role of sport events in contributing to inclusive social change and reconciliation in ethnically divided Sri Lanka, generally confirmed Sugden’s conclusions. He argued that,

if strategically organised, sport events can be a suitable vehicle for reducing the distance between disparate groups. Schulenkorf noted that in order for sports projects to be successful they should, on the one hand, define superordinate goals that create an overarching identity for the participants, but they should also leave enough space for participants to experience their own ethnic sub-identities on the other hand. Schulenkorf referred to this as a “dual identity status”, in which the ethnic sub-identities of the participants are combined with a superordinate identity. Such a dual identity status can be encouraged by organising joint sports activities where different ethnic groups participate together and where a shared set of values and organisational identity is emphasised while at the same time allowing participants to engage in culture-specific activities.

### Critical notes on the social functions of sport

Notwithstanding the beneficial effects of the sport interventions they described, Sugden (2010) and Schulenkorf (2010) also warned against well-meaning but simplistic interventions that only tap into the mythic and largely unproven social values of sport. The key question according to Sugden is, therefore, “how and where to intervene”. This question relates to the specific contextual factors that make such interventions successful or not. It points to the fact that although sport may have the potential to contribute positively to feelings of social connectivity, sport cannot and should not be considered a “natural” and universally applicable remedy for social problems. We will now turn to some of the more critical notes on the social functions of sport expressed by scholars who question whether sport can actually contribute to a reduction of existing cultural and ethnic disparities in society.

Various scholars emphasise that it is illusory to view sport as a meritocratic level playing field. Despite political or popular rhetoric that argues otherwise, sport does not automatically lead to social capital, social inclusion, social integration and social cohesion. History has taught us that sport can be a field where differences, or even social exclusion and social discrimination are produced or reinforced, particularly with respect to gender, social class, race/ethnicity, nationality, physical ability and/or sexual orientation. In sum, sport not only creates bonds, but also differentiates. Some scholars, such as Krouwel et al. (2006), even argue that the potential positive social functions of sport are often “nullified” by the tensions that exist in wider society. Since sport programmes that aim to connect different hostile groups rarely deal with the broader social problems such as deprivation, rivalry, and racism that these groups have to deal with in daily life, ethnic differences can be reinforced rather than bridged through these sport programmes.

In addition to this scepticism about the social functions of sport, Elling (2002) argued that most sporting groups are relatively socially homogenous (they are, in other words, more oriented towards “bonding” than “bridging”), most contacts made through sport are not particularly profound and most “sport friendships” do not go beyond sport. Coakley (2004) argued likewise that despite the fact that sport is certainly one of the most visibly mixed ethnic practices in society, research has thus far not been able to provide much of an empirical foundation to the theory that sport leads, or rather should lead, to more multicultural acceptance and “fraternisation” than in other spheres of society.

So in contrast to the view of sport as a multiethnic meeting place that enhances interethnic tolerance and understanding that was described earlier, critical scholars argue that sport activities reinforce existing ethnic identities rather than serve the formation of a new, socially inclusive identity. This is confirmed by scholars such as Carrington (1998), who showed that a sport club can have the function of an “ethnic space” where ethnic minority groups can create their own social sphere and seek shelter among members with similar cultural or ethnic backgrounds. But when such ethnic clubs meet other ethnic teams in competitive sporting contests, these “shelters” easily transform into “arenas” characterised by interethnic aggression and tension. Tense interactions in the wider society are then brought onto the playing field, thereby causing sporting contests to magnify instead of diminish interethnic tensions and antagonism.

### Sport as a contested terrain

Juxtaposing these critical notes on the social function of sport with the aforementioned positive aspects of sport as a social force, it can be concluded that sport is full of paradoxes and should be considered a contested social terrain. Sport may lead to cooperation among team members, but sport competition may also reinforce antagonism and hostility among monoethnic teams. Given these paradoxes, we would argue that in order to better estimate the role of sport in fostering inclusive social change, it is important to lower the often sky-high expectations of what sport can offer, especially those expectations from policy makers who often praise sport for its perceived “magic” potential to achieve all sorts of positive social outcomes.

In the concluding section of this chapter, we will try to bring together the view of sport as a positive social force with the more critical perspective. This means that we will more fully discuss both the limits of the social functions of sport and the contextual factors that contribute to the success or failure of the use of sport in intervention work.

### Contextual factors of success

This chapter showed that sport should be seen primarily as an *added value* and not as a social panacea that can fix anything that does not work in a society. This idea was confirmed by Coalter (2007), when he stated that participation in *some* types of sport can assist *some* participants only *some* of the time. For one thing, although sport provides important social meanings to individuals who participate, social exclusion is also a problem of sport itself, for instance through racism in amateur or professional football. Another complicating fact attesting to the modest social role of sport is that, as a relatively autonomous field, sport cannot be isolated from other socio-cultural spheres. Participants in sport intervention initiatives often have social and personal problems that originate in social fields outside sport, such as traumatic war experiences, problematic family circumstances (e.g. broken families, single mothers), financial problems (financial debts that force people to take temporary jobs), or problems in relation to legal status (refugee status, difficulties in obtaining a work permit). Sport-based intervention programmes have only very limited power to address all these complex and overlapping problems. In order to address the complex problems of participants from a “holistic perspective” (Sherry, 2010), the involvement of multiple actors and community organisations in sport-based intervention



work would be needed. As Schulenkorf (2010) rightly argued, it is too much to expect sporting events to have an impact on social relations without the support of other contextual actors, such as local and national political parties and social partners. Sport should, in other words, be only one part in a much broader web of actors dealing with the larger social problems of the targeted group.

This points to a crucial factor of the success of sport-based intervention work: in order to promote non-sporting social change through the use of sport, it is essential to address the broader social context of the society in question and develop a network of partnerships accordingly. The main challenge is to build up engagement from the local community and create social and cultural engagement with the sport project from the beginning. In the case of the F4P project in Israel this implied, for instance, the development of a relationship of trust with the local community so that many Arab and Jewish towns would approve that their children as well as local volunteer coaches and leaders work alongside their European counterparts. More generally, it is important to involve national institutional partners with the project, since such national partners can help to connect the micro level of the sport project with the macro level of broader sports policy and knowledge building. In other words, the involvement of national organisations means that these organisations can learn from the project and integrate aspects of the project in their own national policies. The involvement of social partners is additionally important for linking participants in the sport programme to accommodation, the labour market, community support networks or rehabilitation programmes. Social partners can, therefore, provide participants with a much broader social and personal development programme than the sport activities alone can offer.

Furthermore, an overview of the literature shows that social sensitivity to the specific needs of the target groups is essential. It means taking the voices and values of participants seriously and tailoring the programme according to their needs. Studies conducted by Sherry (2010), Spaaij (2009) and Van Sterkenburg (2004) showed that this can be facilitated by engaging peer educators who have been in the same social situation as the participants in the intervention programme, and understand where potential problems lie and how to talk to the participants. Sensitivity to the target group also means that the focus that policy makers often place on the stimulation of *bridging* social capital instead of *bonding* social capital should be critically reflected upon. Earlier in this chapter we explained that modern governments usually tend to stimulate bridging social capital at the expense of bonding social capital since they fear that the latter may isolate ethnic minority groups from mainstream society and mainstream norms and values. However, literature on this topic shows that ethnic minority groups often prefer to practice sport within their own ethnic communities, especially as they grow older and performance becomes less important. Research has additionally shown that members of such mono-ethnic sport clubs acquire bonding as well as bridging social capital. In other words, it is not always necessary for members of the ethnic minority group to interact with people from the dominant ethnic group to gain an understanding of the dominant or mainstream social values. These insights should lead to more nuanced policies concerning the use of sport as a tool for increasing social capital or enhancing social cohesion.<sup>3</sup>

3. This should be understood in a positive way, i.e. combining the possibility of practicing sport with peers and with other communities through joint initiatives, as illustrated by the good practice examples (see chapters 3 and 4).

A final point that we want to highlight is that it is important to contextualise *sport itself* if we want to better estimate the social benefits of participation in sports activities. Even though sport is often referred to the abstract in policy documents or declarations, sport actually presents itself in a variety of ways. It is preferable to think of sport as consisting of a variety of forms that all have different results in different contexts. Consequentially, we cannot talk about the social function of sport without putting sports experiences in real-life contexts. It might be particularly useful in this regard to distinguish between institutionalised and formalised competitive sport on the one hand and sport training, tournaments and festivals that often have a more friendly and supportive character on the other. Institutionalised competitive sport may have less power as an integrative vehicle than training activities or sport festivals that take place under the supervision of committed mentors or organisers emphasizing a shared set of values while at the same time taking the voices and values of the participants seriously. Examples of sporting events where competitiveness is played down to emphasise the enjoyment of the game and foster a community spirit are the aforementioned F4P project in Israel or the *Mondiali Antirazzisti* (Anti-Racism World Cup, [www.mondialiantirazzisti.org](http://www.mondialiantirazzisti.org)) organised every year in Italy. This tournament uses football as a means for eradicating prejudices against other cultures and it shows how getting together and debating issues can be rewarding. The football matches are held in between other activities, and the participants are encouraged to organise debates on topics such as (anti-)racism and football.

In the Balkans, one such case are the *Balkaniads* youth football tournaments for boys and girls that are organised as part of the Balkan Alpe Adria Project (BAAP). In both the Western? Balkan region and

the South Caucasus, the Danish Cross Cultures Project Association (CCPA) has been active in implementing *Open Fun Football Schools* for children ages 7 to 11, using grassroots football “as a vehicle to stimulate social cohesion and peaceful co-existence” (<http://www.ccpa.dk>). These two projects are part of the good practices developed in the following sections.



### 3. Good Practice Examples in the Western Balkans region

Milan Hosta

In seeking to understand the socio-political situation in the Balkan region, especially in the case of the ex-Yugoslav countries, it is difficult to assess whether these should be referred to as post-conflict or in-conflict societies. There have been numerous attempts to provide a short explanation of the social context, which, using the unique regional sense of self-effacing humour and irony, could be framed as follows: “where logic ends, the Balkans begin” or as the Serbian rock band Bajaga sings “this is the Balkans, the land of dreams [...] this land was built by warriors and poets, and various gods [...] every 50 years there is war going on [...]”

Indeed, the socio-political history of the region is very rich, culminating in a colourful mythology that has been used and misused politically through the ages, from antiquity to the disintegration of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. An important phenomenon of the twentieth century, sport played a significant role in constructing and deconstructing the strong ties between the ethnicities in the region.

#### 3.1. A brief geo-political history of the region

- The single state called the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, disintegrated into six independent states: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, each of which – with the exception of Bosnia and Herzegovina – is characterised as a nation by a single dominant ethnic group.

- Kosovo<sup>4</sup> declared its independence in 2008, but has not yet been officially recognised by the UN as an independent state; rather, it continues to be considered as a province of Serbia, albeit with an Albanian majority population
- Six languages are spoken in the region: Bosnian, Croatian, Macedonian (Cyrillic alphabet), Serbian (Cyrillic), Slovene – all from the Slavic group – and Albanian.
- The region has three main religions: Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodox, and Islam.
- Only “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” (1991) and Montenegro (2006) gained their independence peacefully.
- Slovenia has been an EU member since 2004; Croatia has held EU candidate country status since 2004, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” since 2005 and Montenegro since December 2010. Albania and Serbia have applied for EU membership.
- Nominal GDP per capita in 2009 (in USD): Slovenia: 24,111; Croatia: 15,284; Serbia: 5,821; “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”: 4,546; BiH: 4,365 (source: International Monetary Fund 2009).

4. All references to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

### 3.2. The role of sport in the region

*“To build a friendship takes years, but to destroy it takes one second.  
I think that’s exactly what happened to us”*

Vlade Divac, former NBA player, current president of the Serbian Olympic Committee on his friendship with fellow basketball star Dražen Petrović from Croatia.  
Quote from the film *Once Brothers*, 2010 ESPN

During the celebrations following Yugoslavia’s victory over the Soviet Union in the basketball world cup finals (Yugoslavia had beaten the United States of America in the semi-finals), Vlade Divac pulled the Croatian flag out of the hands of a fan who had joined in the cheering on the floor. It was the year 1990, at a time when it was already clear that nationalist tensions in Yugoslavia would lead to a new state order in the region. It was also a period when an ethnically mixed Yugoslavian team was dominating the world of basketball. This basketball case is an excellent reflection of the passionate images that only sport can generate, as well as an example of how they can be linked to the political passions of power plays on the playground of nationalism.

The former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was a state where sport played a significant role that was closely linked to political interests. The awareness of the political importance and international recognition attainable through sport was high. Team sports in particular – including football, basketball, handball, volleyball and water polo – were played at the world’s elite level. This country of 20 million people generated enough sporting potential not only to provide excellent national leagues and championships, but to be successful internationally. In fact, the interventionist model of socialist sport policy, which did not allow athletes to become

professionalised, gave athletes hidden advantages in the form of scholarships, civil service, and other existential benefits. After the breakup of Yugoslavia, it was expected that this quality could not be sustained, but to the contrary, the now-independent states (especially Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia) still manage to keep the pace with the elite, if only a few steps behind. In addition, many athletes from the region have become stars in strongest world leagues (such as the NBA, ATP and WTA tennis, FIS ski tour, etc.) in spite of the region’s slow economic development and recent history of armed conflicts. This twenty-year continuity of high-level sporting achievements by athletes from nations that once formed a single state bears the legacy of a talented region, and a kind of nostalgia for the good old times when, together, they were world champions (i.e., football Under-20 in 1987, basketball in 1970, 1978 and 1990) is brought up by the media time and again. One reason for this may be that some of the ex-Yugoslav athletes are now coaches or commentators.

#### *From extreme passions, through extreme pains, to extreme theory*

*“Yugoslavia in the ‘90s: the greatest team there never was? The Yugoslavian war possibly denied the world the greatest team in football history. [...] What if Jarni, Stimac, Prosinecki, Boban, Suker and Mijatovic had been allowed to blend with Mihajlovic, Jugovic and Boksic, as well as the players who were already established – Dragan Stojkovic, Dejan Savicevic and Srecko Katanec. Then,” Katanec said, “we would have crushed the world.”*  
Jonathan Wilson<sup>5</sup>

As the most popular sport in the former Yugoslavia, football became also the arena for fans to express nationalist and ethno-mythical

5. In the *Guardian*, 24 July 2007 (see: [www.guardian.co.uk/football/2007/jul/24/newsstory.sport9](http://www.guardian.co.uk/football/2007/jul/24/newsstory.sport9))

passions in the course of the awakening democratisation in the 1980s. Unfortunately, the limited freedom of speech provided only enough space for expressions of hate on nationalist grounds, which soon turned the stadiums into political laboratories, where the logic of mass behaviour and the generating of conflicts were tested.

The passion for sports in the Balkans was not immune from the attitudes that were well described by George Orwell in his famous essay “The Sporting Spirit” (1945): *“Serious sport has nothing to do with fair play. It is bound up with hatred, jealousy, boastfulness, disregard of all rules and sadistic pleasure in witnessing violence: in other words it is war minus the shooting.”*

But, where the logic of sports ceased to exist, some people went on to carry out a kind of Orwellian sport – only fully armed. Thus it is not a coincidence that some ordinary people decided to become weekend soldiers instead of weekend joggers during the war in the 1990s. Organised football supporters were among the first of those who went to war and who joined the paramilitary special forces.

The complexity of political moments, ethnic and religious diversity, unresolved historic burdens, and the sharp nationalist drives of some individuals all combined to allow football riots to contribute to changes in the Balkan region and Europe as well. In concluding this section we must say that sport, while at times misused, has changed the Balkans. So sport may also be a tool to be used to continue the changes in some other, more human directions in this region. The most important question might be whether competitive sport that generates national identification can still contribute to the objective of promoting social cohesion in post-conflict societies. Though we

will not seek a conclusive answer here, the good-practice examples presented below represent attempts to reach this goal.

### Post-conflict strategies

The first condition for successful change management is that the need and the will to change must come from within the society itself and the local individuals. A second condition can be found in a quote attributed to Albert Einstein, namely that problems cannot be solved at the same level of consciousness that created them. Armed conflicts started with the 10-day-war in Slovenia in 1991 and ended with the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords by Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia in 1995. Again, in 1998-99, armed conflict broke out over the status of Kosovo,\* culminating with the intervention of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces against the Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999. This dynamic region is likely to continue to be the focus of geopolitical struggle and change as the countries work to gain recognition by (and membership in) the EU, NATO, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), etc.

### Regional leagues

The division of the region into several smaller entities or states has introduced new dynamics into the national sports leagues, which consequently lowered the quality of the competitions. No single country had a pool of sport clubs that was strong enough to keep pace with the world-class level. Being aware of this deficiency, ideas

\* See footnote 4 page 19.

for competitions that would replace the former Yugoslavian league in basketball, football and other sports began to circulate. In 2001, on the initiative of the leading basketball clubs Olimpija (Ljubljana, Slovenia) and Cibona (Zagreb, Croatia), the ABA (Adriatic Basketball Association) was established, which in its first two years included clubs from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia. Serbia joined two years later. This example shows how powerful sport can be in overcoming prejudices or narrowing nationalist interests. Even though there were some incidents of violence at a few matches, no major outbreak has occurred in ten years. From the very beginning the league management pursued a clear fan policy that prevents extremist groups from misusing the game – a message that has been sent time and again to the organisers of the games as well as to fans.

A similar regional solution was developed for ice hockey, with two clubs from Slovenia and one from Croatia joining the Austrian national league. In the case of football, some experts have claimed that the region is not yet ready to peacefully stomach competitions among clubs from different ex-Yugoslav countries. Others are seeking for parallel ideas that would not include the most nationally steeped clubs or the most violent fan groups.

It is a fact that, in most popular sports, some matches between Serbian and Croatian clubs or national teams are still high-risk events. For instance, in 2003 an incident of physical violence between Serbian and Croatian fans broke out after the European Water Polo Championship finals between Serbia-Montenegro and Croatia that took place in Slovenia.

In short, the prevention of violence and racism in sport is not a matter for the sport sector alone. Since sport was misused by politics for

reasons beyond mere competitions (i.e. inflaming nationalist passions, fan/soldier education, etc.), an intervention that breaks such practice and democratises social structures and sport institutions could be an answer. Moreover, it will be crucial to implement the strategies that use the power of sport for the purposes of democratizing the region, while bolstering social cohesion, economic growth and welfare in general.

### *Institutionalised strategies in building society through sport*

All of the ex-Yugoslav states have been working towards a new model for sport in society, with the declared purpose of bringing welfare to the people. As the historical conditions would dictate, all of these new states chose an interventionist model, where governmental policy regulates the field to a large degree. Other than a strong Olympic movement, based on multinational cooperative logic, and the few sports associations that can afford market-oriented organisation, the rest are dependent on the state.

An overview of Serbian and Bosnian national strategies reveals much about the understanding of sport and the different ways of reconstructing a healthy and competitive environment for new generations.

The Serbian strategy for 2009-2013 is based on the premise that the country represents itself internationally, affirms its cultural legacy and strengthens national cohesion through sport (Ministry of Youth and Sport, Serbia 2008). Further on, the importance of physical education is stressed, and the evident lack of sports infrastructure is mentioned. Based on this premise, priority actions are planned and the financial support is distributed accordingly. Explicit emphasis is given to national recognition, which could challenge ideals of social

cohesion and ethnic dialogue: when sport is regarded in narrow terms, projects that use sport as a tool for democratic development or cultural and ethnic pluralism, and not for the competitive purpose of representing nation internationally, are not likely to be supported systematically from the sport budget.

The expert group that produced the Bosnian strategy for 2010-2014 was aware of the complexity of sport, and has taken a different path to create their strategy (Ministry for Civil Affairs, Bosnia and Herzegovina 2010). They proclaimed that the common goal of the development of sport in Bosnia and Herzegovina is to create systems and mechanisms that will enable sport to become a significant part of the culture and the joint material and spiritual values of society. They do not deny the value of sport for national representation, but they communicate it much more subtly through their three general goals. The first goal is related to sport for all, the second to physical education and talent development, and the third is explicitly oriented towards the state in order to achieve and maintain elite-level sporting results. Compared to the Serbian strategy, Bosnia and Herzegovina shares the problem of a weak infrastructure support to reach these goals.

Under these conditions, models of good practice must be embedded in a contemporary and socially progressive concept of sport. Since the old structures of sport are contaminated by political mishandling, new initiatives from the non-governmental sector could serve as an agent adding constructive energy into the larger scheme of social development in the region. The case of regional football leagues is one such example; these new strategies will not always lead successfully to whatever new quality is needed;

therefore, ideas of parallel development where the new context enables new players to take the lead and others to follow might be an option.

There are other initiatives worth mentioning that grew from grass-roots level and from the particular need of people to build a flourishing environment where sport is enjoyed for its own ends, as well as to be used to create democratic and pluralistic side benefits that enrich society from within.

### 3.3. Good practice projects – case studies

#### *Preliminary remark*

Since 1999 the Vienna Institute for International Dialogue and Cooperation (VIDC) has been coordinating the European FARE – Football Against Racism in Europe network.<sup>6</sup> The goal of this network is to fight against racism, homophobia and sexism as well as against the exclusion of minorities in European football. One of the most successful activities of FARE is the annual Action Week against discrimination in football every October. This initiative has been joined by associations, clubs, NGOs, youth groups and minority organisations, including in the Western Balkans.

In 2003, the first clubs in the former Yugoslavia became active: Red Star Belgrade, Partizan Belgrade and Rad Belgrade symbolically raised red cards against racism at their home games. One after

6. Since July 2010 FARE has been organised as an independent NGO. VIDC still remains a partner of the network and is responsible for running the campaign in Austria, and also acts as a consultant for the initiative in the Western Balkans.



the other, clubs and initiatives in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Croatia, Montenegro and finally Bosnia and Herzegovina became involved. Since 2006, FARE and VIDC have intensified their activities in the Western Balkans. Through a partnership with Nike and the King Baudouin Foundation, which supports the “Stand Up – Speak Up” campaign as a measure to counter nationalism in the Balkan states, the project has had substantial financial resources at its disposal for the first time. A number of the initiatives presented below are operating in the framework of FARE.

#### *Note on methods*

A questionnaire to gain information on the presented projects and initiatives was sent to 57 e-mail addresses, including from Olympic Committees and governmental offices responsible for sport in the targeted countries. After initially weak response, personal contact was established with a number of local NGO representatives with expert knowledge in the field. Since many of the presented initiatives were not yet officially evaluated, it was sometimes difficult to draw conclusions on their transferability and sustainability. Therefore some of our project descriptions remain without final assessment of these good practice criteria.

## Open Fun Football Schools (OFFS)

**Implementer(s) – main organisation:** CCPA (Cross Cultures Project Association Denmark)

**Venue (city, region and country):** Skopje, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”

**Involved partners:** Football Federation, Agency of Sport and Youth, the governments of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden (Stability Pact Initiative), FCs, Telekom Macedonia, the Macedonian Ministry of Ecology, local municipalities, UEFA

**Involved countries and / or regions:** Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Georgia, Kosovo\*, Moldova, Serbia, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Ukraine as well as Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria.

**Project period / Date of the event:** in Bosnia and Herzegovina 1998, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” 2000, Serbia and Montenegro 2001, Croatia 2002, Caucasus 2003 (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia), Kosovo,\* 2006, Moldova 2008, Ukraine 2010

**Target group(s):** children aged 7-11, coaches, parents, football clubs, primary schools

**Sports:** Football

The Open Fun Football Schools are among the largest cross-national programmes using sport as a tool for building social cohesion in post-conflict societies. This project has been developed in the Western Balkans and has also been applied in the Southern Caucasus and other regions. Its goals are to foster peace and stability by building the capacities of civil society organisations, and to promote local support for cross-border collaboration (Cross Cultures 2010).

\* See footnote 4 page 19.

Starting in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1998, it was first introduced to “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” in 2000. According to the organisers, 175 Open Fun Football Schools have been implemented between 2000 and 2009, engaging more than 38,000 boys and girls aged 7-11 in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”. The Open Fun Football Schools have trained 2,800 volunteer coaches in regional seminars, and another 3,000 coach’s assistants and club officials have taken part in their activities (Cross Cultures 2010).

According to the CCPA philosophy, the Open Fun Football Schools are meant to bolster mutual cooperation among the institutions and organisations working with children in the region, and to design activities and educational programmes around the core principles of “multi-ethnicity, gender equality, sport for all, social dimension and the fun concept” (Cross Cultures 2010).

The Open Fun Football School programme was one of the first initiatives for building mutual understanding and trust after the civil war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and has definitely played a significant role in the peaceful resolution of the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. The programme was successful in organising street sports events and associated follow-up activities, like activities/workshops for children who are living in conflict zones, meetings with local authorities, evaluation procedures, etc.

- **Sustainability:** The schools are sustained through public transparency, a good local policy approach and the development of a toolbox for volunteers.

- **Anti-discrimination:** The activities were designed to meet the realities of life in a multi-ethnic region, to promote peaceful coexistence and to bring together children and adults with different ethnic backgrounds.
- **Effectiveness and impact:** The effectiveness of the project is augmented by the implementation of follow-up activities such as workshops.
- **Transferability:** The project's methodology, organisational structure, quality of web support and thorough database have been transferred to several conflict countries such as in the Caucasus region (see below under chapter 4).
- **Review and assessment:** The initiative implemented a clear evaluation methodology.
- **Participation of beneficiaries:** The involvement of stakeholders, partners and sponsors is unambiguous.

## Football Unites the Alps, Adriatic and the Balkans

**Implementer(s):** Balkan Alpe Adria Project (BAAP)

**Venue (city, region and country):** Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia

**Involved partners:** VIDC, FARE, FA of Montenegro, FA of Bosnia and Herzegovina, FA of Serbia, King Baudouin Foundation

**Involved countries and / or regions:** countries from Western Balkans, Austria

**Project period / Date of the event:** Since 2006

**Target group(s):** youth, ethnic groups in the Balkans, sport administration staff, fans

**Sports:** Football

The Football Unites the Alps, Adriatic and the Balkans campaign was organised by the BAAP, in partnership with VIDC and the FARE (Football Against Racism in Europe) network. The campaign's activities are focused on fostering cooperation among the football associations of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia. Funding for the activities is provided by these football associations, UEFA and the King Baudouin Foundation.

In summary, the programme seeks to:

- Use football as an instrument of intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding
- Educate supporters and youth team representatives of clubs on the dangers of ethnic nationalism and racism
- Overcome nationalism, in particular among youth teams, by means of youth exchange in which all communities participate

- Use football as a medium to communicate an integrating message targeting young people and the general public.

The project combines several different measures: One involves the *Balkaniade* – a series of international youth football tournaments for boys and girls under 16, hosted by the national football associations and local clubs with teams from different countries in the Balkans. Another is the “Football Unites’ series of workshops: Every year, this project brings together regional and international stakeholders to discuss best-practice examples and initiatives that contribute to the overcoming of nationalism and racism. In 2010, this workshop took place on the eve of the FARE Action Week on 14-15 October in Skopje, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”. In addition, the organisers have implemented anti-racism activities with national football teams and clubs. The project partners have organised several anti-racism days at football matches in the Balkans.

There are also youth exchange programmes with the International FairPlay Youth tournaments in Vienna, Austria, where local migrant communities, ethnic minorities, football teams and international guests from the Western Balkans come together once a year to play football and to deepen intercultural exchange.

A main success of the project is that BAAP helped to make nationalism and discrimination in football an issue in the Western Balkans. There is now a higher awareness among the media and relevant stakeholders in football. Football governing bodies have also taken a more pro-active stance on the issue and have developed anti-discriminatory actions in close cooperation with BAAP. Furthermore BAAP started to link diverse organisations in different countries and regions of the former Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia and to

develop a common campaign in Bosnia and Montenegro and Serbia with strong links to Croatia and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”.

- **Sustainability:** This project builds on an established network of partners.
- **Anti-discrimination:** The project has raised awareness of the problems of ethnic discrimination in the region.
- **Effectiveness and impact:** The project has succeeded in bringing together youth from zones of conflict.
- **Transferability:** The role of local NGOs as carriers of social change and the involvement of volunteers is transferable.
- **Review and assessment:** The initiative has grown step by step in partnership with European partners, such as FARE, UEFA and VIDC. Those international partners and BAAP have established measures to monitor the output of the activities with the effect that slight corrections and changes in the strategy appear year by year. Additionally, important stakeholders in the region have been involved in discussions of the project development, which has an important effect on building mutual trust.
- **Participation of the beneficiaries:** The volunteers are thoroughly involved in the project, culminating with a joint tournament in Vienna as a reward and motivation for social change.

## I Came to Play

**Implementer(s):** Sports and Youth Humanitarian Organization PLAY, Serbia

**Venue (city, region and country):** Letenka, Novi Sad, Serbia

**Involved partners:** Serbian Ministry of Youth and Sport, US Embassy, Slovene Institute for Fair Play and Tolerance in Sport

**Involved countries and / or regions:** Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”

**Project period / Date of the event:** August 2010

**Target group(s):** youth (boys and girls)

**Sport:** Basketball

Sports and Youth Humanitarian Organization PLAY Serbia was founded in May 2008 by former professional basketball athlete Mihajlo Delić, and it aims at using sport as a universal instrument for social change while promoting ethical behaviour and good sportsmanship.

PLAY organises the yearly “I Came to Play” basketball camp, with the motto “ReBuilding Bridges and Transcending Boundaries through Power of Sport and Play” .

According to the PLAY organisation, the camp is “designed to bring together a group of young people whose love of sports/basketball transcends the recent histories of the region” (Sports Humanitarian Organization PLAY 2009: 4). “I Came to Play” tries to combine positive experiences of playing together with basketball instruction, workshops and social games that foster youth leadership, the importance of education and social responsibility, healthy lifestyles

and “the capacity of sport to transcend boundaries” and national-ist stereotypes while promoting values and mutual understanding among the young players. The camp served as an opportunity to young people from the former Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia to get to know one another and to play together in accordance with the principles of fair play, tolerance and multiculturalism. Drawing on the children’s love of sport, the camp sought to develop the potential of the young participants, who would then return to their own communities and act as agents of tolerance.

Each year the project is supported by a growing number of partners and stakeholders, and continues to gain social importance in Serbia as well as in the other participating countries. The established network can now be used to explore the power of sport to bolster social cohesion in post-conflict societies. The project has been well-covered by media, which gives it a certain advantage. PLAY’ s public communication, in particular, serves as a good-practice model for other NGOs.

- **Sustainability:** The sustainability of the project is bolstered by successful project management, fundraising and media support.
- **Anti-discrimination:** The initiative managed to bring together all nations of the former Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia, including Albania.
- **Effectiveness and impact:** The project managed to achieve significant recognition from experts and the media.
- **Transferability:** Components of the project that are transferable to other contexts are the expert workshops on conflict management, the support of elite athletes and coaches and the public access to the official project report on the web

- **Review and assessment:** The project is very efficient at using sport as diplomatic tool and the project report is clear in stating the initiative's achievements.
- **Participation of the beneficiaries:** The groups that supported this initiative were actively engaged as lecturers, workshop leaders, etc.

## Mini Pitch

**Implementer(s):** FA of Serbia

**Venue (city, region and country):** Serbia

**Involved partners:** UEFA, Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Serbia, Kingdom of Norway

**Involved countries and / or regions:** Serbia

**Project period / Date of the event:** 2008-2009

**Target group(s):** youth (boys and girls)

**Sport:** Football, Basketball, Volleyball

Mini Pitch is a project promoting sport participation and health awareness among children and youth in Serbia. An underdeveloped youth infrastructure is one of the major drawbacks in many Serbian communities. Not only sports, but the establishment of youth centres in general as generators of youth activities are among the main concerns of the Ministry of Youth and Sport in Serbia. With the Mini Pitch project, the Ministry of Youth and Sport and FA Serbia have taken advantage of the opportunity provided by the Norwegian Embassy, FA Norway, and UEFA that, together, has resulted in the construction of at least 50 mini football pitches in Serbia. This allows many more young boys and girls to participate in sport. As a sustainable project management scheme, these community projects are structured to support the advantages of such multifunctional playgrounds. Each mini pitch is designed to allow the playing of football, basketball or volleyball, as well as other physical activities and games. The local community is responsible for reaching out to various target groups and for raising awareness of issues such as human rights, drugs, ecology, racism and nationalism, democracy, violence and fan coaching.

According to the organisers, as these pitches were being built, the lack of local facility management and maintenance capabilities became even more obvious than expected. In addition, the “soft” interventions for the social values that are to be communicated through local activities were not yet developed to their full potential.

Mini Pitch is much more than just a “one off” project. On the contrary, its intent is to become a trend among local communities, raising the standards and improving sports public infrastructure. It has led to the establishment of numerous sports schools and continuous sports activities for a large number of users. FA Serbia believes this project will also have a positive effect on the development of other sports and leisure infrastructure and management in particular.

Considering the huge lack of sports and leisure infrastructure in the region, this project has a great amount of potential. In order to change social patterns and relations, the sport facilities must also change according to contemporary requirements. Mini Pitch is one such project influencing youth behaviour by inviting them to practice in different places. However, a social programme is needed for a stronger impact.

- **Sustainability:** A consequence of the project was the establishment of sports infrastructure and further sports activities. The project has an assured national long-term impact.
- **Anti-discrimination:** While the project has no direct bearing on anti-discrimination, the initiators provided the guidelines for further usage of Mini Pitch to address issues relating to discrimination as well.



- **Effectiveness and impact:** The project succeeded in establishing a good platform for further long-term work.
- **Transferability:** An emphasis on the quality of infrastructure as first condition for further programme development seems to be an important lesson for transferability.
- **Participation of the beneficiaries:** The participation of the beneficiaries lies mainly in the potential that Mini Pitch offers for future community use.

## Judo Friends

**Implementer(s):** Ministry of Youth and Sport Serbia

**Venue (city, region and country):** Serbia, Ivanjica

**Involved partners:** Judo Federation of Serbia, EPAS, Peace and Sport

**Involved countries and / or regions:** Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” and Algeria

**Project period / Date of the event:** since 2002

**Target group(s):** youth, coaches

**Sport:** Judo

From 24 July to 2 August 2010, the Ministry of Youth and Sport Serbia organised the “Judo Friends” judo camp in cooperation with the Judo Federation of Serbia, the Council of Europe’s Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS), and with the support of the European Judo Union and the Peace and Sport organisation from Monaco.

The camp gathered young judokas, aged 16-18 years, from six countries: Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”. Other guests of the camp were judokas from Algeria, as per a recent sports cooperation agreement with Serbia.

The aim of the camp was to promote “peace and sport in the Balkan region” as the organisers consider that sport is an effective way “to re-build bridges and establish close ties and cooperation” in the post-conflict region, as well as “to foster mutual understanding and tolerance” (Judo Friends Serbia 2010).

The ten-day programme included judo training lessons supervised by qualified judo instructors from Serbia, with lectures on the prevention of racism and violence in sport given by experts from the Council of Europe, and workshops on social interaction as well as evening entertainment programmes (Judo Friends Serbia 2010).

Judo Friends profited from high media coverage, not least due to the support of the Serbian Ministry of Youth and Sport. In particular, the visit of the Minister herself and the ambassador of Japan provided much of the media attention.

Since judo belongs to the family of combat sports and has a philosophy of soft power, it is very suitable to conceptualise the fighting technique and explain it on the social level. In this way, the young participants can learn how an inherent knowledge of judo can help them to understand the ethnic conflicts and their management without severe social injuries.

- **Sustainability:** The sustainability of the project is ensured through the civic and governmental partnership that was developed for using sport to serve diplomatic aims.
- **Anti-discrimination:** The topic was addressed indirectly through lectures and workshops.
- **Transferability:** The partnership and support from governmental bodies that this project achieved could be emulated by other projects.
- **Participation of the beneficiaries:** The project emphasised education in social competences through sport.

## The Heart of Mostar: Social cohesion activities

**Implementer(s):** Sports Association of the City of Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Venue (city, region and country):** Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Involved countries and /or regions:** multi-ethnic participation from Mostar region

**Project period / Date of the event:** July 2010

**Target group(s):** all citizens of Mostar

**Sport:** Football, Handball, Volleyball, Judo

Mostar is one of the most ethnically mixed cities in the Western Balkans region, where lots of mixed families (Croatian, Bosnian and Serbian) have made their homes. Consequently, it also suffered greatly during the war in the 1990s. Physical culture and sports have a long tradition in Mostar. The Sports Association of the City of Mostar began its work in 2002 and was transformed in 2006 when several interests of the ethnically “broken” city were united under one umbrella.

The association not only manages sports in Mostar, it also attempts to use sport for the purpose of social cohesion and the fight against nationalism. Several activities have been initiated by the Association, particularly with regard to the popularisation of sports among youth and the coordination of school sport competitions. For example, the Association gives a yearly award to the most successful school and physical education teacher, and it organises the “Heart of Mostar” humanitarian football tournament each year for the purpose of collecting financial and material goods to support those who are in need

of assistance (e.g. to support the Centre for Children with Special Needs, or to enable special health care or necessary operations for needy children).

The Association also cooperates with the Balkaniads and is a regular guest with a multiethnic team at the Football Youth Tournament in Vienna, Austria, organised by BAAP.

The municipality of Mostar provides the Association with firm support, which helps to make its work more efficient. In a small city like Mostar such cooperation between an NGO and the local governmental bodies is very important in order to meet the needs of the citizens.

- **Sustainability:** The ongoing work of an established sports association ensures the long-term sustainability of the project.
- **Anti-discrimination:** The humanitarian purpose of the project creates common concerns and unites otherwise divided ethnicities.
- **Effectiveness and impact:** The impact of the project has been facilitated by good local cooperation and multi-ethnic coordination.
- **Review and assessment:** The response to the social needs of the environment has been deemed very good within the limits of the available human and financial resources. But the project was not evaluated.
- **Participation of the beneficiaries:** All stakeholders play active roles in the project.

## Anti-discrimination and Multinational Tolerance within Roma Youth and drop-out High School Students

**Implementer(s):** Forum MNE (Youth and Informal Education Forum), Montenegro

**Venue (city, region and country):** Podgorica, Montenegro

**Involved partners:** Save the Children, High school "Ivan Uskokovic"

**Involved countries and / or regions:** Montenegro

**Project period / Date of the event:** Since 2008

**Target group(s):** Roma youth, local youth

**Sports:** Football

Forum MNE has been involved in the annual FARE action week since 2008. The following is an example of how a non-sport organisation can use sport for its own goals if provided with a larger scheme and context like FARE and with a small amount of money to enable the NGO to cover the costs of the project.

An activity in October 2009 targeted discrimination by involving young people from Podgorica risk groups. For this purpose, a football match was organised between young elite players from FC Kom Podgorica and Roma youth, as well as some volunteers from the Konik refugee camp in Podgorica.

According to MNE, the organisers are well informed about how the local and national media functions. In 2008, the organisation received considerable support from journalists, who participated in the event personally as football players. In 2009, therefore, the tournament was already more familiar to them. The event was supported by two national daily newspapers (*Pobjeda* and *Vijesti*). The articles were

published with photos the next day, which contributed much to the community and participants in particular.

The participants were involved throughout the project – from the design phase until its realisation – and volunteers were motivated to take part in the logistics. In this way, the tournament passed on strong messages to a wider public. After the event, Forum MNE organised evaluation meetings with the participants in order to measure and discuss its effect. While the event was small in relation to the overall community, it was significant for the individuals involved; these activities made a difference in young peoples' attitude and behaviour. It strengthened their understanding of the social role and responsibility of the individual. Step by step, the communities that are willing to recognise at-risk groups and share their sporting and media playgrounds with them are evolving in a more democratic direction. The more frequent such actions become, the less it will be needed to stress the importance of social empathy among the members of the community.

- **Sustainability:** Sustainability is ensured by the project's step by step policy of social impact as well as its good media support.
- **Anti-discrimination:** The project fulfils its anti-discrimination mission by focusing on the inclusion of Roma youth.
- **Effectiveness and impact:** The project is deemed to have delivered the promised impact in media as well as to the youth involved.
- **Transferability:** The discussion among the participants as a way of internally evaluating the project is an example of transferable good practice.

- **Review and assessment:** Internal discussions are an important part of an evaluation process especially if external evaluations have not been conducted yet.
- **Participation of the beneficiaries:** The project actively engaged youth from at-risk groups.

## Give the RED CARD to Racism

**Implementer(s):** Football club KOM Montenegro

**Venue (city, region and country):** Pogorica, Montenegro

**Involved partners:** Balkan Alpe Adria Project (BAAP), FARE-VIDC, King Baudouin Foundation

**Involved countries and / or regions:** Montenegro

**Project period / Date of the event:** October 2009

**Target group(s):** football players, fans, media

**Sport:** Football

The football club KOM has been involved in the FARE Action Week and the Balkaniads for several years. As a professional football club, they take advantage of their social recognition. Cooperation in such actions is important for the messages that are sent, as well as for their own identity in terms of the values they stand for. Albeit its limited financial resources, the club has supported the organisation of the FARE event with plenty of enthusiasm.

The message of football as a tool for anti-discrimination was sent directly to the public – particularly to the fans, who were addressed before the game when red cards to racism were shown by the players. There were about 250 spectators at the event. Indirectly, a larger audience was addressed through media coverage. The national newspapers *Dan* and *Pobjeda* covered the event, and the national television channel Radio Televizija Crne Gore showed reportage on its morning programme and invited the organisers to take part in a studio roundtable on the purposes of the action.

At FC KOM, they are trying hard to minimise racist and nationalistic outbursts in sport. By organising visible and meaningful events as

reported here, they are taking advantage of their heightened social recognition and their ability to influence the value system of the local youth. It is important that fans recognise that sport has the potential to send out positive messages even about social affairs that are not directly linked to sport.

- **Sustainability:** The sustainability of the project is ensured through the commitment that FC KOM makes to social responsibility off the playing field.
- **Anti-discrimination:** Discrimination is fought through the project's explicit anti-racism message; the symbolic display of red-cards has received significant media attention.
- **Effectiveness and impact:** The project has thus far achieved a positive outreach through media support, though its long-term effect is questionable.
- **Transferability:** The involvement of athletes and sports clubs in activities targeting racism and exclusion in sport and beyond is an example of good practice that could be transferred to other projects.
- **Participation of the beneficiaries:** The use of athletes as messengers is powerful and distributes moral obligation to the beneficiaries on and off the field.

## **FARE Coordination in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”**

**Implementer(s):** Macedonian Centre for Culture and Development (MCCD)

**Venue (city, region and country):** Skopje, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”

**Involved partners:** FARE-VIDC

**Involved countries and / or regions:** “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”

**Project period / Date of the event:** Since 2003

**Target group(s):** youth, sport spectators, Roma people, media, coaches, police, administrative staff

**Sport:** Football

MCCD is a coordinator of FARE projects in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”. Over a decade of activities, they have created a large NGO platform to support the social values of sport. Over thirty organisations have joined in their fight against racism, which in manifests itself mostly in the form of nationalism in sport. Most of the activities of the NGOs are organised around the FARE Action Week every October. The range of activities is very diverse; it includes actions against nationalism and racism in professional, amateur and youth football, social inclusion projects that are targeting Roma, and grassroots activities which encourage girls and women to actively exercise sports.

The efforts of MCCD’s systematic work have resulted in the formation of a Macedonian Council for Social Dimensions of Sport

Without Violence, Nationalism and Racism, which is accepted and supported by the president of the Macedonian parliament and by the national Agency for Youth and Sport. An agreement on long-term cooperation with the Macedonian Football Association has also been signed.

According to the MCCD, volunteers are always involved in the actions and will act as multipliers of the activities. MCCD tries to coordinate their efforts, and reward them socially and morally, at least. Their common cause is the major driving force behind changes in society. Similar to other NGOs, MCCD has also faced a number of problems in the course of their project, such as:

**Financial issues:** Usually there is not much money at their disposal for the projects they intend to present. Without the support from FARE, the Football Association, and some other international organisations, the existence of MCCD would be in question.

Political implications are most complex to deal with. As the organisers state, MCCD has the support of certain governmental institutions, but a problem might arise if sport is used by political parties to express and communicate their own political interests.

**Sustainability:** The sustainability of this project is bolstered by the quality of networking on the national level.

**Anti-discrimination:** This project explicitly focuses on the integration of Roma and on gender issues.

**Transferability:** The combination of cultural and sport activities is one element of this project that could be transferred.

## **“All Different – All Equal” Football Campaign and Fan Embassy at UEFA EURO 2008, Croatia**

**Implementer(s):** UMKI – Step Ahead Youth Organisation, Rijeka, Croatia

**Venue (city, region and country):** Croatia

**Involved partners:** Croatian Football Federation, Croatian Ministry of Families, Veterans’ Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity, Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, Council of Europe, UEFA, Kick It Out UK, FARE, Football Supporters Europe (FSE)

**Involved countries and / or regions:** Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia

**Project period / Date of the event:** since 2006

**Target group(s):** football fans

**Sport:** Football

The “All Different – All Equal” project in Croatia was part of the Council of Europe campaign. Several events have been held since its implementation in 2006, such as football meetings addressing social issues, awareness raising press conferences, presentation of results on international conferences, etc.

The opening match of the project was played prior to the last game of the last round of the official Croatian football league championship, between HNK Rijeka and NK Varteks. The best Croatian female football players were on one side, and played all 40 minutes while the two male line-ups on the other side were changed every 20 minutes. The kick-off was taken by a journalist as a representative of people with disabilities.

Before the start of the official Croatian football championship game between HNK Rijeka and NK Varteks, the European Union anthem was preformed. While performing the hymn, members of HNK Rijeka Youth brought out an official banner “All Different – All Equal” accompanied by official representatives of the Jewish, Muslim, Orthodox and Roman Catholic communities.

Several football events for the specific purpose of spreading the message around Croatia and the neighbouring countries followed throughout the year. The project involved Albanians, Bosnians, Croatians, Italians, Macedonians, Serbians, Slovenians and Roma, as well as representatives of the Jewish, Muslim, Orthodox, Roman Catholic religious groups.

Since the project was supported by the Council of Europe, it carried a certain level of public and social importance. A number of governmental bodies and other stakeholders have given moral support to these activities by writing letters and by attending the events as spectators or even as participants. Consequently, according to the organisers, media coverage was high throughout the campaign. The UMKI organisation has applied the experience gained through the event to other projects.

### *Mobile Fan Embassy at UEFA EURO 2008*

Besides their “All Different – All Equal” campaign, UMKI is also active in social work with football fans. In this context, UMKI was responsible for coordinating the Croatian Mobile Fan Embassy at UEFA EURO 2008 in Austria and Switzerland. The Croatian Mobile Fan Embassy was part of the UEFA-sponsored fan activities at EURO 2008, a key element of their social programme targeting mainly young



football fans.<sup>7</sup> The programme reached thousands of supporters over the course of the tournament, either at fixed locations or through street work, and offered information and services with a “by fans, for fans” quality. UMKI organised an experienced team of six Croatian fan workers who travelled from Croatia to work with their own fans during the tournament. As a pre-event, UMKI organised a national fan-congress in 2008 to train and inform the fan workers and clubs about the content of the programme.

Additionally, in October 2006, UMKI arranged a mini tournament between the supporters of Croatia and England around the EURO qualifier match between those teams in Zagreb to highlight the importance of tolerance and understanding among football fans. Another element of this initiative was the realisation of an anti-racist expression of both national teams before kick-off, using banners and announcements to spread the message of “kicking racism out of the stadiums”. Such expressions are still not common in Croatian football. For instance, the NK Zagreb Fanclub “White Angels”, a partner of UMKI, were prevented from organising anti-racist activities during the last FARE Action Week in October 2010 by the club management at the home game against NK Karlovac.<sup>8</sup>

- **Sustainability:** The strong partner network contributes significantly to the project’s sustainability.
- **Anti-discrimination:** The anti-discrimination goals of the project are met through the promotion of ethnic and religious understanding (“All different – all Equal” Campaign), as well as

7. See <http://www.fanguide2008.net>.

8. See [www.farenet.org/default.asp?intPageID=7&intArticleID=2280](http://www.farenet.org/default.asp?intPageID=7&intArticleID=2280).

the anti-racism and anti-nationalistic messages disseminated among football fans (Fan Embassies).

- **Effectiveness and impact:** The project brought together important civic and public bodies, resulting in good media coverage.
- **Transferability:** The social preventive approach towards fans and the project management system can be transferred to other projects.
- **Review and assessment:** The project was deemed to have well formed strategies and wide social outreach beyond sport. Through partnerships with international organisations and networks such as UEFA, FARE and FSE, the projects were evaluated and recommendations were implemented into follow-up activities.
- **Participation of the beneficiaries:** Football fans are actively involved in this project.

## 4. Good Practice Examples from the South Caucasus

Olga Dorokhina

### 4.1. A brief geo-political history of the region

The South Caucasus region has been one of the most complex areas in the world for the past 20 years. The collapse of the Soviet regime, civil and interstate wars, economic instability, armed conflicts, natural disasters – all these have affected the economic and cultural life of the region, as well as its sustainable development. People had to survive, living in poverty, unemployment and economic hardships.

Following the collapse of the Soviet regime mass clashes and full-scale military confrontations took place in Nagorno-Karabakh in 1988-1989 and in Abkhazia and the former South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast (Area) in 1991-1993.

In the aftermath of the military confrontations, thousands of civilians were killed and hundreds of thousands were forced to leave their homes. As a result of the conflicts that took place in the South Caucasus, about one million people became refugees or internally displaced persons (IDPs).<sup>9</sup>

The countries of the South Caucasus were incorporated into the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy according to the European Council decision of 14 June 2004. Since May 2009 Armenia,

9. See <http://www.unhcr.org/4bd7edbd9.html>, <http://www.unhcr.org/4641835e0.html>, <http://www.unhcr.org/4641be4f0.html>, <http://www.unhcr.org/464183605.html>.

Azerbaijan and Georgia are part of the the Eastern Partnership (EaP) project initiated by the European Union (EU).

The transition period has been associated with the rupture of the old system, a painful period of adjustment to new conditions. Sport was badly affected at all levels as well.

Nominal GDP per capita in 2009 (in USD): Armenia: 2,615; Azerbaijan: 4,798, Georgia: 2,450 (source: International Monetary Fund 2009).

### 4.2. The role of sport in the region

During the years of the crisis that followed the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the entire sports sector lost government support and funding. Dilapidated sports complexes and swimming pools turned into garbage dumps.

In many cases, the functions of sports facilities had been changed: the buildings where the sporting life was actively conducted were turned into markets or warehouses. As in other ex-Soviet republics, the communist party youth organisations (the Pioneers and the Komsomol) that had been responsible for the greater part of youth sport in the Soviet Union were disbanded in 1991 and were not replaced. All the South Caucasus countries were, in reality, bankrupt, and sports facilities fell into disrepair along with many other parts of the state infrastructure. Over the last 15 years sport has been of little concern in the countries of the region. However, sport progressively began to recover over the years.

Over time, the institutional structures in charge of the management and development of sports (usually the Ministry or Department of Youth and Sports) were set-up. The system of professional sports

entities – associations, federations, clubs, and unions representing various sports – is in the formation process as well. Attention is returning to the need for the development of sport.

Particularly since 2005, the process of restoring sports facilities in Georgia and equipping them with new sports equipment has started under a special governmental programme. Both facilities for professional sports and sites grassroots sports have been restored.<sup>10</sup> New constructions of smaller sites for soccer and basketball can be seen in every district of Tbilisi and other cities, as well as in villages. Similar processes are taking place in Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Despite the fact that professional sports associations are now more focused on solving the current problems associated with the development of a sport, many of them are involved in social projects and various charity events. The national football federations are most active in this respect.

National and local non-governmental organisations working in the field of peacemaking, human rights and the protection of ethnic minorities are also using sport in their activities. Although it should be noted that for the most part these initiatives have a spontaneous occasional character assisting only a small group of beneficiaries, taken together, all these activities have had a positive effect.<sup>11</sup>

The programmes representing a partnership of various stakeholders (international organisations, government agencies, professional sport unions, local non-governmental organisations, businesses networks

and local authorities) have had the most sustainable character and impact. As part of these initiatives it is possible to reach the greatest number of beneficiaries.

### *The main target groups of sport projects*

Children and young people are the main target groups on which the majority of all activities are concentrated. With each year growing attention is paid to gender issues. At the same time it should be mentioned that there has been a very small number of sports initiatives for adults.

### *Supporters and Fan Clubs*

The phenomenon of fan clubs is very important and essential for the development of sport. Fan culture in the South Caucasus is developing, but sometimes fan clubs and supporters have a rather negative role. Very often they cause troubles on their home ground and beyond. In October 2009, for example, fans from the Russian Federation provoked disorder during the football match between the national teams of Azerbaijan and Russia in Baku in a qualifying round for the World Cup 2010. However at the same time fan clubs are part of civil society – and fan clubs may play a very important role in building confidence among the different ethnic groups, as well as in promoting tolerance and mutual understanding.

### *Ethnic and religious diversity of the South Caucasus*

The South Caucasus region presents itself as very complex due to its ethnic, political and poly-confessional entities and the problems

10. See [http://multitrans.ru/c/m.exe?a=110&t=4514035\\_2\\_1&sc=20](http://multitrans.ru/c/m.exe?a=110&t=4514035_2_1&sc=20).

11. See [http://multitrans.ru/c/m.exe?a=110&t=2622979\\_2\\_1&sc=432](http://multitrans.ru/c/m.exe?a=110&t=2622979_2_1&sc=432).

of interaction or non-interaction between representatives of the different ethnic groups and confessions affect sports in very different ways.

To give an example, on some occasions representatives of the different groups have been forced to change their surnames in order to be eligible to play on the national teams. The problems of racial discrimination have grown as the professional clubs have invited more and more foreign players to participate, and now they appear as the potential victims of discrimination. In addition, sportsmen from the South Caucasus region who have played in clubs abroad may also be affected the complicated situation between the countries, for instance in October 2007 during the tensions between the Russian Federation and Georgia.

These are only some vivid examples illustrating problems of racial discrimination and intolerance in the field.

Research has shown that there are no effective mechanisms in the South Caucasus region to prevent or combat these problems. Even though these problems are recognised, the legislation on sports has not laid down the mechanisms necessary to combat violence and racist incidents in sports. Violence is treated only as a criminal act or, if it is connected to internal professional issues, the clubs and federations apply the mechanisms of the international professional federations.

In order to oppose these incidents of racism, it is necessary to work out policies and strategies of actions at the national and regional levels. It is thus necessary to answer the following questions: What is the actual situation in the various countries and regions? What

kind of mechanisms (formal and informal) do already exist to fight racism and discrimination in sport? What are the mechanisms of interaction between the various institutions that are involved in the sports world?

### *The peacemaking role of sport*

International experience indicates that sport, and football in particular, could serve as a site for aggression and conflicts, for displaying intolerance and racism – but at the same time could be a significant basis for restoring broken ties. Sport could be a tool for building trust, mutual understanding and a rising level of tolerance.

In recent years there have been many examples of peacemaking and social cohesion initiatives in the South Caucasus, especially in professional and non-professional football, starting with the restoration of confidence between separated groups, who have been divided as a result of the troubles, and finishing with specific interstate initiatives.

One of the positive examples of the restoration of confidence has been the organisation of friendly matches in the framework of the so-called “Consent” regional football tournament, organised in 2002 in Telavi (East Georgia) by the regional initiative of the Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly Committees of Tbilisi/Telavi (Georgia), Vandzor (Armenia) and Gandja (Azerbaijan). For the first time since the beginning of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, teams from Armenia (“Lori” Vanadzor) and from Azerbaijan (“Kaipaz” Gandja) participated in the tournament. “Kakheti” (Telavi) and “Dinamo Sukhumi” – a team of football veterans from the internally displaced people from Abkhazia (Georgia) took also part in the tournament.

The other unprecedented example of sport and football diplomacy is the visit of the President of Turkey, Abdullah Gul, to Yerevan (Armenia). On the invitation of the President of Armenia, Serj Sarkisyan, he made a landmark visit to watch the historic Armenia-Turkey World Cup 2010 qualifying match in Yerevan. The visit was extraordinary considering the fact that the two countries do not have diplomatic relations and following the visit dialog between Armenia and Turkey was intensified.

All existing tournaments in the professional as well as in non-professional leagues are usually based on a national system, such as when the country is presented by a national team, or is presented in a clubs system. For post-conflict regions like the South Caucasus, the Balkans and others, the challenge consists always in including teams from conflict zones in sporting or cultural activities. If football tournaments, for example, take place in Tbilisi, the question about the participation of a Sukhumi or Tskhinvali team will arise. On the other hand, in a tournament in Sukhumi, the participation of teams from Abkhazia (Georgia) will be questioned, making it practically impossible to conduct a true South Caucasus championship.

### 4.3. Good practice projects – case studies

#### Open Fun Football Schools (OFFS) – Caucasus

**Implementer(s):** Cross Cultures Project Association (CCPA), National OFFS offices in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, OFFS South Caucasus regional office

**Venue (city, region and country):** Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia

**Involved partners:** Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, UEFA, SIDA, StatOil, SOCAR, local governmental entities, local Football federations, municipalities, schools

**Involved countries and / or regions:** South Caucasus, Western Balkans (see above), Moldova, Ukraine as well as Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria,

**Project period / Date of the event:** since 2003

**Target group(s):** Children aged 7-11 with different ethnic and social backgrounds

**Sports:** Football

The Open Fun Football Schools programme was launched in the South Caucasus in 2003, though the first contacts had been established in 2001. Three national OFFS offices operate in the South Caucasus – in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia – and one regional South Caucasus office. Moldova joined this programme in 2006, and Ukraine in 2010. It is planned that in 2011 regions of the Russian Federation will join the programme as well.

The example of the OFFS is interesting for several reasons. First, it is one of the programmes implemented in both the Balkans and the

Caucasus. The main objective of the project is to facilitate friendship and cooperation between people living in divided communities, and to use the OFFS as a tool to bring together children and adults living in divided communities around an activity of common interest (“bridging”).

The regional strategy of OFFS aims at facilitating cross-boundary cooperation between nations as well as cross-entity cooperation between antagonistic population groups inside the country.

Their activities include OFF Schools for children aged 7 to 11, as well as regional meetings, seminars and workshops for volunteers and staff, and the provision of sports equipment like balls, t-shirts, etc. The programme takes gender issues into consideration and seeks to ensure that at least 25 percent of participants are female – as players, coaches, leaders and officials.

The statistics of the OFFS operation in the South Caucasus are impressive. In 2010, 37 OFF Schools were organised in the South Caucasus, involving a combined total of 7,104 children. About 962 adults participated as instructors, leaders and coaches, and 1,445 parents participated in special seminars and workshops. More than 14,000 children (including orphans, children of refugees, and children with diabetes, heart diseases and other disabilities) were involved in the project via special activities like “fun tournaments” and “fun festivals”.

The interaction of different stakeholders – an approach directed towards the involvement and empowerment of local resources – ensures the sustainability of the programme and creates a basis for further expansion. Along with co-financing from different donors like

the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, UEFA, SIDA and StatOil, the programme is supported by local governmental entities responsible for the development of sport, local Football federations, municipalities and others. All offices are still dependant on international donors' funding and support, however.

The OFFS programme has definitely played a positive role in the peaceful resolution of the conflicts in the region. In Georgia, the OFFS programme was successful in organising street sports events and associated follow-up activities, including activities for children living in conflict zones (Abkhazia (Georgia), Tskhinvali region / South Ossetia (Georgia)). One achievement of the OFFS programme in Georgia that should be mentioned is the participation of children from the joint international and border enclaves. The adults and children of different nationalities live, play and train together for 3-5 days during the OFFS events. One key challenge that remains is to make sure that the activities and direct engagement of people and organisations in and from the enclaves are acceptable to the Georgian authorities and do not contravene the law and the resolution on activities on the territories occupied by Georgia (Regulation of the Government of Georgia N 320 Tbilisi 15 October 2010 On Approval of Modalities for Conducting Activities in the Occupied Territories of Georgia).

OFFS seminars were also organised on Georgian territory, with OFFS instructors, leaders and trainers from Armenia and Azerbaijan living and training together. It should also be mentioned that in the future it might be possible to construct and develop a multi-year peace building project for the Turkish and Armenian regions, aimed at fostering tolerance, intercultural understanding and reconciliation

between these two countries. This programme will include cultural exchanges, sport-for-peace events and cross-border peace camps.

- **Sustainability:** The programme has been operating effectively in the region since 2003 and is constantly widening its scope in terms of activities, communities and involved stakeholders. With regard to Armenia, the project further developed strategic targets such as the improvement of local fundraising to promote project self-sufficiency and to further the cooperation with the FA's grassroots department. Evaluation processes on the impact of the project in Azerbaijan are still ongoing. With regard to Georgia, it is stated on the OFFS's website: "With new strategic targets defined and a new plan and approach towards fundraising established this will hopefully solve the sustainability problem."<sup>12</sup>
- Within the framework of the planning process of the OFFS, significant attention is paid to the elaboration of strategies to ensure the self-sufficiency of future activities and to reduce the dependence on international donors – such as by increasing the contributions of local authorities. These contributions would, for example, cover the transportation of children and coaches as well as the work of the international instructors. In addition, the respective national football federations and their donors would continue their active participation in the project by providing support for the seminars conducted.
- **Anti-discrimination:** Children and adults from different ethnic and social backgrounds (including those representing divided communities) participated in the programme's activities.

12. See <http://www.ccpa.eu/1-328-georgia.html>.

- **Effectiveness and impact:** Recorded statistics show that the number of programme participants and involved regions increased year by year. Besides the aforementioned activities, the programme contributed to the empowerment of girls and women in sport in the region.
- **Transferability:** The OFFS Trans-Caucasus Countries project is part of the larger OFFS humanitarian project implemented by the Cross Cultures Project Association (CCPA) in the Balkans region, the Middle East and the South Caucasus region.
- **Review and assessment:** The programme implemented a system that assesses the social responsibility factor of the project, monitors its effect on civil society and evaluates the organisational and financial structure, all with regard to the development of future self-sufficient follow-up projects (see: <http://www.ccpa.eu/1-149-our-sustainability-approach.html>). Moreover, the programme developed a good system for the review and assessment of its achievements as well as an implementation process with the direct involvement of the beneficiaries both at the national and regional levels.
- **Participation of the beneficiaries:** The current and future activities of OFFS involve municipalities, parents, primary school teachers, local sponsors, national and regional football associations, local and national media and youth and sports ministries.



## Sport for Peace Programme

**Implementer(s):** Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Committees Georgian National Committee (hCa GNC)

**Venue (city, region and country):** Georgia

**Involved partners:** Parliament of Georgia and Georgian Government, Georgian National Volleyball Federation, Dutch Embassy in Georgia, NGO Bridge of Friendship Kartlosi, IDPWomen Association "Consent", Kakheti Center of Civil Initiatives, Initiative group "Disevi", Coalition for IDPs Rights

**Involved countries and / or regions:** Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia

**Project period / Date of the event:** operates since 2002

**Target group(s):** minority groups, refugees/IDPs, youth, children

**Sport:** Football, Volleyball

The Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Committees Georgian National Committee (hCa GNC) has been working on peacemaking processes in the Caucasus region for more than 18 years. This long experience has allowed to identify two things: Firstly, different groups have their own important role to play in confidence building. Secondly, sport is not used to its fullest potential in peace and confidence building activities in the South Caucasus region.

Through a special programme, the hCa GNC is attempting to research how it might be possible to involve sport and cultural activities into peace processes and find answers for questions such as:

How could the activities of professional sports support the peace process on the resolution of conflicts in conjunction with the problems of racism and discrimination?

How could sports activities be used to restore ties between populations divided as a result of conflicts; how could they contribute to the building of confidence and trust?

This work is based on the monitoring and analyses of the possible use of sport as a tool for peace and intercommunity dialogue. The recommendations elaborated in the research findings are to be put into practice via partnership networks. The idea of trans-regional football tournaments, championships and/or matches such as the aforementioned "Consent" regional football tournament, implemented in cooperation with the hCa Committees of Vandzor and Gandja, was also elaborated in analyses by hCa GNC.

The other example which was put into practice was the "Sport on the service of peace" project. This project involved the organisation of volleyball courts in Disevi village, which is located in the South Ossetia (Georgia). Disevi borders the Ossetian village Khelchua, and has relations with another Ossetian village, Ksuisi. Negotiations were conducted with the Georgian National Volleyball Federation, which, with the support of the Dutch Embassy in Georgia, became the primary implementer of the project.

The project was implemented with the aim of developing confidence and fostering a rapprochement between Georgian and Ossetian communities in South Ossetia (Georgia) in the South Ossetia (Georgia). The sports grounds were used not only for conducting volleyball matches but also for other sporting and cultural events. This project helped establish a foundation for the development of a Georgian-Ossetian intercommunity/interethnic dialogue, especially at the youth level. The elements of trust were laid along with the construction works – with the involvement of local ethnic Georgians

as well as ethnic Ossetians. Unfortunately in the aftermath of the August 2008 conflict between Georgia and Russia, a large part of the population of Disevi village had to leave their homes and now live in different settlements for IDPs.

Among the achievements that could be mentioned is the successful participation of the “Unionists from Georgia” football team – a team made up of former football players who are now internally displaced persons from Abkhazia (Georgia) and South Ossetia (Georgia) – in the Social Inclusion Games in Odense (Denmark) in August 2009.

Considering the fact that the main victims of the conflicts in Abkhazia (Georgia) and the South Ossetia (Georgia) have been the non-separatist population of the conflict zones, it is highly important to include them into social life and focus attention on the necessity of protecting their rights.

The decision to finance the participation of the team was made by the Parliament of Georgia and the Georgian Government. This represents the first steps in the promotion of the philosophy of street soccer on the grassroots level in Georgia. The team’s participation in international activities provided a successful example of sport as a means for dialogue and integration that could also be applied to other unprivileged groups, including former criminals, alcoholics and drug addicts.

- **Sustainability:** The Sport for Peace programme is incorporated into the involved organisations’ routines and has been operating since 2002.
- **Anti-discrimination:** The initiatives under this programme are directed towards the promotion of the rights of different

groups under risk of being discriminated against, such as refugees/IDPs, minority groups and other conflict-affected members of the population.

- **Effectiveness and impact:** The programme is not directed towards the involvement of a large number of beneficiaries but rather towards the involvement of groups that are currently not receiving significant attention and/or cooperation; it aims at implementing innovative ideas, forms or formats for using sport in peace building.
- **Transferability:** Most activities of the programme have a regional or trans-regional character and could be transferred both from a geographical and/or thematic point of view. For example, football-related initiatives may also be implemented in other sports.
- **Review and assessment:** As the programme is one main focus of involved organisation’s work, it is reviewed and assessed along with its other strategic priorities.
- **Participation of the beneficiaries:** The activities within the programme bring representatives of different groups of beneficiaries and stakeholders from governmental structures, professional sport organisations and mass media together with local citizens and members of local initiative groups.

## Wrestling tournaments: traditional sports

**Implementer(s):** citizens of local communities

**Venue (city, region and country):** villages of South Ossetia (Georgia) which were affected by armed conflict in 1992-1993 and in August 2008

**Involved partners:** local authorities, local NGOs

**Involved countries and / or regions:** Georgia

**Project period / Date of the event:** annually during summer

**Target group(s):** local communities

**Sport:** Wrestling

Along with football, wrestling is one of the most popular sports in the Caucasus. National wrestling styles such as “Kokh” in Armenia, “Gyulesh” in Azerbaijan, “Chidaoba” in Georgia have been known since ancient times. Each has its own characteristics and remains very popular today.

In the context of this example, the traditional form of Georgian wrestling known as “Chidaoba” will be considered. Chidaoba is one of the oldest sports in the world. It was mentioned as early as the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. in some Georgian documents. The tradition of organising Chidaoba competitions for anniversaries or weddings is still kept in many towns and villages in the region – particularly in the villages of South Ossetia (Georgia), which were affected by the armed conflicts in both 1992-93 and August 2008.

The wrestling tournaments start at the beginning of the summer season and are conducted every Friday, Saturday and Sunday in different villages. People from all the surrounding villages gather for these tournaments, which are accompanied by national musical

instruments such as the zurna and doli (drum). The site of the tournament is usually very crowded. The tradition of holding these competitions has only been interrupted by war, during the armed clashes in South Ossetia (Georgia) in the 1990s. The armed conflict in August 2008 furthermore interrupted the tradition. The tradition is so powerful that it has a high potential for recovery, however, and the traditional rural tournaments were reinitiated in 2009 and 2010, primarily due to the enthusiasm and involvement of local residents.

The fact that these tournaments are considered being more than just entertainment is underlined in the biographic notes of the well-known wrestler and later coach Dmitry Mindiashvili:

*“On these evenings in the village everything was important, everything mattered, and this in turn left their mark on the local youth, causing us to consider carefully and thoughtfully into the details of life, to develop a code of honour. In the village the wrestling was never just a struggle. It was an element of physical and moral education”.*

Dmitry Mindiashvili, Krasnoyarsk<sup>13</sup>

The tournaments are a good example of self-organisation of local communities. They are not only an opportunity to pass the time, but a place for communication and exchange of views.

Several of these tournaments have been organised in the traditional places for wrestling competitions – Pkhvenisi – by the local organisation “Bridge of Friendship – Kartlosi”. New, special sport clothing was given to the participants (wrestlers), as were prizes for

13. Dmitry Mindiashvili, “Do not leave me, love ...” (autobiography), Krasnoyarsk: Siberian Printing House, 2003.

the winners in each of the weight categories and special prizes for showing tolerance, courage, etc. This is one of the ways of supporting the local communities affected by war and conflict.

- **Sustainability:** The sustainability of these tournaments is based on tradition, the mobilisation of local communities, and the representation of people of all ages, regardless of ethnicity or gender. Organising the tournaments requires modest resources, but it is very important for the rehabilitation of the wrestling sites in the villages.
- **Anti-discrimination:** The wrestling tournaments do not have an articulated focus on anti-discrimination, however elements of tolerance, confidence, and respect are incorporated into it. Ethnic Georgians, Ossetians, and representatives of mixed families take part in the tournament. The preparations and implementation of the tournaments are regulated by adult local citizens having authority and respect from the local population. The locals themselves select the referees whose decisions are respected.
- **Effectiveness and impact:** According to very rough calculations, about 2,000 persons participated in the tournament in South Ossetia (Georgia) alone every year. As activities are organised on the grass roots level by local citizens (who are not incorporated into any organisational structures), there is no recording of statistics or formal assessment of the effectiveness and impact of these traditional sports.
- **Transferability:** Traditional sports are very popular in the neighbouring countries. The organisation of similar events with a

regional character (for example, a Caucasian festival of traditional sports) has great transfer potential.

- **Participation of the beneficiaries:** Local citizens are both the organisers and participants of the events. Nevertheless, some tournaments are organised with the participation of local NGOs working on issues of youth and community mobilisation, which allows the integration of innovative educative elements.

## Tournament “Notkora”

**Implementer(s):** Kakheti Centre for Civic Initiatives

**Venue (city, region and country):** Kakheti region, Georgia

**Involved partners:** Local authorities, local mass media, FARE, Universities, Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly Georgian National Committee, Women’ Informational Center, Public Movement Multinational Georgia National NGOs

**Involved countries and / or regions:** Georgia

**Project period / Date of the event:** was launched in 2007, conducted annually during the FARE Action Week

**Target group(s):** Pupils representing different ethnic groups, University Students

**Sport:** Football

Since 2007, the Kakheti Centre for Civic Initiatives has held the “Notkora” football championship. The tournament is conducted within the framework of the FARE Action Weeks.

Notkora is the name of one of the ancient Christian monasteries in the Kakheti region. It is visited frequently by ethnic Georgians and also by the Azerbaijani living nearby, as they regard this place as a holy site. According to one legend, a prayer in the temple helps childless families in particular. According to another legend, the relics of the eighth century king St. Archil, who was massacred by conquerors, are buried at this site. The temple is situated on an ancient natural border – Turdo Gorge, dividing the two ancient Georgian kingdoms, Kakheti and Ereti.

Before 2002 the monument was dilapidated and disused, and a group of young students – ethnic Georgians and Ossetians (also from

regions affected by conflict) – enlisted local youth to help organise the “Notkotra 2002” youth peacemaking camp which promoted archaeological excavations and the cleaning up of the monument. Thus, this historical site is an original symbol of tolerance and mutual understanding of different ethnic groups.

As in the other parts of Georgia, different ethnic groups live in the Kakheti region, and for the stable development of the region it is necessary to support an atmosphere of confidence and mutual understanding between them, as well as equal engagement in various activities – including sport.

Despite the fact that there have never been any armed conflicts in Kakheti, as there have in other regions of Georgia – these conflicts have still an impact on interethnic relationships in the region. Internally displaced people from Abkhazia (Georgia) and a large community of ethnic Ossetians are currently living in the Kakheti region.

Initially the tournament was conducted with school football teams (of the 9th, 10th and 11th classes) from the five villages of the Kakheti region: Karajali, Notkora, Gulgula, Vardisubani and Areshperani. These villages were not chosen accidentally: the first is home to ethnic Azerbaijanis, while ethnic Georgians live in the following three villages and the fifth of these villages is home to ethnic Ossetians.

The main objectives of the tournament are:

- To develop trust, confidence, understanding and tolerance among the teenagers of the different ethnic groups of the Kakheti region, represented by the five villages’ school football teams;
- To draw the attention of the local authorities to the situation of youth football in the Kakheti region.

The tournament attempts to reflect the current political situation and reduce any interethnic tensions. For example, the 2008 tournament took place in the Areshperani village (Lagodekhi rayon). At that time the mass media reported that in the villages of the Kakheti region, particularly in Areshperani, the Ossetian population had been forced to leave their homes. After examining the facts, it appeared that this information did not correspond with the actual situation in Areshperani, yet the dissemination of this information could contribute to the formation of new tensions. In this situation it was particularly important to undertake some kind of action in Areshperani in order to promote an atmosphere of confidence and mutual understanding among the representatives of the different ethnic groups living in the region.<sup>14</sup>

The local population greatly appreciated the fact that the tournament took place in their village. They understood that such kinds of events demonstrate their involvement in the larger society. The tournament also helped to draw attention to the various problems experienced by the population in this village.

The Kakheti Centre for Civic Initiatives attempts to involve other NGOs by presenting special prizes for the tournament. Local authorities as well as the mass media also participate in the tournament.

Under the framework of the FARE Action Week 2009, it was decided to organise a tournament of University teams. Ultimately, teams from the following universities took part: the Sukhumi branch of Tbilisi Ivane Javakishvili State University, Tbilisi State Ilia Chavchavadze University, the Art Academy of Georgia, Gori University, Telavi Iakob

Gogebashvili State University and Zugdidi Meskhi State University. An important decision has been to conduct future tournaments for teams from South Caucasian universities. Regional and local authorities also supported the tournament. Special Prizes were prepared on the name of authorities of Kakheti region. Furthermore, the municipality of Zugdidi provided assistance in transportation of the Zugdidi Meskhi State University team.

- **Sustainability:** The Notkora tournament has already become a tradition in the multiethnic Kakheti Region and is conducted every year as a part of the FARE Action Week.
- **Anti-discrimination:** The tournament is not only a new opportunity for children and youth to play football but also a chance to interact with peers from other neighbouring communities, to embrace the spirit of fair play, to learn more about the threats of intolerance and discrimination and to find out about the role of football in fighting this dangerous phenomenon.
- **Effectiveness and impact:** Within four years about 450 pupils and university students representing different ethnic groups (Azerbaijanis, Georgians, Ossetians), IDPs and community youth affected by war – living in Telavi as well as in other cities/villages – have participated in the tournament.
- **Transferability:** The organiser's approaches are flexible and creative, which allows the possibility of implementing the tournament in various locations. The topics that are chosen as headings for the tournaments – tolerance, peaceful co-existence, multiculturalism – are defined in a broad sense so that participants in various regions can identify with them.

<sup>14</sup> European Center for Minority Issues.

- **Review and assessment:** The implementation of each tournament is based on the review and assessment of the results of the previous ones. Analyses of current political and social situations are also taken into consideration when planning and designing the programmes of the tournaments.
- **Participation of the beneficiaries:** Consultations with beneficiaries and local and regional authorities, national NGOs, schools, Universities are conducted on all stages of the tournament.

## Safe Play Area Project

**Implementer(s):** International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Azerbaijani Red Crescent

**Venue (city, region and country):** Azerbaijan's frontline regions (districts of Agdam, Gazakh, Tovuz, Aghstafa, Aghjabadi, Fizuli, Goy-Gol, Goranboy, Terter and Gadabey)

**Involved partners:** Norwegian Red Cross, International Olympic Committee, population of local communities

**Involved countries and / or regions:** Azerbaijan

**Project period / Date of the event:** 2005-2010

**Target group(s):** schoolchildren

**Sport:** various, the focus being on building safe areas to practice sport

As a consequence of the hostilities in Azerbaijan, landmines have caused havoc and threats that many communities still have to face – including the fact that it has not been safe for children to play outside. The Safe Play Area Project intends to create spaces for children and young people to move and exercise without the risk of stepping on a landmine or other explosive remnants of war. The programme creates a site within a community that is “known to be safe and which has been developed into an outdoor recreational place for children and adolescents. Ideally, the area is fenced off. Simple messages are placed around it to warn about the danger posed by mines and other explosive remnants of war” (ICRC 2008).

The Safe Play Area Project started in 2005, with financial support from the Norwegian Red Cross and additional technical support from the International Red Cross. Further financial and operational support was granted by the International Olympic Committee.

Since its original implementation, several Safe Play Areas have been established that guarantee children safety while playing.

The aim of the Safe Play Area Project is to create spaces for families to spend time together, while at the same time making children alert to the land mines and explosive remnants of war – it is based on the experience that the number of victims of landmines increases significantly during the summer months (ICRC 2008).

The Safe Play Areas are specifically designed to fit the needs of young schoolchildren. Organised sports and games in the Safe Play Areas like football and badminton represent a valuable contribution to decreasing the number of landmine victims.

- **Sustainability:** The development of sport infrastructure and creation of safe playgrounds in particular represent contributions to the safe lives of local communities. Local students participated in the design and construction of the areas, allowing the locals to identify with the project and the newly designed areas more readily and continuously.
- **Anti-discrimination:** Children in the targeted communities were deprived of their fundamental right to have safe places for sport, exercise and play.
- **Effectiveness and impact:** Some 3,500 children living in 42 communities in the districts of ten territorial units can play safely and without fear (ICRC 2008). The local families accepted the offer of the safe play areas and continue to use these areas.
- **Transferability:** Landmines and other explosive remnants of war are a threat in other (post-) conflict communities, not only in the South Caucasus region. It is very important to create safe



play areas as well as to organise children's summer activities in order to decrease existing risks.

- **Review and assessment:** The project developed a good structure of review and assessment mechanisms that build on reports and feedback from the local population and the direct beneficiaries of the project.
- **Participation of the beneficiaries:** Students and children participated in the design and construction of the areas.

## Chess Festival – UN Cup Tournament

**Implementer(s):** Armenian United Nations Association (AUNA) and the Chess Academy of Armenia

**Venue (city, region and country):** Qualifying tournaments are conducted in more than 35 Armenian cities prior to the Chess Festival, UN Cup-Tournament in Yerevan.

**Involved partners:** Chess Federation of Armenia, United Nations Department of Public Information (UN DPI), United Nations Communication Group (UN CG), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), Gafeschian Foundation, Armeconombank, “Pyunic” – Union for Disabled, Yerevan State University (YSU) and Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU).

**Involved countries and / or regions:** Armenia

**Project period / Date of the event:** 2005-2008

**Target group(s):** schoolchildren aged 6-12

**Sport:** Chess

The Chess Festival-UN Cup Tournaments were held within the scope of the UN International Peace Day under the motto “Sports for Peace”. The project goal was to “promote the dissemination of UN mission, values, principles and spreading Peace Culture and creating an atmosphere of Dialogue and Tolerance through Sport in Armenia” (AUNA 2008a). The first tournament was organised in September 2005.

The tournaments were conducted annually in the 35 cities where the Chess Academy has its local branches. The Academy’s trainers conducted local competitions and the winners were selected for participation in the final Festivals in Yerevan. Around 5,600 children directly participated in local tournaments, and 160 children and

180 adults were involved in the Chess Festivals in Yerevan. This was an opportunity for the children to meet and play with international chess grand masters and Armenian Olympic champions, which created additional motivation for them to participate.

Since it was co-organised by the UN, the project always received significant attention from high-level UN officials, and different UN agencies encouraged and supported the provision of funding and the dissemination of UN publications, T-shirts, etc. The tournament contributed to awareness on the part of the involved children for UN values: they met with UN representatives and received information concerning UN activities and programmes.

- **Sustainability:** The Chess Festival-UN Cup Tournaments became an annual event after their establishment in 2005, and were conducted every year until 2009. The festival was part of the activities of AUNA in which sport was used as a tool for promoting the values of peace and tolerance. Though the annual tradition was broken because of the global financial crisis, largely affecting the Armenian economy, AUNA is nevertheless planning to re-establish it and to organise the next tournament in 2011.
- **Anti-discrimination:** Children from various ethnic groups participated in the tournaments. Organisers paid great attention to the involvement of refugees and disabled persons. This was aided through close cooperation with organisations like “Pyunic” – Union for Disabled.
- **Effectiveness and impact:** Participation in the tournament creates an environment of equality, even though the participants might have different ethnic backgrounds or are refugees. Chess

reaches many people in Armenia and the chess tournament is a good way to raise awareness of the values of peace.

- **Transferability:** The Chess Festival represents an interesting example how an intellectual game or sport can be involved in the promotion of a culture of peace. AUNA is planning to enlarge the framework of the Chess Festival, making it a cross-regional event throughout the South Caucasus region.
- **Participation of the beneficiaries:** Trainers, directors of the chess clubs and parents have the opportunity to participate in all stages of the tournament. The Chess Festival creates an opportunity for representatives of international organisations, NGOs, the media and institutions of higher education to meet and find ways of cooperation.

## Caucasian Cup

**Implementer(s):** International Union of Caucasus Youth (IUCY)

**Venue (city, region and country):** Tbilisi, Georgia

**Involved partners:** Tbilisi City Hall, Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs of Georgia

**Involved countries and / or regions:** 12 ethnic groups living in Georgia

**Project period / Date of the event:** May, 2010

**Target group(s):** schoolchildren, 10th to 12th grade

**Sport:** Football

The International Union of Caucasus Youth is a newly established organisation. It is a multicultural team with members from various origins, all living in Georgia. In the summer of 2009 two groups from the Union participated in trips to remote regions of Georgia: Pankisi Gorge (where Kists and refugees from Chechnya live) and Kvareli rayon (Avar village). The aim of these field trips was to study traditions of the local population and conduct research into local realities and difficulties. Through discussions and interaction with the local youth, the idea of conducting a football tournament emerged. This was supported by the Tbilisi City Hall and the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs of Georgia, which allocated resources for transportation, accommodation, and catering. The objective of the tournament was rapprochement and integration of youth with different ethnic background living in Georgia. The organisers also intended to contribute to the setting-up of a regional Caucasus identity. Altogether 120 teenagers formed 12 teams representing the following ethnic groups: Abkhaz, Armenians, Assyrians, Avars, Azeris, Georgians, Greeks, Jews, Kists, Kurds, Ossetians and Russians.

Besides the tournament, a special cultural programme that included sightseeing in Tbilisi and visits at cinemas and parks was organised for all participants. For some of the children coming from various remote regions – particularly the Ossetian, Armenian and Avar teams – it was their first visit to Tbilisi.

- **Sustainability:** The tournament has the potential to be continued and will be held again in 2011. The event initiators have plans to go beyond the context of Georgia and expand the participants to include the neighbouring countries – especially the Republics of the North Caucasus of the Russian Federation. A team from Ingushetia and Dagestan (Russian Federation) has already confirmed its participation in the next tournament. Negotiations are also being conducted with participants from the Republic of North Ossetia – Alania (Russian Federation) as well as with the bordering regions of Armenia and Azerbaijan.
- **Anti-discrimination:** For such a multicultural region, where the risk of renewed hostilities is very high, it is important to create a foundation for the peaceful coexistence of different ethnic and confessional groups. The format of the tournament promote the idea that future peace as well as the sustainable development of the region depend on the next generations. During the tournament, each team was introduced by a well-known and prominent member of the Georgian society (journalists, writers and scientists) of the same ethnic background. They underscored the importance of civil integration and active citizenship. Their examples inspired and empowered the participants in the tournament.
- **Effectiveness and impact:** The tournament contributed to the development of interpersonal relations of children and youth

from different ethnic groups and regions of Georgia. Participants in the tournament keep in communication via the internet, phone calls, and visits to families. The project contributed to an increased youth involvement in civic activities. Some of the tournament participants became interested in the activities of IUCY and are now members of this organisation.

- **Review and assessment:** After the event, the planners reviewed the whole process of the project and proposed several changes for the next tournament, such as getting additional support from international sports organisations.
- **Participation of the beneficiaries:** The tournament itself was initiated and implemented by the beneficiaries. Cooperation with local experts working on conflict resolution and the strengthening of civil society within the Caucasus region also contributed to the successful implementation of the project and its future development.

## Sport Unites People Regional Youth Camp

**Implementer(s):** Armenian United Nations Association, AUNA (Armenia), Educational Centre for Youth, ECY (Azerbaijan), Academy for Peace and Development, APD (Georgia)

**Venue (city, region and country):** Ureki, Georgia

**Involved partners:** British Council offices in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia

**Involved countries and / or regions:** Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia

**Project period / Date of the event:** August 2008

**Target group(s):** youth aged 18-25

**Sport:** beach volleyball, football, traditional board games, triathlon, water polo

According to the organisers, the project's aims and objectives were:

- To challenge young people and empower youth through sport activities
- To raise awareness of sport as a tool for intercultural cooperation
- To contribute to youth active participation as leaders in local and international initiatives

The summer camp gathered 21 participants between the ages of 18 and 25 from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia in Ureki, Georgia, in August 2008. Campers participated in workshops focusing on six main themes: sport, culture, education, teamwork, leadership and communication (Sport Unites People 2008: 2), all organised with the goal of empowering and training future youth leaders – students, members of youth initiative groups, youth NGOs – to use sport activities as a tool in their work with local youth work (AUNA 2008).

The camp activities included board games such as backgammon and Shashki (checkers), as well as water sports (mainly water polo) and a beach volleyball competition.

- **Sustainability:** Though the initiative had a “one-off” character, elements of sustainability like partnership, leadership, communication, teamwork and intercultural learning were built into the programme. The organisers focused on the working fields of the participants and explored the idea of future joint projects.
- **Anti-discrimination:** The young people who were selected for the programme had different ethnic backgrounds or represented communities that were divided as a result of conflicts in the South Caucasus region. One of the objectives of the Camp was to promote intercultural tolerance and mutual understanding among these groups.
- **Effectiveness and impact:** The programme proved that the “Youth and Sport” rubric has significant potential to engage young people in intercultural dialogue and activity. The project had a multiplier effect: after returning home, school participants organised similar activities in Charentsavan and Meghradzor (Kotayk region, Armenia).
- **Transferability:** The Sport Unites People youth summer camp was conducted as part of the “Youth! Sport! Action!” global pilot project for the 2012 Olympics. The extensive activities for youth in the South Caucasus as well as in other countries of the South East Europe region included sport competitions (triathlon, basketball, football, water games) and educational events.

- **Review and assessment:** Evaluation sessions took place, and evaluation forms were filled in by participants, focusing in particular on the successes and shortcomings of the programme.
- **Participation of the beneficiaries:** Youth camp participants were actively involved in the planning and implementation process. The programme of the camp was tailored to their expectations as expressed in application forms as well as during daily summarising sessions.

## 5. Conclusions and recommendations

Sport has the potential to contribute to inclusive social change and social cohesion on a modest scale – but this does not happen automatically. In the context of post-conflict countries and regions or other fragile situations, social cohesion does not come by itself and sport cannot be seen as an impartial or even independent body, which has not been influenced or sometimes even hijacked by the conflict or the conflict parties.

Therefore project implementers have to take the political and social circumstances in their target regions into consideration when drafting actions for overcoming ethnic, sexual or religious discrimination or designing projects to build bridges between various entities, stakeholders and interests.

The general political conditions in post-conflict societies that projects have to deal with could be described as follows:

- A serious lack of political legitimacy (a “vicious cycle” of low legitimacy and low state capacity);
- Poor-quality governance (“bad governance”) associated with ongoing conflicts and systemic corruption (including the usurpation of state structures by special interests and organised crime);
- A perpetuation of existing power structures and domination (strictly hierarchical social power structures, the strong exploiting the weak and the monopolisation of access to power and resources) (Andriuk 2010);
- State structures that could not provide basic functions for social inclusion, especially for highly marginalised communities (such as minorities and other discriminated groups);

- A lack of strong and independent civil society communities and organisations as well as a lack of cooperation between these actors and the political sphere (very often civil society organisations are not recognised by the power structures).

For those reasons, *sport inclusion projects in post-conflict societies have to focus from the very beginning on building bridges between the various stakeholders and on creating mutual understanding and trust.* This has to be done not only between former conflict parties or entities but within the societies themselves, because cooperation and networking in terms of social cohesion through sport are often very weak and unfortunately civil society organisations are no exception. Social cohesion in post-conflict societies is needed to ensure the positive development of the various actors in the social and political field of sport. In addition, media attention is key, even if this attention is only temporary, because the echo effect of more and more projects can finally result in changed attitudes and raised awareness of such topics.

To guarantee the impact and sustainability of the actions, local and regional ownership is extremely important. Sometimes local communities seem to be only the targets or beneficiaries of programmes and projects, but are not themselves involved in the process of designing the strategies and contents of the events. This could especially be a problem if the communities are not ready to deal with the addressed issues or feel patronised by foreign donors, international NGOs or other outside organisations, but have to participate in the programme because of their own financial interests or, even worse, due to pressure from political powers. To resolve such problems, sport inclusion projects should be organised from the start in partnership with the stakeholders in the region, especially from



the local and regional level. Sensitivity to the target groups' needs and individual backgrounds is crucial to the success of a project. Moreover, local participants often have to address wider social and economic problems that project implementers from abroad do not know or care about, such as for example, the lack of infrastructure and facilities or the need for safe sports locations. In this sense the projects should be as inclusive as possible and easy to follow up without strong logistical or financial support from outside.

On the other hand, and as already mentioned in the research, sport-based interventions should be part of a wider agenda of social and political change, for instance by engaging national or European organisational bodies and universities in the project so that they can connect the micro level of the sport project with the macro level of broader sport policy and knowledge building. This sounds contradictory to the paragraph above, but the commitment to international initiatives or campaigns, such as FARE – Football Against Racism in Europe – could help to focus on regional or national problems on discrimination while at the same time discussing these issues on a European level. This could be extremely useful in regions where all concerned parties see themselves as victims of the conflict and will help to create a common regional goal and ownership to the project.

Finally, trans-regional sporting events should be seen as an instrument of peacemaking and peacekeeping. Such initiatives are an opportunity to overcome divisions between opposing groups or entities and give representatives of different interests the chance to present their regional, religious or ethnical concerns notwithstanding any disagreements and conflicts. Additionally, such events could help to mobilise positive values of regional identification and cooperation.

## Practical recommendations

Some of our recommendations relate to the Vienna Action Plan, which was compiled by VIDC following the Vienna “Development through Football” Conference on 23-24 April 2010.<sup>15</sup> The recommendations are targeted towards public authorities, youth organisations and schools, NGOs, sport clubs and sport associations in post-conflict regions and cover sport in general.

### *Sports and Conflict Resolution*

- While sport in itself cannot solve conflicts, it should be used as a tool for preventing violence, ethnic and regional tensions and war
- Use sport as a resource for dialogue and cultural exchange in post-conflict areas
- Establish long-term programmes to reconcile former war and conflict parties through sports, including child combatants, soldiers and other victims
- Engage, consult and cooperate with local grassroots NGOs and local political actors
- Train and advise local NGOs in order to take advantage of the available funding opportunities
- Conduct trans-regional sport events that can play a significant role in peacekeeping and promoting mutual trust as well as exchanging best practises between various actors

15. Vienna Action Plan from 23-24 April 2010: <http://www.footballfordevelopment.net/documents/downloads>.

- Develop regional platforms for sport development, coordination and cooperation to promote mutual understanding and enhance the process of Europeanisation and commitment to European initiatives
- Implement a permanent monitoring system on a regional or national level to analyse the current situation regarding discrimination and racism in sport
- Investments in infrastructure on all levels of sport are needed, especially to develop safe locations for practising sports
- Sport at all events should gain more public interest and investment, particularly if the events are targeting former conflict parties and entities. Here traditional forms of sport, which are organised on the level of communities or regions, should be in focus, as should the inclusion of vulnerable groups such as children, youth, disabled persons or ethnic or social minorities
- Implement life-long learning coaching for promoting and exercising social values in and through sport
- Develop regional ICT tools and databases for sport leaders, which would result in better regional cooperation and knowledge exchange

#### Targeting schools and young people

- Use non-formal education to link football, as well as other sports, with teaching in marginalised communities that are not involved with the mainstream education system, or may not learn as effectively in a conventional classroom environment

- Design educational strategies that incorporate sport to attract young people and introduce them to important issues in the areas of health and sanitation, civil responsibilities, discrimination and overcoming social barriers
- Include development through sports and anti-discrimination in the curricula of educational institutions
- Develop preventive work with fans and spectators to encourage self-regulation mechanisms in fan culture and integrate this work into transnational initiatives

#### Media and Campaigning

- Ensure consciousness-raising coverage that does not reproduce prejudice and stereotyping, and report successes and positive stories to provide a balanced perception of vulnerable and under-privileged groups
- Establish cooperation with private and public media to report on sport for development issues and make information accessible, especially to marginalised societies
- Design a strategy to build media capacity by training and sensitising journalists in the area of anti-discrimination through sport
- Consult and actively exchange with development NGOs and experts from the World South; build partnerships with projects using platforms such as the International Platform on Sport and Development

### *Tackling Gender Inequity and Raising Gender Awareness*

- Raise awareness among teachers, coaches, media, sports bodies and other stakeholders to ensure accessibility to all kinds of sports by males and females alike
- Adopt strategies against stereotyping based on gender, sexual orientation and other forms of discrimination and protect all people who challenge social norms by their free choice and exercise of sport
- Assess the socio-cultural context and select adequate types of sports (gradual steps) specifically adapted to various target groups
- Make pedagogical and didactical considerations with regard to coeducational and other group dynamic forms related to gender
- Pro-actively identify and create (especially) female role models and involve them in a systematic and conscious way
- Claim and ensure safe and adequate spaces especially for girls and women to play sports
- Identify and involve the main “gatekeepers” (people who prohibit female participation) and account for them in every stage of the planning, implementation and evaluation process.

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