

### Moving-ON

Beyond discriminations, promoting inclusion of Roma, Sinti and Travellers communities in Europe through sport

# Booklet

3.2 Video Storytelling output with the collection of the stories and interviews



Co-funded by the European Union

















#### **MOVING-ON**

BEYOND DISCRIMINATIONS, PROMOTING INCLUSION OF ROMA, SINTI AND TRAVELLERS COMMUNITIES IN EUROPE THROUGH SPORT

#### CERV-2022-EQUAL - PROJECT N. 101084712

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



Co-funded by the European Union







fare



EXCHANGE HOUSE IRELAND National Travellers Service





# TABLE OF CONTENT

#### Introduction

- 2 The First Spark: From Passion to Practice
- Adversity and Resilience:
  Navigating Challenges
- Beyond Limits:
  Overcoming Barriers
- 5 Guiding Lights: Role Models and Inspirations
- Paving the Way:Advocating for Change
- 7 Conclusion

### INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the photo booklet that captures the essence of our project, MOVING ON. This booklet brings together powerful visual and narrative extracts from the interviews conducted with participants of our events, focusing on the voices and experiences of Roma, Sinti, and Travellers (RST) communities across Europe.

At the heart of this initiative lies our commitment to promoting equality, inclusion, and active participation of RST youth in sports and through sports, ensuring that every voice is heard and valued.



By sharing these stories, we aim to challenge and dismantle anti-gypsyism, foster gender equality, and highlight the transformative power of sport as a tool for social inclusion. This project not only advocates for fairness but also strives to inspire future generations to continue breaking down barriers.

This booklet is divided into five sections, each capturing different aspects of the participants' journeys. It begins with how their interest in sports was sparked, followed by the challenges they faced, including discrimination, and how they overcame them. The stories then highlight moments of breaking barriers that contributed to their growth. The booklet also explores the impact of influential figures who inspired and guided them. Finally, it reflects on their perspectives on combating discrimination in sports and their hopes for inspiring social change.



As you journey through this booklet, you will witness how sport is being used as a catalyst to break down barriers, create trust, and support the meaningful participation of RST youth in sports. These stories are more than just testimonies; they are a testament to the enduring spirit of these communities and the impact of inclusive EU policies on their lives.

Thank you for joining us in celebrating these stories.

### METHODOLOGY

In collaboration with local youth groups from both Roma, Sinti, and Traveller (RST) and non-RST communities, interviews were conducted at both local and EU levels to gather a wide array of perspectives. This inclusive approach brought together voices from diverse cultural backgrounds, offering rich insights into their lived experiences.

The questions used in this methodology were designed to be qualitative and narrative-driven, focusing on allowing athletes to share their personal journeys. By emphasizing storytelling, the methodology provided a platform for athletes to express their challenges, triumphs, and reflections in a detailed and introspective way. This approach not only highlighted individual stories but also sought to create a deeper understanding of how broader social and cultural factors shaped their experiences.

The narrative-based interviews allowed for a more holistic exploration of the athletes' lives, shedding light on the complex interplay between identity, sport, and community. Through this process, the interviews became a space for empowerment, encouraging participants to articulate their unique perspectives and contributing to the larger conversation on inclusion and diversity in sports.



### APPROACH

This approach goes beyond quantitative data to provide a deeper understanding of athletes' lived realities. The questions are designed to encourage self-reflection and storytelling, capturing the nuances of their experiences and their impact on personal growth, role modeling and social change.

The booklet reflects on the changes needed in the world of sport to combat discrimination and offers hope for inspiring social change and greater inclusivity.

### THE ATHLETS

Featuring athletes from Italy, Ireland, the Czech Republic and Spain, this collection offers a rich tapestry of experiences.

By sharing these stories, this booklet aims to raise awareness of the discrimination that RST athletes often face, challenge stereotypes and advocate for a more inclusive sporting environment.

### AIM

These stories go beyond overcoming obstacles; they are about resilience, empowerment and the transformative power of sport as a catalyst for change. As both an educational tool and a source of inspiration, this booklet highlights the achievements of these remarkable athletes and promotes a more inclusive and diverse sports community.

### **VIDEO INTERVIEWS**

Below you will find the link to access the YouTube playlist we created to showcase our collection of 16 stories. We have three stories from the Czech Republic (featuring four protagonists), three from Ireland, six from Italy, and four from Spain.



To enhance accessibility, we have chosen to use YouTube as a resource for its automatic translation services. This approach allows for a broader reach across multiple languages without the limitations of regional Roma dialects, which vary significantly and are not mutually intelligible.

For instance, in Ireland, Travellers speak a language entirely distinct from Romani, with Roma communities from diverse backgrounds using different dialects. Italy has its own range of dialects, including Sinti, Balkan Romanes, and Vlach, while in Spain, very few people still speak Calo. Czech Romani is also highly distinct from other dialects and would require separate translations. Given these variations, a single Roma language translation would not be practical. By using the main language of each country and leveraging YouTube's automatic translation features, we can achieve greater inclusivity and accessibility for all participants.

Passion for sport ignites a drive that inspires individuals to push their limits and strive for excellence. Coupled with consistent practice, this passion leads to significant personal growth, enhancing physical ability and mental resilience. The dedication to honing one's skills not only fosters a sense of accomplishment, but also builds character, teamwork, and a lifelong love for sports.

A passion for sport is particularly important for minority groups such as Roma, Sinti and Travellers. It provides a vital outlet for self-expression and fosters a sense of belonging within the community. When this passion is nurtured through consistent practice, it empowers individuals to break down barriers, build confidence and celebrate their identity, while promoting teamwork and resilience. Participation in sport helps create a more inclusive environment where diverse voices can thrive and be heard.

From the interviews conducted, it was noted that children often began training by following the example of a family member, highlighting the importance of having role models whitin their community. These role models demonstrate that training and sports participation are not only accessible but also achievable, inspiring the next generation to pursue their passions.



"My passion for boxing started with the YouTube videos and the movie about George Foreman."

**AARON STOIKO** 



#### WHO IS GEORGE FOREMAN?

George Edward Foreman (born January 10, 1949) is an American former <u>professional boxer</u>, entrepreneur, <u>minister</u>, and author. In boxing, he competed between 1967 and 1997 and was nicknamed "Big George". He is a two-time world <u>heavyweight</u> champion and an <u>Olympic</u> gold medalist. As an entrepreneur, he is known for the <u>George Foreman Grill</u>. After a troubled childhood, Foreman took up <u>amateur boxing</u> and won a gold medal in the heavyweight division at the <u>1968</u> <u>Summer Olympics</u>.

"I always loved sports. I played my whole life on the street. I had an educator who cared about us and gave me the opportunity to joint a club and start playing."



"My dad was a very good Gaelic footballer, I was 10 or 11 years old when I started playing." **JOHN COLLINS** 



#### 99

#### WHAT IS GAELIC FOOTBALL?

Gaelic football (Irish: Peil Ghaelach; short name Peil), commonly known as simply Gaelic, GAA or football, is an Irish team sport. A form of football, it is played between two teams of 15 players on a rectangular grass pitch. The objective of the sport is to score by kicking or punching the ball into the other team's goal (3 points) or between two upright posts above the goal and over a crossbar 2.5 metres (8 ft 2 in) above the ground (1 point).





"My interest for boxing is born from my family, I saw my cousing fight for 2 or 3 times and I liked it."

#### **CARLETTO STOIKO**

"When I was very young, maybe 5 or 6 years old, my father brought me on the Gaelic pitch." **THOMAS MCDONNELL** 





My favorite sport is football because I love it and I started playing it when I was young JAN HLAVÁČ

"My passion for boxing born because of my cousin Erik. He had 3 or 4 fights, he ispired me. From there I started love boxing."





"My interest in sport came from a passion for bikes; I did both mountain biking and road biking. I've always enjoyed biking and I wanted to put it into practice at the sport level."

**BRAIAN HUDOROVIC** 

"My interest in sport began with my father, who was one of the first Roma boxers to be federated in the 60s. I learned many fundamental principles from him."



ANA GIMENEZ



My favourite sports are ice hockey and football. So hockey, because I've been watching it with my grandmother since I was about three years old and I like the sport, It's a rough sport, and I like rough stuff. And soccer, It's just something that belongs to a kid, I guess, soccer.

#### ERIK GIRGA

My favourite sport is football because I've just been doing it for a living since I was a kid, I enjoy it.

ANTONIO KOTLÁR





"I started from a young age, when I was about 4 or 5, I just took up a bit of boxing and football together and went back playing football on a traveller football team."

#### **THOMAS COLLINS**

"I started when I was 4 years old and played with my dad in the park. I saw that it wasn't just about running after a ball but about values, respect, things that enrich you as a person."



#### **ESTHER GOMEZ**



He said that his sport' experiences started by watching different fights in the ring on YouTube. Then he went to the gym, he trained and he got into the ring.

My favourite sport is football because I've just been doing it for a living since I was a kid, I enjoy it. I grew up with it since I was a kid, my grandpa played football, I got it from him. That's about it.



**VIKTOR TOKAR** 



"My interest in sports started since I was little with soccer and rugby, but in the end, I was more drawn to dance."

#### **DANI TORRES**

Resilience is the ability to face life's obstacles with strength, perseverance, and determination, turning adversity into an opportunity for personal growth and development. In sports, this quality is often essential for success, particularly for athletes who must continually navigate setbacks, injuries, or social challenges. For Roma and Sinti athletes, resilience takes on an even deeper significance, as they often contend not only with the physical and mental challenges inherent in their sports but also with social marginalization, discrimination, and cultural misunderstandings.

This session highlights the journeys of Roma and Sinti athletes who have faced significant hurdles throughout their athletic careers. These obstacles may have ranged from financial limitations, lack of access to training resources, or prejudices rooted in ethnic stereotypes. Despite these difficulties, the athletes interviewed have demonstrated remarkable resilience, channeling their struggles into motivation for improvement and eventual success. Their stories reflect how resilience can serve as a powerful tool, enabling individuals to grow stronger in the face of adversity and to view setbacks as opportunities to refine their skills, perspectives, and approaches.

By sharing the personal challenges they encountered and the strategies they used to overcome them, these athletes provide an inspiring testament to the power of resilience. Their journeys offer valuable lessons in determination, highlighting how embracing adversity can lead to both personal and professional growth. This session encourages readers to reflect on the importance of resilience in their own lives, recognizing that challenges are not barriers but stepping stones toward greater achievement.

"A difficult moment for me was when I was summoned to the national team. I went there alone for two to three days and faced the strongest boxer in Italy but I wanted to demonstrate my worth and overcome my fears so I stood up for myself."

**CARLETTO STOIKO** 



#### **ESTHER GOMEZ**

"During my boxing career, I've encountered offensive comments. With the support of my family, my own resilience, and guidance from my coach, I've learned how to handle these situations and respond effectively." MARCEL HUDOROVIC

"In sport, it is the only place I ever experienced discrimination. For a long time, I was the only traveller on my football team. You feel a bit an outcast for a while but you'll make friends."

**THOMAS MCDONNELL** 



"I have experienced discrimination in the first sports center I worked at, my colleagues made me feel different. I began to doubt if that was really my place; I even doubted myself."

ANA GIMENEZ

Aaron Stoiko told us that during his journey in boxing he experienced difficult moments, he wanted to quit but thought it would not be right to quit right away but, as he told us, "I have to keep going always and never give up because I believe in it."

#### **AARON STOIKO**

"Racism and discrimination begin to be felt in sports, I was strong on it so it didn't touch me but there are other guys I grew up with who wouldn't have been as strong as myself."

**THOMAS COLLINS** 



"I didn't experienced discrimination in soccer and rugby, but as a Roma, if there is any theft, I'm the first one they look at, even in a dance hall."

**DANI TORRES** 

"During my sports career as a boxer I faced some problems, some insults, and afterwards I solved them by talking to my cousins. Afterwards I went there with my family to talk to them."



"I don't want to say the name of team but I've been called "knacker" numerous times. I was called once a "smelly knacker" on the pitch."

#### **JOHN COLLINS**

I definitely want to take it as far as I can, like keep pushing on and on and on. But we just have to work and work on ourselves the way we have to and it's either going to work out or it's not going to work out.

JAN HLAVÁČ

The interviews conducted with RST athletes provide a unique and personal lens through which to examine the persistent barriers faced by this community. While many expressed a desire to break free from the constraints of discrimination and exclusion, their experiences highlight the complexity and depth of these challenges. For many, systemic prejudice remains a deeply rooted obstacle that extends beyond their athletic careers, affecting their everyday lives and limiting opportunities for growth and inclusion.

Through these interviews, it becomes evident that while there is a strong willingness to overcome these barriers, there is also a sense of skepticism among some of the individuals interviewed. They question whether meaningful change can truly be achieved, given the longstanding societal biases they continue to face. This skepticism reflects a broader tension between hope for progress and the harsh reality of continued discrimination. However, despite these doubts, many of the interviewees showcased remarkable perseverance and a desire to push beyond the limits imposed on them. Their stories reveal not only the external barriers they encounter–such as access to resources, institutional biases, and exclusion from key opportunities–but also the internal barriers, including self-doubt and the emotional toll of constant marginalization. Yet, for many of these athletes, sport serves as a powerful vehicle for overcoming such barriers, providing them with a platform to challenge stereotypes and redefine their own narratives.

Their experiences encourage us to reflect on what more can be done to foster genuine inclusion, both in sports and in society, and to acknowledge that while progress has been made, there is still much work ahead. This session challenges us to consider how we can collectively push beyond the limits of current thinking and take concrete steps toward dismantling the systems that perpetuate inequality.

"There'll be a lot of people now, they'll hiding their ethnicity or hiding that they are traveller in order to fit in. But you have to stand up straight and be proud of who you are because when you are called these names, you realise it is more to do with the person that is acting like that than to do with you."

THOMAS MCDONNELL



"Since I have been in the gym I have changed a lot, I have made friends in the gym. I feel more confident and stronger."

#### **EDUARD STOIKO**

"When I started in my profession at the fisrt sport center, it was very tough. I tought it wasn't for me; I had serious doubts and quit my job because of how they made me feel. I believed my career was over, but then I realized it was just beginning."

#### ANA GIMENEZ

"I wouldn't hide that I am a traveller, which I am very proud to say, and my son Patrick is also playing right now, he knows never to hide his identity as a member of the traveller community. I would tell Patrick, if he came up against discrimination on the pitch to walk away, even if it is hard. As I got older, I walked away from a lot of situations because nothing really comes out of it, you never win."



"One experience that made me grow as a person was joining the gym, it made me create a group, not the usual one, where we help each other, support each other and overcome our fears together."

#### **AARON STOIKO**

"I was very stubborn and always gor frustrated with myself, telling myself, "you can do more". It is fine to push yourself, but you need to know your limits. You can't do everything all at once because we are not machines. Breaking barriers meant realizing I shouldn't beat myself up so much on the field."

#### **ESTHER GOMEZ**



"I was hard to overcome discrimination because my dad didn't have the means to support me in soccer, so the clubs always subsidized me. I noticed the difference when I saw my teammates' parents, but my dad couldn't come with me."

"On a personal level when I had to overcome a very difficult time for me, I talked to the coach, he gave me advice that served me so much and I overcame myself even more."

MARCEL HUDOROVIC



"I overcome challenges breaking my family's norms and generational patterns. It is not common for a Roma to dedicate themselves to sensual bachata. It would be easier if I were a soccer player, but I've chosen to follow my path."

#### **DANI TORRES**

"To deal with the problems of discrimination, you can try to talk, without judging people because I don't know you and you don't know me. Here in the gym we are a big family and here we all have a love for boxing."

#### CARLETTO STOIKO

In this session, the Roma and Sinti athletes shared the individuals who inspired their passion for sport and shaped their dreams and aspirations. For many, these role models served not only as symbols of excellence in their chosen field but also as sources of motivation to aim higher and break through societal barriers. Whether it was a famous athlete, a coach, or a family member, these guiding lights played a significant role in encouraging them to pursue their goals, often against great odds. As these athletes recounted their stories, they spoke of the powerful influence of seeing someone who looked like them or came from a similar background succeed in sports.

This representation sparked their own dreams and ambitions, helping them believe that they too could achieve greatness. These figures, through their perseverance and achievements, became beacons of hope, motivating the athletes to work harder and remain focused on their goals, even in the face of challenges like discrimination or lack of access to resources.

Beyond the technical skills and competitive spirit, the athletes reflected on how their role models inspired their values, teaching them lessons of discipline, resilience, and the importance of pushing boundaries. These inspirations didn't just fuel their athletic performance; they instilled a sense of purpose, helping them envision a future where they could contribute to their community and inspire the next generation of Roma and Sinti youth. In sharing their dreams and goals, the athletes revealed their deep desire to transcend the limitations placed upon them, not only as athletes but also as members of marginalized communities. Their ambitions go beyond personal success—they aspire to challenge stereotypes, create pathways for future athletes from their communities, and act as role models themselves.

This session is a celebration of the power of inspiration. These stories remind us of the importance of visibility and mentorship in sports, showing that the influence of a role model can extend far beyond the field, creating a ripple effect that empowers future generations to aim higher and achieve more.

### "My idol is Mike Tyson"



#### WHO IS MIKE TYSON?

Mike Tyson, an iconic figure in boxing history, is known for his incredible power and speed in the ring. Born on June 30, 1966, in Brooklyn, New York, Tyson became the youngest heavyweight champion at just 20 years old. His aggressive style and relentless determination led him to dominate the sport in the late 1980s, earning him a reputation as one of the greatest boxers of all time. Despite facing personal challenges and setbacks, Tyson's resilience and charisma have allowed him to reinvent himself, transitioning into acting and business while remaining a beloved figure in sports.

#### "My biggest dream is to win Olympic gold and the world heavyweight title."

So my idol is **Neymar.** I like his style, I like his goals, I like his tackles, I like the way he just handles everything, he does it beautifully.



JAN HLAVÁČ

#### **AARON STOIKO**

"I always admire **Ricardinho** in futsal. In women's soccer, my role models are Alexia Putellas and the Brazilian player Marta."



#### **ESTHER GOMEZ**

"My dad is my biggest role model."

**JOHN COLLINS** 





"For me getting to the goal is crucial, when I get to the mountain it is a goal and when I reach it I am very happy."

#### **BRAIAN HUDOROVIC**

"So Lionel Messi I like about him is that how he just plays that football differently than other people like when he was at Barcelona, like he was killing it there, he had just found a different way to that game than other people. That's probably why he's my idol".

VIKTOR TOKAR

"My greatest role model, both in sport and in life, has always been my father. I always knew what I wanted to be thanks to him."



"My biggest dream is becoming a professionist and a world champion." **EDUARD STOIKO** 

"One of my role models was Rivaldo."

#### **ELI NAVARLAZ**

So in sports, I guess in football I would like to prove that I could play for a professional club, play for the Czech national team or just, or play in the Champions League. That would be my dream.

#### ANTONIO KOTLÁR

My dream in football is to get into a professional league and play in the Champions League.

**VIKTOR TOKAR** 

"In the world of bachata and salsa, there aren't many Roma role models. I know Lucas, a Roma who is a salsa champion in France."

#### **DANI TORRES**

### "My biggest dream is becoming the number 1."

#### MARCEL HUDOROVIC

In the final phase of our project, we delved into one of the most pressing issues faced by the Roma, Sinti, and Traveller (RST) communities: the persistent discrimination and exclusion that have historically marginalized them. This session focused on exploring not only the personal experiences of the interviewees but also their perspectives on how to overcome these systemic challenges.

Throughout the interviews, participants offered valuable insights on the steps needed to foster greater inclusion and equality for the RST communities. They spoke candidly about the prejudices they face, both within and outside the sporting world, and emphasized the importance of tackling these issues head-on. Many shared personal stories of discrimination–whether in access to resources, biased treatment, or exclusion from opportunities–that painted a vivid picture of the hurdles they regularly encounter.

Central to these discussions was the role that sport can play in advancing inclusion. For many interviewees, sport is not just a physical activity or competition but a powerful tool for social change. They believe that through sport, barriers between communities can be broken down, and individuals from diverse backgrounds can find common ground. The inclusive nature of sport, with its emphasis on teamwork, fair play, and meritocracy, provides an ideal platform to challenge stereotypes and build bridges between communities.

Several participants emphasized the need for structural changes within sports institutions to better support RST athletes. They called for more targeted outreach, resources, and support systems that can help level the playing field for underrepresented groups. Additionally, they advocated for educational programs that address the roots of discrimination, promoting empathy, understanding, and cultural awareness within both sports and broader society.

This session, "Paving the Way: Advocating for Change" remind us that the fight for equality is ongoing, and that through advocacy, education, and the unifying power of sport, we can collectively work toward a future where all individuals, regardless of their background, have equal opportunities to thrive.

"Here in the gym there is no discrimination, it is important to create a healthy environment where anyone feels comfortable. Sports should be fun and here the atlets come to have fun, to learn, to behave properly. Here they also learn to deal with the discrimination they find outside, having the strength of a group behind them. In the gym they understand the importance of getting along with everyone and for everyone to get along with them.

Coming into a big family, there are rules that have to be followed, there is mutual respect that has to be given. As a result, they learn how to talk, how to be together, overcome discrimination to experience a common passion together."



#### GABRIELE SPANO - ARES BOXING CLUB COACH

"I don't think it will ever change. It is 2024, nearly 2025 and we are still facing every day traveller getting refused from bars. To be honest, I don't think it is never going to change."

#### THOMAS COLLINS

"I think that within the courses that they do, there should be a bit around ethnicity and different ethnicities and inclusion as well, and to spot how someone might be feeling excluded or discriminated."

THOMAS MCDONNELL



"I think that there should be more value and visibility to our culture. We want respect as a people, to be accepted for who we are."

#### ANA GIMENEZ

"I contribute to raising awareness and social change by coaching girls, helping them achieve their goals. I talk to their parents and advocate for their dreams. Just by showing up and putting yourself out there, it makes a difference. The parents trust you, and that makes the path easier for the girls."

#### **ELI NAVARLAZ**

"I think there should be a lot more opened up for traveller communitiy in sport. I'd love to be able to contribute by going to different sites, talking about my experience through sports, and trying to get them out of the dark. I think every traveller should have the opportunity of one sport, especially during childhood."

#### **JOHN COLLINS**



"Being Roma and well-known is my contribution. I never deny my roots, I always proudly say that I'm Roma. To tackle discrimination education is key. Roma's teens need to understand that success isn't working at 17, but educating yourself. Then, the media should stop ridiculing us and show the true progress of our communities."

#### **DANI TORRES**



JAN HLAVÁČ Cech Republic



ERIK GIRGA Cech Republic



ANTONIO KOTLÁR Cech Republic



VIKTOR TOKAR Cech Republic



THOMAS MCDONNELL Ireland



THOMAS COLLINS Ireland



JOHN COLLINS Ireland



BRAIAN HUDOROVICH Italy



EDUARD STOIKO Italy



AARON STOIKO Italy



CARLETTO STOIKO Italy



MARCEL HUDOROVICH Italy



GABRIELE SPANO Italy







ELI NAVARLAZ Spain

ESTHER GOMEZ Spain

ANA GIMENEZ Spain

DANI TORRES Spain

### CONCLUSION



The purpose of this booklet is to promote equality, inclusion and active participation of Roma Sinti Travellers (RST) youth in sport. By sharing their stories, we aim to challenge and dismantle anti-gypsyism, promote gender equality and demonstrate the transformative power of sport as a vehicle for social inclusion, ensuring that every voice is recognize and valued.

It offers participants the opportunity to engage in physical activity, share their experiences and discuss how sport has impacted their lives. Through these experiences, young people can understand and advocate for changes that reinforce the importance of inclusion and teamwork, and build a foundation for positive relationships.

Overall, this booklet serves as a valuable resource for schools and community initiatives seeking to raise awareness of these critical issues. By sharing insights from interviews with young people, it informs and educates individuals about the realities faced by RST communities, promotes understanding, and encourages constructive dialogue.



#### **MOVING-ON**

BEYOND DISCRIMINATIONS, PROMOTING INCLUSION OF ROMA, SINTI AND TRAVELLERS COMMUNITIES IN EUROPE THROUGH SPORT

#### CERV-2022-EQUAL - PROJECT N. 101084712

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



Co-funded by the European Union







fare







