



# MOVING ON

Access to sport for Roma, Sinti & Travellers in Europe

## COLLABORATIVE REVIEW OF LOCAL STRATEGIES FOR ROMA, SINTI AND TRAVELLERS

BASED ON NATIONAL REPORTS



Co-funded by  
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EXCHANGE HOUSE IRELAND  
National Travellers Service





## **MOVING-ON**

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

**CERV-2022-EQUAL – PROJECT N. 101084712**



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# Collaborative Review of Local Strategies for RST

The document D4, titled **Collaborative Review of Local Strategies for Roma, Sinti, and Travellers (RST)** *based on National Reports*, provides a detailed analysis of how different countries are integrating Roma communities in sport initiatives.

The document explores the specific plans and actions undertaken by each country to promote participation among Roma, Sinti, and Traveller populations. Our goal is to understand the existing strategies, identify the main challenges, and propose enhancements.

We closely examine four countries: Ireland, Italy, Czech Republic, and Spain. By studying their approaches, we aim to comprehend the various methods they are employing to foster inclusivity in sports for marginalized groups.

We also seek to arrange meetings with governmental officials and stakeholders responsible for sports and anti-discrimination policies, to learn their strategies and explore opportunities for collaboration.

Our objective is to promote equity and to make sports inclusive for all individuals. We believe it is crucial to see how effective the current approaches are at including marginalized groups like the Roma, Sinti, and Travellers in sports. Through this review, our aim is to understand each country's strategy better, identifying strengths and ways to improve.

Throughout this document, we closely examine the challenges Roma communities face in sports participation. Our focus is not just about physical activity; it is about bringing communities together, respecting different cultures, and fostering empowerment. These elements are essential for making sports meaningful and inclusive for everyone.

Our ultimate goal is beyond identifying issues: we want to find viable solutions. *By working together, sharing what we know, and coming up with new ideas, we hope to make sports more welcoming for everyone.* We want to celebrate our differences and make sure everyone, including Roma, Sinti, and Traveller communities, feels valued in the world of sports.

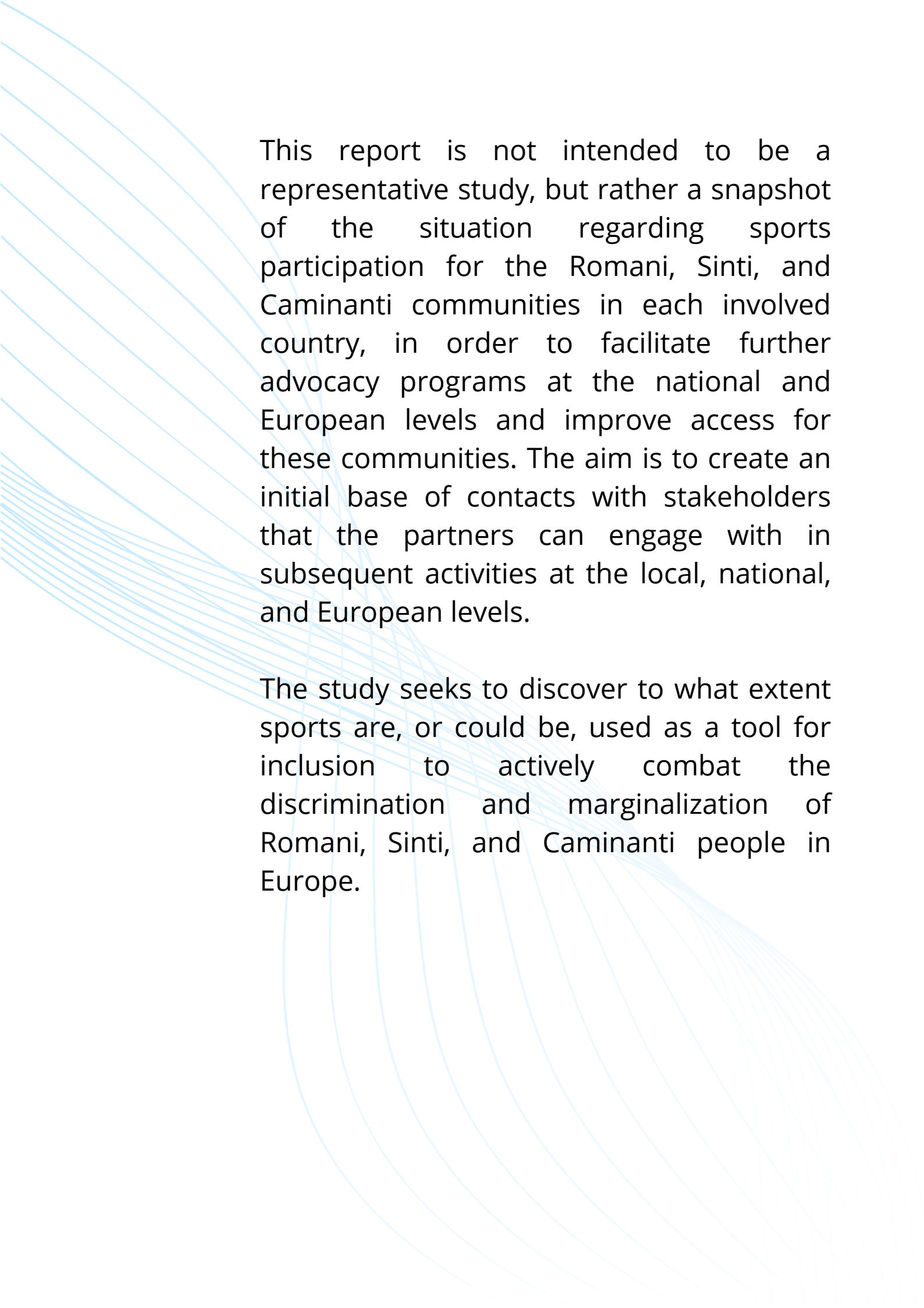
# METHODOLOGY

This report is intended to serve as a research study to inform about the objectives of the Moving On project and the main obstacles to participation in sports activities faced by the Romani, Sinti, and Caminanti communities in Ireland, Italy, the Czech Republic, and Spain.

The report is primarily based on the activities and experience of the European Roma Rights Centre and the national organizations (INEX SDA, Exchange House Ireland, GEA, FAGiC) implementing the project in each of the target countries.

In addition to understanding the barriers to sports and physical activities, the study aims to analyze the representation and consideration of sports and physical activities within EU and national strategies and policies aimed at RSC communities. The research also intends to clarify gender disparities in sports participation and show how intersecting identities can lead to multiple discrimination in accessing sports and physical activities.





This report is not intended to be a representative study, but rather a snapshot of the situation regarding sports participation for the Romani, Sinti, and Caminanti communities in each involved country, in order to facilitate further advocacy programs at the national and European levels and improve access for these communities. The aim is to create an initial base of contacts with stakeholders that the partners can engage with in subsequent activities at the local, national, and European levels.

The study seeks to discover to what extent sports are, or could be, used as a tool for inclusion to actively combat the discrimination and marginalization of Romani, Sinti, and Caminanti people in Europe.



# IRELAND

In Ireland, efforts to include Travelers in sports face various challenges that highlight the complexity of promoting inclusivity in the sporting realm.

These challenges are multifaceted and encompass a wide range of issues. The first significant barrier is the pervasive fear of discrimination, which can deter Travelers from participating in sports activities. This fear is often rooted in past experiences of exclusion and prejudice, making it difficult for individuals to feel comfortable and welcomed in sporting environments. Additionally, there is a noticeable limitation in Traveler participation in specific sports, which can be attributed to a lack of access to resources, facilities, and opportunities that are more readily available to the general population. This disparity is further exacerbated by difficulties in maintaining effective connections between Traveler organizations and national sports bodies.

These organizations often struggle to collaborate due to differing priorities, limited funding, and a lack of mutual understanding. Overall, these obstacles illustrate the need for targeted strategies and collaborative efforts to overcome the barriers and foster a more inclusive sports culture for travelers in Ireland.



## Challenges Identified

- ***Fear of discrimination and non-acceptance:*** Travelers in Ireland often harbor deep-seated fears of discrimination and struggle with feelings of non-acceptance within certain sports environments. These fears serve as significant barriers, hindering their active engagement in sports activities and undermining their sense of belonging within sports communities.
- ***Limited participation in certain sports:*** While football remains popular among travelers, their involvement in other sports, such as Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), is geographically restricted. This geographical disparity in sporting opportunities poses a significant challenge, impeding efforts to promote broader participation and inclusivity among traveler communities.
- ***Difficulty in maintaining connections:*** Establishing and maintaining connections with traveler organizations and the inclusion departments of national and local sports bodies present significant obstacles. These connections are crucial for providing ongoing support, resources, and advocacy for traveler inclusion in sports. However, the transient nature of traveler communities and the complexities of engagement pose ongoing challenges.

## Possible Solutions

- ***Creation of a directory:*** Developing a comprehensive directory that consolidates services for travelers and the inclusion departments of sports bodies can serve as a valuable resource hub. This directory would streamline access to essential resources and support networks for both traveler communities and sports organizations, facilitating collaboration and knowledge-sharing initiatives aimed at promoting inclusivity in sports.
- ***Inclusion Module for Sports Clubs:*** Introducing a specialized inclusion module within sports club training programs, modeled after initiatives offered by Sports Ireland, holds significant promise. This module would equip coaches and administrators with the necessary tools, knowledge, and insights to effectively address the specific needs and challenges faced by traveler participants, fostering a more inclusive and supportive sporting environment.
- ***Formation of a National Body:*** The consolidation of a relationship between national and local RST community representative organizations and the departments responsible for inclusion policies within national and local sports entities represents a crucial point. The relationships and best practices that are generated serve as a driving force toward greater and better inclusion of RSC communities in sports.

# CONCLUSIONS

Despite the multifaceted challenges facing Ireland's efforts to promote traveler inclusion in sports, there are promising opportunities for positive change.

Through collaborative partnerships, targeted initiatives, and strategic interventions, Ireland can overcome these challenges and foster greater inclusivity within its sporting landscape. Ultimately, these efforts contribute to social cohesion and equity while enriching the diversity and vibrancy of Ireland's sporting culture, ensuring that sports truly become a platform for all to thrive and belong.





# ITALY

In an online meeting organized by the municipality of Padua, two counselors, two social workers, a representative from the Quadrato Meticcio association, and three representatives from the GEA cooperative gathered to discuss strategies aimed at reaching the target audience and fostering collaboration.

The objective of this meeting was multifaceted. Primarily, the participants aimed to examine and develop effective approaches to actively involve the Roma community in a variety of inclusive activities. These activities included workshops, which would provide educational and skill-building opportunities, roundtable discussions, designed to facilitate open dialogue and address pertinent issues within the community, and sport events, intended to encourage physical activity and foster a sense of unity and camaraderie. By focusing on these diverse methods of engagement, the meeting sought to promote Roma inclusion, enhance community relations, and ensure that the Roma population in Padua feels recognized, supported, and integrated into the broader societal framework.



## Challenges Identified

In addition to acknowledging the contextual challenges previously outlined, the participants identified the difficulty of gaining the trust of the target audience, particularly project operators and key figures. Building trust and rapport with the community emerged as a significant hurdle in advancing inclusion initiatives.

Results of the Event: During the discussion, the Quadrato Meticcio association stepped forward to host one of the Moving On project activities as part of their "City of Ideas" event scheduled for April 25 and 26. They also expressed their readiness to collaborate on future events and engage with families already in contact with their organization. Furthermore, it was emphasized that a multifaceted approach would be necessary to effectively address the challenges of Roma inclusion in sports.

This approach could involve not only direct engagement with the Roma community but also outreach to broader societal stakeholders such as schools, local associations, and other community organizations. By involving a diverse range of stakeholders, the initiative aims to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for Roma individuals to participate in sports.

Additionally, the participants recognized the importance of ongoing communication and collaboration among all involved parties. Regular meetings, progress updates, and feedback sessions were proposed as mechanisms to ensure that the initiative remains responsive to the evolving needs and concerns of the community. By fostering open dialogue and transparency, the initiative seeks to build trust and accountability among all stakeholders involved.

In light of the commitment from Quadrato Meticcio and GEA to initiate small afternoon activities within the camps, it was suggested that similar initiatives could be expanded to other community settings. These activities could serve as valuable opportunities to not only promote Roma inclusion in sports but also to foster social cohesion and integration within the broader community.

As such, the municipality of Padua reaffirmed its support for events beyond the camps and pledged to actively promote them to the wider community through various channels, including social media, local media outlets, and community newsletters.



## Future Actions

- **Identify schools:** Identify schools as potential partners for inclusion initiatives and sports events.
- **Meeting with families:** Conduct meetings with families to provide detailed explanations of the Moving On project and its objectives.
- **Meeting with local sports associations:** Engage with local sports associations to foster collaboration and support for inclusion efforts.
- **GEA annual presence:** Establish an annual presence of GEA to organize sports sessions and promote ongoing engagement.

## CONCLUSIONS

The "Moving On" project in Italy encounters challenges, but with concerted collaboration among organizations and a commitment to specific actions, there are ample opportunities to advance the inclusion of the Roma population in sports and society at large. By addressing trust barriers, leveraging existing networks, and fostering ongoing engagement, Italy can make significant strides towards promoting equity and inclusion in sports.





# CZECH REPUBLIC

In the Czech Republic, as in many other countries, there are ongoing struggles with integrating marginalized communities, especially the Roma population, into various aspects of society, including sports.

Despite efforts to promote diversity and inclusivity, significant obstacles hinder the full participation of Roma individuals in sports. These obstacles include limited access to sports facilities, the impact of polarizing discourse around migrants from Ukraine, and the lack of widespread recognition of football as a tool for social inclusion by social service organizations.

# Challenges Identified

- ***Limited Access to sports facilities:*** The Roma population faces significant barriers in accessing sports facilities. Many communities lack adequate infrastructure or resources for sports activities, which limits opportunities for participation. Additionally, instances of both overt and covert discrimination exacerbate the problem, with negative stereotypes and prejudices often leading to exclusion from sports clubs or activities, perpetuating a cycle of marginalization.
- ***Impact of polarizing discourse on Ukraine migrants:*** The polarizing discourse surrounding migrants from Ukraine indirectly affects interactions between the Roma population and Ukrainian children. Prejudices and discriminatory attitudes influence the way these groups interact, resulting in social barriers and exclusion.
- ***Recognition of football as an inclusion tool:*** Football holds significant potential as a vehicle for social inclusion and community building. However, it has not yet gained universal recognition as such by social service organizations in the Czech Republic. This lack of acknowledgment hampers efforts to leverage the sport's positive impact on youth development and integration.



## Possible solutions

- ***Engagement with Local Authorities and Crime Prevention Institutions:*** Collaboration with local authorities and crime prevention institutions is crucial to address the systemic barriers to sports participation faced by the Roma population. By working together, stakeholders can identify and dismantle discriminatory practices and improve access to sports facilities.
- ***Adapted Application of Football with the Football3 Method:*** Implementing football programs utilizing the Football3 methodology shows promise in fostering inclusion among diverse communities, including Ukrainian and Roma children. This approach emphasizes values such as respect, fair play, and teamwork, promoting social cohesion and breaking down stereotypes.
- ***Regular Meetings among Social Workers:*** Facilitating regular meetings among social workers responsible for overseeing Roma and Ukrainian children enables constructive dialogue and strategic planning for effective interventions. These meetings serve as a platform to exchange ideas, share best practices, and develop tailored initiatives to address the specific needs of these communities



## CONCLUSIONS

Despite the formidable challenges of promoting Roma inclusion in sports in the Czech Republic, there is a tangible path forward through proactive engagement with local authorities, the adoption of innovative football methodologies, and the establishment of comprehensive sports programs.

By addressing systemic barriers, combatting discrimination, and fostering greater participation and inclusion, the Czech Republic can create a more equitable and inclusive sporting landscape for Roma communities.





# SPAIN

In Spain, a collaborative effort involving various administrations, including the Office of Equal Treatment and Non-Discrimination, the Department of the Presidency, and the Catalan Sports Council, came together to address the challenges hindering the Romani community's access to sports in Catalonia.

The issues of structural discrimination, socio-economic disparities, and gender-related concerns within the Romani community underscore the complexity of fostering inclusivity in sports. In Spain, various public administrations are collaborating to address the challenges faced by the Romani community regarding involvement in sports in Catalonia.

This effort involves institutions like the Office of Equal Treatment and Non-Discrimination, the Department of the Presidency, and the Catalan Sports Council. They aim to tackle structural discrimination, socio-economic disparities, and gender-related issues within the Romani community, highlighting the complexity of promoting inclusivity in sports.

Despite legal and policy advancements against anti-Roma discrimination (antigitanismo), there's still a significant lack of focus on combating it within sports. This gap underscores the need for further attention to ensure equitable access for Romani individuals in sporting activities. Moreover, there's a clear correlation between income levels and participation in extracurricular activities, with disadvantaged neighborhoods facing greater barriers.

This exacerbates challenges for the Romani community, necessitating targeted action to bridge the gap and promote inclusivity in sports.

In summary, while collaborative efforts are underway to address barriers to Romani community engagement in sports, there's a pressing need for targeted action against anti-Roma sentiments in sports and to mitigate socio-economic factors hindering access to sports opportunities.

## Challenges Identified

- ***Persistent discrimination and access barriers:*** Discriminatory practices continue to exist within sports, marked by stigma, social exclusion, and inadequate access to facilities for the Romani community. These barriers pose significant obstacles to active participation and integration.
- ***Health disparities:*** Romani individuals encounter notable health challenges, including higher rates of obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases. It's crucial to implement culturally adapted health promotion programs and measures to address healthcare inequalities and improve health outcomes.
- ***Gender disparity in participation:*** Gender norms prevalent within the Romani community restrict women's engagement in sports. Overcoming these barriers requires gender-sensitive initiatives empowering Romani women to fully participate in sports activities.

## Next Steps

- **Government initiatives:** Develop comprehensive policies addressing discrimination and enhancing accessibility to sports facilities. Allocate resources for culturally adapted health promotion initiatives targeting the Romani community.
- **Sports organizations:** Implement awareness campaigns and training programs within sports clubs to promote inclusive practices. Design initiatives tailored to the needs of Romani women, fostering gender equity in sports participation.
- **Civil Society engagement:** Collaborate with Romani community organizations to co-design initiatives fostering sports participation and community cohesion. Advocate for Romani representation in decision-making processes within sports organizations.
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** Establish mechanisms for continuous monitoring and evaluation to adjust strategies based on feedback. Ensure transparency and accountability by regularly reporting findings and disseminating information on the effectiveness of initiatives.

# THE EXCEPTION OF COMBAT SPORTS

As emerged from interviews with other people who practice combat sports, the interviewee from Girona described how he has not experienced any negative treatment due to his ethnicity since he started at a local boxing club:

*"I have always liked sports; I tried [different sports], I did everything, and the truth is that where I am now, they know that I am Romani, and they treat me well. I am one of them, I feel super comfortable, and that is the most important thing. I think the important thing is to do sports and, well, to have an active body, and then to be treated well, to feel comfortable in a place, is the best. That's why the change [towards boxing]."*

A former professional Muay Thai fighter of Romani origin who was interviewed spoke similarly about the lack of obstacles in the sport due to ethnicity. He attributes this to the multicultural makeup of combat sports clubs and says:

*"In combat sports, you are all equal in this sense - the distinction is more 'are you lazy' or 'do you train well' or 'are you fat' because you weigh too much. It's true, if you are overweight, there is discrimination because you are always too fat [in Muay Thai]."*



## CONCLUSIONS

The collaborative effort underscores the importance of intersectoral collaboration to develop and implement targeted policies and programs. This joint approach is vital for dismantling barriers and promoting the inclusion of the Romani community in Catalonia's sports scene.





# Conclusions from the Collaborative Review of Local Strategies for RST

- ***Recognition of Complexities:*** The collaborative review underscores the intricate nature of promoting inclusion in sports for marginalized communities such as the Roma, Sinti, and Travellers (RST). It acknowledges that inclusion efforts extend far beyond merely facilitating participation in physical activities. Instead, they encompass broader societal objectives such as fostering social cohesion, promoting cultural integration, and empowering marginalized groups within the sporting landscape.
- ***Identification of Challenges:*** Across the examined countries, several recurring challenges emerge, shedding light on the systemic barriers hindering the full participation and integration of RST communities. These challenges include limited access to sports facilities, pervasive fears of discrimination, and the difficulty in maintaining sustained connections between Traveler communities and sports organizations. These obstacles collectively underscore the complexity and depth of the challenges faced in fostering inclusivity within the sporting sphere.

- ***Promotion of Collaboration:*** A central theme of the collaborative review is the promotion of collaboration among diverse stakeholders, including local authorities, sports organizations, civil society groups, and marginalized communities themselves. By fostering collaboration, knowledge exchange, and innovative thinking, the review seeks to harness collective efforts towards creating more inclusive and equitable sporting environments. It emphasizes the importance of building partnerships that transcend traditional boundaries and leverage the unique strengths of each stakeholder group.
- ***Call for Actionable Solutions:*** While the review identifies a myriad of challenges, it also serves as a catalyst for actionable solutions. These solutions encompass a wide range of initiatives, including engaging with local authorities to address systemic barriers, adapting sports programs to meet the specific needs of marginalized communities, fostering trust and rapport within marginalized communities, and establishing comprehensive support networks to facilitate sustained engagement. The review underscores the importance of tangible actions that lead to meaningful change within the sporting landscape.

- ***Commitment to Tangible Change:*** Ultimately, the collaborative review reflects a collective commitment to effecting tangible change within the sporting sphere. It calls upon stakeholders across different countries to translate insights and recommendations into concrete actions that advance inclusion efforts. By addressing systemic barriers, combating discrimination, and promoting greater participation and inclusion, the review aims to catalyze lasting transformation within the sporting landscape, ensuring that sports truly become a platform for all individuals, including marginalized communities, to thrive and belong.

In summary, the collaborative review represents a comprehensive and multifaceted exploration of the challenges and opportunities inherent in promoting inclusion in sports for RST communities. It serves as a rallying call for concerted action, emphasizing the need for collaborative efforts, actionable solutions, and a steadfast commitment to driving positive change within the sporting landscape.



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