



COLLABORATIVE POLICY PAPER

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Project Partners



GEA COOP, Italy



FAGIC - Federation of Roma Associations
of Catalonia, Spain



FARE NETWORK STICHTING, Netherlands



INEX - Association of voluntary activities (Football
for Development), Czechia



ALDA, France



ERRC, Belgium



EHI - Exchange House Ireland, Ireland

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Executive summary

The **MOVING On** project, funded by the European Commission's CERV program (2023–2025), addresses the **critical need for greater inclusion of Roma, Sinti, and Traveller youth in sports**. By breaking down barriers to participation, the initiative **promotes gender equality, social inclusion, and positive representation of Roma, Sinti and Travellers communities in grassroots sports across seven European countries** (Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, and Spain). The project also aims to **influence EU policies on sports inclusion, health, and education, demonstrating the transformative potential of sports in promoting social equity**.

To achieve these objectives, MOVING On's strategy is built around **national roundtables** that engage a **diverse array of stakeholders, including sports organisations, non-governmental organisations, community groups, policymakers, and government authorities**. Each project partner is tasked with organising at least two roundtables, ensuring a minimum of eight across all participating countries. The first round table brings together representatives from sports organisations, community groups, and NGOs to focus on the grassroots application of inclusive strategies, community engagement, and overcoming practical challenges. The second roundtable is designed for policymakers, government officials, and regulatory bodies, with discussions centred on the broader policy framework, funding opportunities, and regulatory support required for the effective implementation of inclusive strategies. These dialogues emphasise policy development, strategic planning, and the role of government in advancing social inclusion through sports.

Drawing on the work reports and recommendations provided by each partner, this policy paper underscores the **importance of regulatory support and strategic planning at both grassroots and governmental levels**.



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Executive summary

Considering the role of sport as a tool for social change, it urges the EU and member states to implement inclusive policies that prioritise marginalised communities, ensuring that sports become a powerful tool for social inclusion, health promotion, and education for Roma, Sinti, and Traveller youth. The paper advocates for stronger policy frameworks, improved funding mechanisms, and cross-sector collaboration to guarantee equitable access to sports for marginalised groups.



Context and background

The **Roma, Sinti, and Traveller** community constitute one of the **largest ethnic minorities in Europe** and are simultaneously **among the most vulnerable and marginalised groups**. Estimating the exact size of the Roma populations remains a challenge, as statistical data on ethnic origin is not consistently or systematically collected, primarily due to privacy concerns. However, according to the Council of Europe data, Roma populations are present across all European countries, with an estimated total 10 to 12 million, most holding EU citizenship. The estimated share of Roma people in the various Member States ranges from 30 % in Romania, 12.2 % in Bulgaria, 12.2 % in Hungary, 12.2 % in Spain, 7.9 % in Slovakia, 6.5 % in France, 3.2 % in Czechia, 2.8 % in Greece, 2.4 % in Italy, 1.7 % in Germany to less than 1 % in most of the other EU Member States (Lercef, 2024).

In nearly all countries where these communities exist, **they experience significant social and economic exclusion from mainstream society. As a result of this marginalisation, Roma tend to fare worse across nearly all socio-economic indicators**. They generally have lower income levels, higher poverty and unemployment rates, lower levels of education, and face greater incidences of malnutrition (Council of Europe, n.d.). In the existing literature, indeed, **anti-Roma discrimination is identified as one of the main causes of the social and economic marginalisation of Roma**. Over time, negative stereotypes about Roma have gradually emerged at almost all levels of European society, strengthening socio-economic barriers and increasing the so-called **“anti gypsyism”**: an unusually prevalent form of racism, which has its origins in how the mainstream society views and treats those considered as ‘gipsies’ in a process of historical ‘othering’, which builds on stereotypes and negative attitudes that may sometimes be unintentional or unconscious (Council of the European Union, 2021). The most widespread forms of institutionalised anti-Roma discrimination are linked to **deficiency in the functioning of various public institutions and/or the way regulations are implemented**



Context and background

and enforced by central, regional and local authorities. Examples of these discriminatory attitudes include **abusive behaviour of police, failure of the justice system to investigate racist abuses, forced evictions, unequal treatment of Roma, Sinti and Travellers children by the mainstream schooling system (e.g. segregation, abusive behaviour of teachers, inferior education), failure of official authorities to take active actions (stand) against racist attitudes**(Petrova 2004; Mudde 2005; Cviklova 2015).

In light of the aforementioned framework, the **Moving On** project is conceived with the **aim of strengthening positive narratives countering anti-Gypsyism and supporting inclusion strategies at the local, national, and community levels, through the use of sport as a tool for social inclusion**. Indeed, while the potential of sport and physical activity for improving public health is well-established, its practical application as a political tool for combating discrimination and promoting the inclusion of ethnic minority groups, such as Roma, Sinti, and Traveller youth, remains limited.

This paper seeks to assess the impact of the project by highlighting the outcomes of the national roundtables with multi-stakeholder participation, organised within its framework. Based on the above findings and stressing the potential of sport to foster social inclusion, the document aspires to offer informed political recommendations to address the social and economic marginalisation of the Roma, Sinti, and Traveller (RST) community in Europe.



Context and background

This section provides the results and insights from the roundtable discussions and workshop organised by the partners of the Moving On project. These discussions have served as a crucial platform for presenting evidence and formulating policy recommendations aimed at drawing political attention to the issue of social marginalisation and anti-gypsyism. The argument is made in favour of a coordinated, evidence-based approach to address the barriers faced by Roma, Sinti, and Traveller youth in accessing sports and ensuring inclusion. The position advocates for a policy shift that prioritises intersectionality, with a focus on gender and human rights. The evidence presented supports the argument that such changes are both necessary and feasible through the adoption of the expert recommendations made during the roundtable discussions.

In particular, the document will proceed with a brief presentation of each partner involved in the Moving On project, outlining their specific roles and contributions. This will be followed by an explanation of the various roundtable discussions organised throughout the project, highlighting the key topics addressed and the perspectives shared. Furthermore, a designated section will analyse and contrast the diverse outcomes and challenges encountered during the project's development. Ultimately, the paper will conclude with a series of well-targeted policy recommendations, derived from the collective insights of the roundtable discussions and designed to stimulate political attention and catalyse tangible change.



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FAGIC



The **Federacion De Asociaciones Gitanas De Catalunya -FAGIC-** was created in 1991 and brings together 96 Roma associations from all over Catalonia. It is the most representative organisation of Roma associations in Catalan society and was created with the aim of defending and promoting the rights and culture of the Roma people in Catalonia.

Throughout the project's implementation, FAGIC conducted two roundtable discussions to address the issue of discrimination in sports faced by these communities in Catalonia. The first roundtable involved policymakers and authorities, while the second brought together technical staff, athletes, and representatives from sports clubs.

Roundtable with Authorities

The initial roundtable, held on March 20, 2024, focused on raising awareness of discrimination in sports and exploring potential avenues for collaboration. Participants discussed the role of the Office of Equal Treatment and Non-Discrimination in addressing discrimination complaints and the importance of cooperation between Roma and non-Roma entities. The Office of the Sports Unit of the Mossos d'Esquadra, a regional police force, was recognized for its significant role in investigating discrimination cases against Roma individuals.

A key topic of discussion was the **underreporting of discrimination cases in sports**. Despite evidence of significant inequalities, few discrimination complaints related to sports reach the Office of Equal Treatment and Non-Discrimination. The roundtable explored potential reasons for this underreporting and discussed strategies to encourage individuals to come forward and report incidents of discrimination. The potential for **collaboration with the Catalan Football Federation** was also discussed. The federation represents the governing body for football in Catalonia and could play a crucial role in promoting equality and combating discrimination within the sport.



By establishing contact with the federation, FAGIC could potentially conduct research, connect with Roma individuals involved in sports, and access relevant data.

The ***Integral Plan of the Romany Population***, a comprehensive plan aimed at addressing the challenges faced by Roma individuals in various sectors, was presented as a valuable tool for combating discrimination in sports. **The plan promotes equal opportunities and eradicates discrimination across all sectors, including sports.**

Round Table with Multistakeholders

The second roundtable, held on June 11, 2024, focused on **personal experiences of discrimination in sports and building partnerships for change**. Athletes shared their own experiences of facing discrimination within the sports context, highlighting the challenges they encountered and the impact it had on their participation.

The role of the ***Catalan Football Federation*** in addressing discrimination cases was discussed in detail. Participants explored the federation's existing policies and practices and identified areas where improvements could be made. The roundtable also focused on the importance of raising awareness among sports clubs and athletes about the issue of discrimination and promoting a culture of respect and inclusion. The Office of Equal Treatment and Non-Discrimination was introduced as a resource for reporting discrimination cases. Participants were provided with information on how to file a complaint and the support services available to individuals who have experienced discrimination.

Key Findings and Recommendations

- **Underreporting of discrimination:** Many cases of discrimination in sports may go unreported due to fear, lack of awareness, or language barriers.



- **Importance of collaboration:** Cooperation between Roma and non-Roma entities is crucial for addressing discrimination in sports.
- **Role of authorities:** The Office of Equal Treatment and Non-Discrimination and the Office of the Sports Unit of the Mossos d'Esquadra play important roles in investigating and addressing discrimination complaints.
- **Value of the Integral Plan of the Romany Population:** The plan provides a framework for addressing the challenges faced by Roma individuals in sports.

Based on these findings, FAGIC made several **recommendations to address discrimination in sports and offer a roadmap for addressing this challenge and promoting a more inclusive and equitable sports environment for all.**

- **Raise awareness:** Conduct public awareness campaigns to inform Roma communities and sports clubs about the issue of discrimination and the support services available.
- **Encourage reporting:** Create safe and accessible mechanisms for individuals to report incidents of discrimination without fear of retaliation.
- **Strengthen collaboration:** Foster partnerships between Roma organisations, sports clubs, and authorities to address discrimination collectively.
- **Advocate for policy change:** Work with policymakers to develop and implement laws and regulations that protect the rights of Roma individuals in sports.



- **Promote inclusion:** Encourage sports clubs to adopt inclusive practices and create a welcoming environment for Roma athletes.

National workshop

FAGIC national workshop, held on October 4, 2024, focused on **exploring inclusive sports strategies for Roma, Sinti, and Traveller communities in Catalonia through a series of roundtable discussions**. Its objectives included bringing together key stakeholders from national institutions, sports organisations, social inclusion entities, and NGOs to evaluate and enhance sports as a tool for social cohesion and inclusion. Participants examined existing barriers to participation in sports, shared insights on successful initiatives, and developed actionable proposals for creating accessible and culturally sensitive sports opportunities.

Key activities highlighted were:

- **Youth Engagement and Youth-Driven Conclusions:** Young Roma participants actively contributed their experiences, emphasising the need for sports programs that are culturally sensitive and accessible. They expressed that sports promote not only physical health but also social cohesion and self-esteem within their communities. Youth participants advocated for the inclusion of Roma role models in sports to inspire younger generations and called for anti-discrimination measures to create safe, respectful sports environments.
- **Expert Knowledge Sharing:** Presentations by experts from successful initiatives in other regions provided insight into effective inclusion strategies, reinforcing the value of knowledge exchange in informing Catalonia's efforts.



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- **Focused Discussions:** Participants discussed the importance of organisations combating racism in sports, shared personal reflections on challenges faced by individuals in sports, and highlighted the essential role sports play in strengthening family and community bonds among Roma families.

The discussions culminated in **specific proposals for inclusion, targeting both national and local implementation**. These proposals aim to leverage sports as a powerful tool for social cohesion and empowerment within Roma Sinti and Travellers communities. To sustain momentum, participants recommended establishing a communication platform to facilitate ongoing collaboration, share progress, and continue centering their voices in the inclusive sports dialogue.



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GEA



GEA is a non-profit Social Cooperative founded in 2004 in Padua. Its main goal is to promote and support processes of integration and active citizenship of immigrant individuals, families and communities, in particular minors and women, in the area of Veneto region, which has a relevant rate of immigrants. GEA has developed different experiences and skills in the field of integration and intercultural education, offering different services such as Cultural and Linguistic Mediation, intercultural counselling, projects development and management, support and consulting of migrant associations and groups in their relations with institutions, public and private territorial services.

To address the challenges faced by Roma, Sinti, and Caminanti in accessing sports, GEA organised two roundtable discussions. The first roundtable brought together policymakers and authorities, while the second focused on multi stakeholders, including sports organisations and community representatives.

Roundtable with policy makers

GEA's first roundtable was with policy makers and authorities represented by the **Municipality of Padova and the organisation Quadrato Meticcio**. This online meeting took place on March 4th, 2024 and convened councillors, social workers, and representatives from Quadrato Meticcio and GEA to discuss strategies for reaching the target audience by exploring collaborative opportunities for organising workshops, roundtables, and sports events.

After a brief introduction, participants delved into a **baseline study** that highlighted the **significant barriers faced by Roma and Travelers, particularly women, in accessing sports**. These barriers included spatial segregation, early school dropout, and social anti-gypsyism. The meeting then shifted to a **discussion of best practices and challenges**, with participants sharing their experiences and insights to create a more inclusive and equitable environment.



Key findings:

- **Challenges in accessing sports:** Roma and Travelers, especially women, face significant challenges in accessing sports due to a confluence of factors. Despite the recognized positive impact of grassroots sports on Roma social inclusion in Europe, functional action in this area has been limited.
- **Need of collaboration:** Effective implementation of sports inclusion initiatives requires collaboration among government agencies, non-governmental organisations, and sports associations. Participants discussed the **need to ensure long-term pathways** and reflected on the specific roles of each participating entity in achieving these goals.
- **The challenge of trust:** Beyond the challenges outlined in the baseline study, gaining the trust of the Roma and Traveler community emerged as a significant obstacle. Building trust with the target audience was crucial for their engagement in the planned events and activities. To address this, participants considered using the living environment of the target audience to establish trust and propose activities outside of traditional settings. The aim was to involve the community in activities with non-Roma individuals to foster a sense of belonging and inclusivity.

The roundtable concluded with positive outcomes. Quadrato Meticcio associations volunteered to host an activity as part of their 'City of Ideas' project on April 25th and 26th. Participants agreed to start with small afternoon activities within the camps to build trust and establish initial connections. Quadrato Meticcio and GEA offered their human resources, while the municipality of Padova expressed readiness to collaborate on organising events outside the camps and promoting them to the wider community.



Roundtable with sport stakeholder

The second roundtable, held on May, 7th 2024, was a focused event centred on two main themes: the Moving ON project and the role of sports in Padova.

The meeting, led by Gea, reviewed ongoing projects in Padua focused on promoting equality, inclusion, and participation of Roma, Sinti, and Caminanti communities in sports. Emphasis was placed on collaboration to increase engagement, particularly in preparation for an EU Sport Event in July. The discussion covered strategies implemented by local associations, Uisp and Quadrato Meticcio, to involve Roma, Sinti and Caminanti communities and assess local conditions. Despite efforts, findings revealed significant barriers to inclusion of the communities in sports, with participation largely restricted to combat sports like boxing, often due to discrimination and lack of access to other sports.

Quadrato Meticcio highlighted specific neighborhood differences: while Roma, Sinti and Caminanti children in the Palestro district, who live in homes, face integration challenges, those in informal camps experience higher levels of exclusion and discrimination. Many sports associations avoid formally registering Roma children, limiting their access to consistent training.

Conclusion

At the level of policies and approaches, there is a willingness on the part of sports organisations, an openness that diminishes when the problem is addressed in specific contexts. As previously noted, even though there is good predisposition from the decision-making and organisational bodies of the sports entities, the Roma, Sinti and Caminanti Community still cannot effectively participate in activities due to the lack of integration opportunities in the teams. A forward-looking approach for the future involves greater involvement of the local community, families, and residents



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of the neighborhoods to overcome the obstacle of antigypsyism, a sentiment still deeply rooted.

National workshop

On May 29th, 2024, GEA hosted the event: “ L’inclusione sociale attraverso lo sport: il caso delle comunità Rom, Sinti e Caminanti in Padua, Italy.” at Casa di Quartiere, a networking space based in Arcella neighborhood, (Padua, Italy).

During the event, the primary objectives of the project were presented, emphasising the promotion of equality, inclusion, and active participation of Roma, Sinti, and Caminanti communities in sports and through sports initiatives. Discussions highlighted both proposed and ongoing activities implemented in the Padua area, as well as exemplary practices already in place at the national level. The event provided a platform to identify key challenges and share effective tools aimed at reinforcing positive narratives, countering antiziganism, and fostering inclusion across local, national, and European contexts.

The meeting commenced with institutional greetings from Diego Bonavina, Councilor for Sports of the municipality of Padua and from Monica Fiorese, the Head of Activities and Inclusive Policies. In this session, UISP Padova was also presented as a national association backed by a robust network that manages numerous sports teams and actively develops innovative inclusion strategies as part of its core mission. Carla Osella, President of AIZO, also shared her extensive experience working with Roma communities, describing the evolution, challenges, and initiatives implemented to promote the inclusion and participation of Roma, Sinti, and Caminanti in community life.

Following these introductions, GEA presented the project, outlining its objectives, collaborations established within the local community, and the activities undertaken. Additionally, project partners shared documents already produced, such as the baseline study, and presented findings



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from a series of meetings held with institutional and sports stakeholders in prior gatherings, including preparatory meetings and roundtables. The event continued with presentations from guest representatives of two associations (**Pinocchio Center** in Panciu, Romania and **Quadrato Meticcio** in Italy) who introduced their organisations, described their activities, and explained their collaboration with the Moving On project.

Their contributions highlighted the connection between sports, participation, and community inclusion, outlining the evolution, challenges, and initiatives implemented to foster the inclusion and active participation of Roma, Sinti, and Caminanti communities in community life. These presentations underscored how sports can serve as a tool for social integration and as a means to combat antiziganism, promoting positive narratives at both local and national levels.

In the concluding session, a discussion was opened to reflect on the themes and insights raised by the individual contributions. Particular attention was given to the role of schools as spaces for inclusion and community-building, with an emphasis on integrating a variety of sports practices beyond traditional ones, such as boxing.



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INEX-SDA



INEX – Association for Voluntary Activities is a Czech non-governmental, non-profit organisation that promotes international volunteering, intercultural education, and active citizenship. It organises volunteer projects and exchanges that focus on social inclusion, environmental protection, and community development, among other issues. INEX-SDA uses football to empower and educate young people from ethnic minority communities in the Czech Republic at risk of social isolation (mostly from Romani communities) through its educational platform '**Fotbal pro rozvoj**' (Football for development). Since 2016, Fotbal pro rozvoj also organises a league of 'fair-play football' that supports access to sporting activities for those young people and encourages them to develop positive social behaviour and competences through the adaptive game of football.

Roundtable with local partners (youth clubs and social centers)

The first INEX-SDA roundtable, titled "Together for Fair-Play," was held on March 3rd, 2024, at the Velký Mlýn Cultural Center in Prague, in collaboration with local partners. This meeting built upon previous engagements with Prague 3, a district of the city, following the successful presentation of best practices in participatory methods between different European city districts in 2023. The main objectives of the roundtable were to explore new opportunities for cooperation and to share recent developments from the Moving-on project, specifically the baseline study and outcomes from discussions with local stakeholders in the social services sector. The roundtable served as a platform for enhancing collaboration and fostering dialogue on social services, participation, and inclusive development strategies within local communities.



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Key areas of discussion included:

- **Program Evolution:** Initially focusing on development cooperation, Fotbal pro rozvoj transitioned to local engagement with social services and established the fair-play football league in 2016. In 2023, the program expanded by creating Fair Play Point, a dedicated organization for youth impact.
- **Regional Practices and Impact:** Representatives from regions such as Olomouc, Karlovy Vary, Usti nad Labem, Pilsen, and Prague shared insights on the program's transformative effects, from building self-identity to strengthening relationships between clients and social workers. Regional coordinators noted the need for more mediators to enhance community support.
- **Participant Development:** Youth participants gain opportunities for mentorship, mediation, and peer learning, with many progressing from beneficiaries to youth leaders. The program's continuity offers youth long-term growth, fostering leadership skills and exposure to new environments.
- **Collaborative Achievements:** The roundtable underscored the value of national coordination and strong partnerships that track participants' progress over time, ensuring sustained impact.

Fotbal pro rozvoj and its partners expressed gratitude for the shared commitment to this impactful work, emphasizing that such collaboration is unique in the Czech Republic. The roundtable closed with a call for continued feedback to refine and expand the program's reach, supporting youth development across the nation.



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Roundtable with authorities

The second roundtable for policymakers and authorities, organised by INEX-SDA as part of the Moving On project, was split into two sessions. The first session was held with local authorities from Prague 3 on March 3, 2024, at the Municipality of Prague 3, while the second session took place with regional authorities from Karlovy Vary on April 9, 2024.

During the March 3rd meeting with Prague 3, INEX-SDA engaged representatives from the district to discuss potential avenues for collaboration. This meeting built on the ongoing relationship between the organisation and the district, which had been strengthened in 2023 through the exchange of best practices in participatory methods from various European city districts. The primary objective was to explore new possibilities for cooperation and to present the latest outcomes of the Moving On project, including the baseline study and results from the earlier roundtable with local social service stakeholders. Vendula Guhová, Community Coordinator, and Karel Světlík, Coordinator for Participation, represented Prague 3, while INEX-SDA was represented by Ansley Hofmann, Program Leader of Football for Development.

The meeting reaffirmed the desire for continued collaboration between INEX-SDA and Prague 3, with both parties sharing a vision of organising a joint sports event to promote fair play, potentially linked to the upcoming European Championship. Access to sports facilities was a recurring topic, as INEX-SDA sought support in finding appropriate venues for its regular programs and fair-play football league.



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Additionally, discussions revolved around the possibility of organising educational workshops and seminars for local educators and pedagogues to introduce INEX-SDA's methods and attract new participants. However, a key challenge identified during the meeting was the lack of accessible sports facilities, which would need to be addressed for the programs to continue effectively.

Despite these challenges, the event yielded positive results. Prague 3 expressed interest in partnering with INEX-SDA for the proposed sports event and demonstrated a willingness to support access to sports grounds, particularly if these programs could engage local youth and promote social cohesion. Moreover, the parties agreed to pursue educational outreach through workshops for educators, and a follow-up meeting was scheduled to discuss the specific details of these initiatives. Overall, the meeting laid the foundation for future cooperation focused on promoting sports participation, social cohesion, and quality education in the district.

The second session, held on April 9th with the regional authorities of Karlovy Vary, addressed a different set of challenges. The Karlovy Vary region, characterised by its isolation and the highest concentration of Roma communities in the country, faces considerable difficulties in terms of resource availability and social infrastructure. The goal of this initial meeting was to introduce INEX-SDA's concept and ongoing research, enhance the organisation's visibility among regional authorities, and explore avenues for future cooperation and funding. The meeting was attended by Robert Pisár, Member of the Council for Social Affairs, Petra Maněnová, Head of the Social Affairs Unit, and Jana Petrůjová, Head of the Working Group for Social Affairs. Representing INEX-SDA were Ansley Hofmann and Stefan Gabčo, Regional Coordinator for Football for Development in Karlovy Vary.



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The meeting served as a platform for mutual understanding, where both INEX-SDA and the regional authorities shared their respective objectives and explored potential collaboration on social inclusion initiatives for marginalised communities. The regional authorities recognized the positive impact of INEX-SDA's programs, particularly in fostering youth engagement through social activities. Additionally, the meeting opened up new funding opportunities, which could support the expansion of INEX-SDA's programs in the region. The outcomes of this session were highly encouraging.

INEX-SDA gained visibility and recognition among the regional authorities, and opportunities for future funding were identified, including potential donations and grant programs. Furthermore, the meeting strengthened the relationship between INEX-SDA and Karlovy Vary authorities, setting the stage for continued collaboration on projects that address the region's unique challenges.

In both roundtable sessions, INEX-SDA successfully advanced its goals of building partnerships with local and regional authorities, promoting sports participation and social inclusion, and identifying resources to support marginalised communities. These meetings not only strengthened existing relationships but also opened doors to new opportunities for cooperation and development.

National workshop

A series of national workshops organised by Fotbal pro rozvoj (INEX-SDA) took place in May and June 2024 across various locations in Prague and Liberec, targeting different stakeholders to discuss the role of sports in the inclusion of ethnic minorities, particularly Roma communities. The workshops were held on May 27th and 29th at the INEX-SDA office in Prague, on May 28th at the Elementary School Chmelnice, and on June 18th at NZDM Vesmir in Liberec, in partnership with the Decathlon store.



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These workshops aimed to bring together students, teachers, educators, and corporate employees to explore how sports can be effectively used as a tool for social inclusion and empowerment. The primary objective of these workshops was to emphasise the importance of integrating sports into national strategies aimed at fostering inclusion, with a particular focus on ethnic minorities like the Roma community. Additionally, the workshops sought to raise awareness about the current barriers that ethnic minorities face in accessing sports programs, highlight the positive impact of sports on social cohesion, and share best practices in this domain.

By fostering dialogue between stakeholders from various fields, the workshops aimed to promote collaborative efforts that can bring about positive change in the field of sports inclusion.

One of the key findings of these meetings was the success in raising awareness about the role of sports as a powerful tool for inclusion. The participants, including teachers and educators, gained new strategies and tools to promote cohesion, address conflict resolution, and support marginalised groups through sports activities. The workshops also served as a platform for the exchange of best practices related to inclusive sports programs, gender equality, and conflict resolution, offering participants valuable insights on how to implement these practices in their respective fields.

A notable achievement of the workshop held at the Decathlon store in Liberec was the successful bridging of the gap between the corporate sector and Roma youth. This event facilitated understanding and collaboration between the corporate employees and the local Roma community, potentially paving the way for future corporate engagement in initiatives focused on social inclusion.



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However, several challenges were identified during the workshops. Participants highlighted the persistent difficulties ethnic minorities face in accessing sports facilities, as well as the stereotypes and discrimination Roma people encounter within the realm of sports. These barriers remain significant obstacles to the full inclusion of Roma youth and other marginalised communities in sports activities.

Despite these challenges, the workshops had a positive impact. They reached a wide range of stakeholders, including students, educators, and corporate employees, successfully promoting awareness and collaboration across sectors. The workshop involving Decathlon employees and Roma youth, in particular, holds the potential to inspire further engagement from the corporate sector in initiatives that promote social responsibility and inclusion.

Overall, the series of workshops contributed to a deeper understanding of the role sports can play in the social inclusion of ethnic minorities and fostered a network of stakeholders committed to bringing about positive change.



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EHI



The **EHI (Exchange House Ireland) Association** is a non-governmental organisation dedicated to promoting social inclusion, human rights, and community development across Europe. Focused on fostering integration and equality, particularly for marginalised groups such as ethnic minorities, migrants, and the Roma community, EHI works to address social challenges through collaborative projects, education, and advocacy. By engaging with local communities, policymakers, and other stakeholders, the association aims to create inclusive environments where everyone has equal opportunities to participate and thrive.

Roundtable with multistakeholders

The roundtable for Sports Organisations, held on March 6, 2024, at the Exchange House Ireland Offices in Dublin, was a key event in the "Moving On: Access to Sport for Roma, Sinti, and Travellers in Sports" project.

Several key areas were identified as crucial to fostering greater inclusion. Firstly, it was suggested to **target structural components of sports organisations**, such as club committees, boards, and membership meetings, to ensure that Travellers have a voice in the decision-making processes. Additionally, encouraging Travellers to volunteer in sports and clubs was seen as a vital step toward building a more inclusive environment. The group also emphasised the importance of finding experienced trainers and other figures who can act as ambassadors, advocating for Traveller involvement across various sports disciplines.

Another significant approach discussed was **fostering direct collaboration between Traveller organisations and local sports clubs or centres**. This could be achieved by organising meetings where Traveller representatives and sports club officials can explore opportunities for cooperation. Inviting local sports clubs to participate in Traveller-specific sports days was also proposed as a way to build bridges and increase awareness about Traveller participation in sports.



The group highlighted the **necessity of ensuring that sports clubs' safeguarding and recruitment policies** explicitly promote inclusion and anti-discrimination, which would be essential in creating a welcoming environment for Travellers.

To support these initiatives, the **development of comprehensive inclusion programs tailored for sports clubs** was proposed. These programs would serve as valuable resources for clubs looking to enhance their inclusivity practices. The group identified the **need to set up meetings with key stakeholders**, including the Social Inclusion Offices of national sports bodies, Sports Ireland, Inclusion Ireland, and Local Sports Partnerships. These meetings would aim to secure support and collaboration in promoting Traveller involvement in sports on a broader scale. The group discussed the **potential of developing specific Traveller inclusion modules** within sports bodies' club and coach training programs. Such modules would provide essential education and awareness, equipping coaches and club members with the knowledge to foster an inclusive environment.

Finally, the **idea of establishing a national Traveller sports representative body or panel** was proposed. This body would be instrumental in championing the project's objectives, providing a unified voice for Travellers in the sports sector, and ensuring that the momentum gained through these efforts is sustained over the long term.

Roundtable with Decision Makers

The roundtable held on April 30, 2024, at the Sport Ireland Campus in Dublin was a significant component of Sport Ireland's "Sport 4 Empowerment" (S4E) programme, which aims to promote social inclusion through sports. This programme is designed to create social inclusion opportunities through sport and physical activity, specifically targeting those at risk of social exclusion and poverty. As part of the social innovation priority of the EIST programme, S4E will focus on developing



and scaling innovative ideas and methods to address social issues using user-focused design thinking. This approach enhances **creative problem-solving and innovation**, enabling successful projects to achieve national impact. Sport and physical activity will serve as the primary mechanisms to engage and support the identified target communities through these innovative programmes.

During the event, participants collectively highlighted **several systemic challenges** that the Traveller community encounters, particularly **issues related to discrimination, low employment opportunities, and inadequate support systems**. Discrimination was a prominent theme, with attendees emphasising its pervasive nature in both employment and sports settings. This discrimination manifests in various forms, significantly impacting the ability of Travellers to **secure jobs and participate fully in sports activities**.

The discussion also uncovered significant **barriers to sports participation** for the Traveller community. Participants shared negative experiences stemming from their educational backgrounds, as well as unwelcoming attitudes from sports clubs, which further exacerbated feelings of exclusion. These barriers not only discourage participation but also contribute to the **sense of marginalisation** felt by many Travellers within the sports landscape. Moreover, the roundtable revealed a strong alignment between the goals of the S4E programme and those of the Moving On Project, suggesting that collaboration could enhance efforts to address these challenges. Travellers stood out as a critical concern. Participants noted that the lack of adequate support in both education and health sectors compounds the difficulties faced by the Traveller community, further limiting their potential for engagement in sports and employment.

The roundtable culminated in a **range of positive outcomes and collaborative opportunities**. Participants identified specific areas where S4E could partner with the Moving On Project to maximise impact. New ideas for the S4E programme were generated, including the need to review existing inclusion policies, collaborate more closely with sports



bodies, and actively promote sports within the Traveller community. The discussions not only fostered a spirit of cooperation but also raised awareness about the unique challenges faced by Travellers, emphasising the importance of addressing these issues through sports initiatives.

Ultimately, the roundtable served as a platform for generating new ideas and reinforcing the commitment to creating a more inclusive environment for the Traveller community. By focusing on the intersection of sports and social inclusion, the event aimed to lay the groundwork for meaningful collaboration that can lead to tangible improvements in both employment opportunities and sports participation for Travellers in Ireland.

National Workshop

The National Workshop, held online via Zoom on August 8, 2024, was a dynamic and interactive session that blended online participation with open group discussions, presentations of research findings from the Moving On project, and a concluding focus on solutions. The event aimed to address the challenges and opportunities for Traveller and Roma communities in sports, culminating in concrete recommendations and actionable steps.

Key findings from the meeting revealed a generally **positive perception of sports among participants**, who highlighted various **benefits**, including **improvements in health, community engagement, mental well-being, and a sense of belonging**. Participants expressed a strong desire for further research into these communities' experiences, increased accountability in the implementation of policies, and enhanced inclusion efforts from both Traveller and Roma communities and sports organisations.

Proposed solutions, such as the **development of cultural inclusion modules** and the establishment of a national sports action panel, received positive feedback and enthusiasm from attendees.

However, several **significant challenges** were identified that hinder sports participation for Traveller and Roma individuals.



The prevalence of racial abuse and discrimination in sports environments was cited as the most significant barrier, underscoring the need for urgent attention to discriminatory behaviours that persist within sports settings. Participants also noted that negative stereotypes and perceptions about Travellers can deter their involvement in sports. While limited access to health services was recognized as a less impactful barrier, it was acknowledged that such limitations can still pose challenges for individuals seeking to engage in sports.

A lack of representation for Traveller and Roma individuals at decision-making levels within sports organisations was another critical issue raised. Participants emphasised that this absence restricts their influence and diminishes opportunities for meaningful participation. Additionally, minimal Traveller involvement in coaching or committee roles within sports clubs contributes to feelings of exclusion and disengagement from sports activities. The need for cultural awareness training within sports organisations was also highlighted as essential for fostering understanding and respect for Traveller and Roma communities.

The scarcity of Traveller and Roma individuals in sports clubs can lead to a **sense of isolation and discouragement** among potential participants. Participants noted the importance of establishing early engagement opportunities to introduce Traveller and Roma children to sports, fostering a sense of belonging from a young age. Furthermore, **limited access to sports facilities** presents a considerable barrier for these communities, while financial constraints can also **hinder participation in sports**, especially for individuals from marginalised backgrounds.

The online event successfully engaged a diverse group of participants who actively shared their experiences and insights. The discussions yielded valuable information regarding the unique challenges and opportunities that Traveller and Roma communities encounter in the realm of sports.



General Recommendations

Based on the findings of the meetings, the following policy recommendations are proposed:

1. **Increase funding for sports programs:** Allocate sufficient funding to support sports programs specifically designed for Roma, Sinti and Travellers, including those that address gender disparities.
2. **Promote inclusive sports facilities:** Ensure that sports facilities are accessible to all, including those in marginalised communities.
3. **Address educational disparities:** Implement policies to improve educational outcomes, reducing the risk of early school dropout and increasing their opportunities to participate in sports.
4. **Combat social anti-gypsyism:** Develop strategies to address social anti-gypsyism and promote positive attitudes towards Roma, Sinti and Travellers.
5. **Involve Roma, Sinti and Travellers in decision-making:** Ensure that the people of these communities are actively involved in the development and implementation of sports inclusion policies.
6. **Strengthen partnerships:** Foster partnerships between government agencies, non-governmental organisations, and sports associations to promote sports inclusion.



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