

About the Project:

The main partner meetings were in Helsinki, Matera and Potsdam, as well as two times online due to covid-19 restrictions, one centered in Ireland and another in Helsinki. Comparing four differently structured organizations and partners with different action and focus involving Grassroots Sports and from four different regions of Europe allowed us to make conclusions about best practices and how they can be adapted in the different situations.

During the 2,5 year project period from 2019 – 2021 we held 3 national seminars and 2 online seminars, during which we shared

and compared each partners methods and experiences and got to know their national networks, with whom we also exchanged.

Finally we identified six complimenting and beneficial actions plus a number of needs and challenges, all described in the following. We hope that our shared findings can inform the design and decision making for Grassroots within Europe and thereover.

About the Partners:

Liikkukaa – Sports For All, a national Grassroots Sports Umbrella in Finland with up to 80 member organisations

Brandenburgische Sportjugend, a German federal state Youth Sports Union

UISP– Matera, a regional division of the Italian Sports For All Movement

Immigrant Council of Ireland/Show racism the red card, An immigrant advocacy and a anti-racism educative campaign

About Grassroots Sports:

The project idea was originally based on Baumann and Cardosos research results for the HLG. Baumann and Cardoso (2016) reported to the European Commission (DG EAC) High Level Group (HLG) on Grassroots Sport that all respectable academic studies are pointing to significant economic benefits from grassroots sport through positive impact on health, crime prevention and social cohesion. All of which we were able to confirm during our project.



Photo: Mondiali Anti Razzismi in Matera, Italy

The HLG defined Grassroots Sport as follows:

“Grassroots sport is physical leisure activity, organized and non-organized, practiced regularly at non-professional level for health, educational or social purposes.”



Grassroots Sports for Combating Discrimination and Racism in Europe



Photo: European Street Soccer Championship in Potsdam, Germany

Note:

Grassroots Sports is "just" a vehicle to transport education and social action and to promote health. It needs independent agency, long-term commitment by funders and "open door" level cooperation."



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Strengths of Grassroots Sports:

- **Low thresholds**

One main strength of Grassroots Sports is its low threshold for participation and its low demand for skills, commitment and financial sacrifice. Grassroots Sports can thus be far more inclusive than elite sports and bring people together on a level field, regardless of gender, socio-economic situation, age or ability.

- **Community based**

It is easy to organise a community based, cross community and gender independent Grassroots Sports and to involve people not only through part-taking in sporting activities, but also, for example as event managers, media volunteers, performers and in many other ways.

- **Educational Aspects**

Due to a much lower focus on sporting success and far less pressure compared to Elite-Sports, Grassroots Sports has the possibility to include a large number of social and educational aspects.

Critical Factors in Grassroots Sports:

- Access to communities and credibility with its members
- Sports know-how and social know-how simultaneously.
- Independent agency and representation outside of elite sports.
- Long-term commitment of sponsors, funders, authorities.
- Quality Sports Facilities at convenient times and places
- Access to Mainstream Sports and exchange of talent
- Resources and Continuity, building takes time and strength
- Volunteers, how to motivate without sportive success?
- Regular action. Event orientation lets people loose cohesion.
- Low motivation of those most needy, how to attract?

Identified best practises and methods:

- **Small Field Sports**

Regular Small Field Sports, for example once weekly, can in some cases be the only regular activity they are looking forward to and the only time to meet other people. All of the project partners are using it and have developed similar methods. Not only are the activities low-threshold, but also low maintenance for the organizers.

- **Educative Workshops**

Educative workshops can be integrated into the sporting events. They can be specifically for trainers, referees, managers of the groups or events, or to all participants. They can be on any social or health related topic, as anti-racism, anti-bullying or pro-healthy choices and in connection with Grassroots Sports reach and target an extremely wide and diverse audience. All project partners have used those.

- **Creative Workshops**

Creative Workshops can be used in similar ways as educative workshops, but through choice of method and topic can also involve community outside of sports. Creative Workshops can also help participants to express themselves in diverse ways, for example through video, music, theatre, spoken word poetry or stand-up comedy.



Photo: First project meeting in Helsinki

- **Camps, Trips & Events**

Camps, trips and events can open new perspectives to participants, function as community and cross community building and can contain all the aspects and benefits of Grassroots Sports.

Those are also great opportunities to discuss current topics in an open atmosphere.

- **Mentoring**

Through and within Grassroots Sports networks and trusted relationships can grow with members of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. Often these relationships are peer based. To facilitate a successful mentorship Grassroots actors need “open door” cooperation from the different communities environment. The project partners are working with Refugee-Reception Centers, Schools, Employers, Municipality, Mainstream Sports Clubs and many others.



- **Campaigns**

Grassroots Sports has several privileged strengths in order to carry out social campaigns. Through its peer structures it can access marginalised and vulnerable groups, does not have much trust issues and has credibility. Through cooperation with for example elite sports, the popularity of athletes can also be used “to get a message across”.

Find out more:

<https://sports4all.net/good-grassroots-sports-practise>