



ANALYSIS OF THE MIGRANTS' PERSPECTIVE:
DESCRIPTIONS AND REFLECTIONS

INTEGRATION OF NEWLY ARRIVED MIGRANTS THROUGH ORGANISED SPORT – FROM EUROPEAN POLICY TO LOCAL SPORTS CLUB PRACTICE (INAMOS)

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Introduction

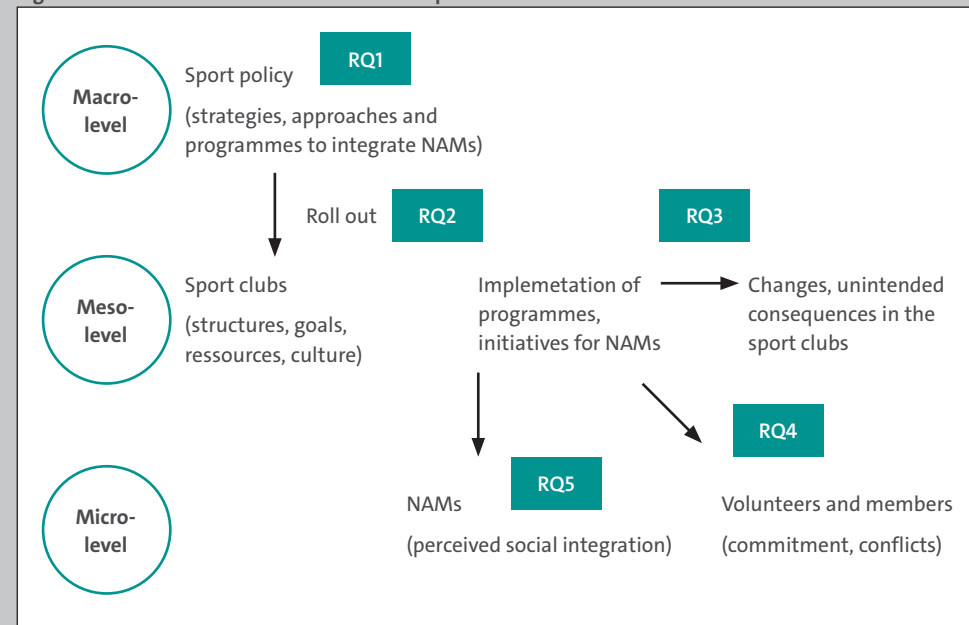
It is important for us to better understand and consider the expectations and perspectives of migrants in relation to sport-based integration practices. If integration goes beyond one-sided expectations of assimilation and instead becomes part of a pluralistic process, it is necessary to examine and understand the expectations and perspectives of the groups and individuals to be integrated in the respective sport context. Due to the heterogeneity of the target group and methodological difficulties such as language barriers, there is almost no evidence in this area. This applies to the question of what personal experiences newly arrived migrants (“NAMs”) have already made in sport-based integration programmes and / or club-based sports activities, how they found their way into a voluntary sports club (“VSC”) or what prevented them from joining.

Therefore, this report addresses main research question five of the INAMOS project:

RQ5: How are sport-based integration practices experienced and perceived by NAMs? What are the target group’s own needs and expectations within this context? Are there any integration practices that go beyond mere participation in sports activities, and what are the prerequisites for socio-cultural and socio-emotional integration of migrants in VSCs?

In the figure below, these two main research questions are embedded in the multi-level framework and presented in relation to the other main research questions (for more details see the report: PROJECT MANUAL).

Figure 1. Multilevel framework and research questions



Our primary aim is to study target group individuals, who we call “TGIs”. This group, however, is multifaceted and consists of NAMs, club members from the minority population and, in a few cases, even majority members. NAMs are defined as migrants who have been living for less than five years in the new country. When we talk about all our interviewees in this report, we use the TGI term, otherwise we specify whether we mean NAMs and/or minorities and/or majorities.

The purpose of the analyses in this report is to answer two sets of queries. Firstly, we want to describe what the target group individuals – those who are to be integrated – think about and experience in practice in a selection of sports clubs in five Western European nations: Denmark, Germany, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland. Secondly, we want to interpret these descriptions and reflections in light of our theoretical perspectives and the larger context (see section 4), namely how to understand integration in the situations (similarities and differences) we describe.

This study does not aim to generate empirical generalisations but will explore, based on reports from concrete and specific individual and group interviews (Swedberg, 2020), how different types of TGIs in various contexts describe and reflect upon their experiences in clubs that work with integration in different ways. We do this by addressing six topics: (1) sporting activities in general; (2) recruitment and access to VSCs; (3) sport in VSCs; (4) programmes and measures for integration; (5) barriers to participation and integration; (6) activity outside sport: integration through sports and beyond. We will interpret a selection of these experiences and reflections in light of who the target group individuals are, the club in which they operate, the programme of which they are part and the national context.

Method

Sample

Specific developments in the world had consequences for how the study was carried out. Firstly, the project was inspired by the large wave of refugees arriving in Europe around 2015. Because of the time delay between the “refugee crisis” that was accompanied by an ambition to integrate refugees in VSCs and our study, it was harder to get hold of NAMs in sport than was assumed in the original plan for the study. There were fewer refugees in general and, due to differences in national refugee policies, in some nations in particular. The pandemic widened the gap between the peak of the refugee situation and the actions taken by sport federations to address this and our study. In some nations in this study, many VSCs and integration programmes were (still) operating during our study, in other nations they were closed. Secondly, several restrictions related to the pandemic made it difficult to reach interviewees and conduct interviews, especially in groups. Some interviews were delayed, others took place via “Zoom”. Thirdly, in the context of (especially focus group interviews) it was difficult to identify TGIs’ specific backgrounds with respect to our interests. National sport federations were helpful in recommending clubs that work successfully on integrating immigrants and provided contact and access to the same clubs. However, given that there were (in some nations) few programmes for refugees, and that the federations and clubs do not register the “ethnicity” of members, we were not certain beforehand about the refugee and minority status of our interviewees.

General norms and the clubs themselves (in some of the countries) indicated that it was not appropriate to address the specificities of TGIs’ backgrounds, and when

asked to present themselves (“tell us about yourself” / “who are you”?) few focus group interviewees gave us this information. So, in some cases we do not know the exact minority status of those we interviewed.

The result is that most (but not all) interviewees have some type of minority background. However, their background in this respect covers a wide spectrum: from minorities who were not NAMs to “true” NAMs and, in some cases (some participants in the Norwegian focus groups), also from the majority population. In the Norwegian case, we were explicitly told by the leaders of the clubs not to ask about the minority background of the focus group participants. The leaders did not want us to signal that their minority background mattered. These differences in what we could ask about the immigrants’ backgrounds is interesting. None of the clubs in Denmark made such demands, and it was not a problem to ask the interviewees about their immigrant background. See Table 1 for detailed information on the interviewees.

Overall, we have, on the one hand, a dataset that is less focused on the NAMs than intended. On the other hand, we ended up with a rich, diverse and complex dataset that reflects the multifaceted composition of participants in VSCs – both in general and in programmes (see Table 1). The sample is more useful in the sense that it better reflects how clubs work on integrating different types of minorities – given the situation in various nations for refugees and migrants – and the traditions and structures in various nations. We can interpret the TGIs as part of this larger context, but we have a restricted overview of NAMs’ experiences and their situations in various types of programmes for integrating athletes through sport.

Table 1. Description of sample

Country	Focus group interview	Individual interviews	Age	NAMs or other minority population
Sweden		4 male 2 female	16-42	3 NAMs 3 other minority
Denmark		4 male 3 female	16-45	3 NAMs 4 other minority
Germany	4 (N= 9 male, 1 female)	4 male 1 female	15-40	3 NAMs 12 other minority
Switzerland	2 (N=10 male)	2 male 3 female	20-45	14 NAMs 1 other minority
Norway	6 (N=26 male, 11 female)	1 female	15-40	3 NAMs Mostly other minorities
Total	12 (N= 45 male, 12 female)	14 male 10 female	15-45	26 NAMs; 55 (mostly) other minorities

Data collection

Focus group interviews (for more details see the report: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY) were the preferred methodology of data collection because we assumed that the perceptions, evaluations, and opinions of the NAMs would be better expressed in group interviews. Focus group interviews can encompass collective orientations (e.g. Liebig & Nentwig-Gesemann, 2002) regarding possible (intended and unintended) consequences of integration initiatives for members, but also for the club. This “collective orientation” is, as described by Wilkinson (1999), typically processed during focus groups as a “collective sense is made, meanings negotiated, and identities elaborated through the process of social interaction between people” (1999, p. 225). Interactive data can be generated which offers the possibility to study the co-construction of meaning between people in specific social contexts (Wilkinson, 1998). The interest mostly lies in “exploring in depth participant’s meanings” (Barbour, 2007, p. 60) and how these are socially constructed. Focus groups have also been a method of choice for researchers when attempting to access groups which are perceived as hard to reach, for example ethnic minority groups (Chiu & Knight, 1999) or migrants (Ruppenthal, Juck & Gagnon, 2005).

The focus group interviews were supplemented by individual interviews. As discussed by Frisina (2018), focus groups “give researchers access to the narratives and arguments that participants present in group situations, whether these are peer groups or researcher-convened groups of strangers” (Frisina, 2018, p. 190), while individual interviews “excel at eliciting “private” accounts” (2018, p. 190). The advantage of individual interviews compared to focus groups interviews is that they can reveal more detailed individual narratives and make it easier for the interviewee to

express views that they consider to be in opposition to the commonly held opinions in the group (Kvale, 2004). We will use the advantage of the complimentary dataset we get from using both kinds of interviews in the analyses.

Data analysis

Compared to much qualitative research, the first step of our analyses was primarily deductive in the sense that we decided on the main topics before conducting the empirical analyses. We find this to be a suitable way to handle the complexity of the data and a precondition for comparing data from the various countries.

The analyses were performed in several steps. Firstly, the general topics were determined by the project design and the questions and theoretical concepts described in the project plan. Our research questions were operationalised in topics with sub-questions. In the analyses, we paid attention to the distinction between topics and themes. Topics are given by research project, interview guide and coding scheme. Themes are what we ended up describing and interpreting through our analyses and within each topic (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The “true qualitative” analyses were then thematic analyses within these more general topics (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

We agreed on a common coding schema consisting of the main topics. The researchers from each country analysed their interviews and delivered a report based on their interviews. A further step in the analyses was then to coordinate these national themes into themes that are relevant for more nations, whether they are similar or different.

Findings

Sports activities in general

An interesting question is the most immediate one: what do our respondents do when it comes to sports activities in the clubs and elsewhere? Our data and access to the field was through VSCs (experts, members and target groups linked to a set of clubs). The idea was to use clubs as a context for target groups so, not surprisingly, most of our respondents reported that they do take part in organised club sports. Some of them take part in ordinary activities in the club, while others participate in programmes for immigrants.

The interviews in Sweden illustrate some of the variation in how immigrants participate in VSCs. All but two of the six respondents participate in what can be described as regular club activities, meaning that they participate in training, competitions, games and social activities in already existing teams. They are all members in the clubs that offer the activities they take part

in. We present here the six respondents from Sweden because they illustrate a variation in sport participation that we also see in interviews from the other countries.

Participant 1, a 19-year-old man from Syria, participates in the most conventional form of sports practice. He plays in a football team with people of the same gender and age that trains a few times a week in the club facility and plays games at the weekends. He describes football as the activity he likes the most. He also watches a lot of football on TV since he is a big fan of a team playing in the English Premier League. He speaks very fondly about his team and his teammates and declares that they are (together with his love of the game) one of the most important reasons for his participation. He has no explicit sporting ambitions himself, pointing out that he thinks that he is too old to be picked up by one of the successful clubs in the city.



Participant 2, an 18-year-old man from Afghanistan who has been living for 5 years in Sweden, plays in a team with high ambitions in one of the upper leagues of the system. The team trains several times a week and is more serious. He started out in a team specifically established for residents at the asylum housing facility where he lives but was promoted to one of the club's regular teams due to his footballing skills. This has also spurred his sporting ambitions and he has started to dream about being able to play football for a living. He knows that the possibility of this happening is slim, but still uses it as motivation when going to training in November when snow has begun to fall and it is already dark at one o'clock in the afternoon. At the same time, he is very happy and content playing in his current team and appreciates the possibilities he has been given, the friends he has made in the team, and the environment to which he has been granted access through the outreach activities he started after arriving in Sweden.

Similarly, participant 5, a woman from an Eastern European country in her mid-20s who has been living for 6 years in Sweden, plays in the club's elite team in the highest national league. Shortly after arriving in Sweden, she was recruited as a part-time coach for a few of the other teams in the club. As an athlete at national elite level, she devotes most of her time to training, games, tournaments and coaching. As she already had a career in her previous homeland, she says it was only natural to seek out a club when she arrived in Sweden:

"But I could not dream of the luck I would have in finding a club in the very city where I arrived that had ambitions that matched my my own. A team that would welcome me, that played at the highest national level and that, in addition, could offer me an opportunity to make money for a living." (Interview 5, Sweden)

She noted that she is still comparatively young and that a professional or at least semi-professional career is within reach. This, together with her love of the game, is the main driver for her participation.

Participant 6, a man in his 40s from an African country who has lived in Sweden for more than 20 years, play recreational football with a group of men his age. He plays purely for fun and to get some exercise. As a team, they play in a league for recreational football, consisting of teams with similar ambitions. He states:

"Football has always been my companion. I was quite promising as a young player, you know, and when I came to Sweden I started playing in the club where I am still a member. But when we had children and I perhaps wasn't good enough for the club's top team, I started playing for one of the other teams where ambitions were a bit more modest, and as we got older me and a few of the other guys in that team decided to form a team that plays just for fun." (Interview 6, Sweden)

To him, football is still as important. It is just that the reasons for playing it have changed. Today, it is important as a means of staying healthy but, most of all, it is the best way of staying in touch with the friends he has made in the club over the years.

Respondents 3 and 4 both participate in activities established specifically for integration purposes. Respondent 3, a 23-year-old man from Iraq, started his participation in the outreach programme for integration that a skateboard section of a club organised for refugees, asylum seekers and first-generation immigrants. This meant being picked up a few times a week from where he lived and going with a group of individuals in similar situations as himself to skateboarding spots all over the city, including the skateboard facility to which the

section has access. After a few years of participation, he was asked to help as a form of assistant coach. Today, this commitment has been extended to temporary part-time employment and he is made responsible for some sessions. He also acts as a general assistant to the full-time employee on all issues related to organising the outreach programme. He said:

"Skateboarding is everything. I mean, I know I can't continue doing this forever. But for now, I'm kind of living my dream here. I get to skateboard as much as I want. I even get paid you know." (Interview 3, Sweden)

However, he emphasised that it is not just about skating. It is also about giving something back to the club that took him on when he came to Sweden. Today, he concludes, "I get to do the same things for these kids that others did for me".

Respondent 4, a 16-year-old girl from Syria who has been living for 5 years in Sweden, plays in a handball team set up in the neighbourhood where she lives. In this team, she plays with other girls with immigrant backgrounds from the same neighbourhood. She trains a few times a week, but the team does not compete in any league or tournaments. However, they have played a few friendly games against other teams in the club and other nearby clubs. She has been asked by the club to join the regular club team for girls her age, but she declined the offer as it would mean commuting to the city centre. She likes the team she plays in and has no sporting ambitions that would make a potential transfer attractive. She is not that into handball, she emphasises. For her, it is more something to do in between schoolwork and spending time with her family. It could just as well have been something else, she ponders. Had it not been a handball club that happened to offer activities in her neighbourhood, it might have been something else. Perhaps not even sport, she concluded.

The description of these six persons shows a variety of ways of doing sport. From elite ambitions to no sporting ambitions, from participating in programmes for immigrants to being a part of ordinary teams, and from sport being an important part of life to something that is enjoyable but not that important. The variety is also found in the interviews from the other countries.

Recruitment and access to VSCs

How did migrants get in touch with the club?

Previous research shows that social networks are important for members gaining access to VSCs: family, friends, school. Fewer approach sports clubs alone on their own initiative (Seippel, 2005). The situation could, however, be different for some of our TGIs who might have weaker or at least different social networks than majority members. This makes it interesting to look at how NAMs in particular are recruited into sports.

For those joining VSCs as part of the "normal process", the situation seems to be much the same as for non-migrants (Seippel, 2005): they come with friends or parents. It is also telling that some do not even remember how they first gained access to the VSC. Yet there are also some who were brought in through programmes but perhaps did not think or know about them.

The main route for gaining access to the sports clubs is through other people, family, and friends. Either because the refugees/migrants know people who are club members or they are contacted by club members. In many cases, they are approached while playing football in a park or on the street and get asked 'where do you play?' or 'do you want to play in a club?'. Some of the immigrants reported that an employee from the public immigration's

authorities (in the municipality) encouraged them to join a club. Others explained that they actively looked for clubs in their neighbourhood, either through internet searches (websites or Instagram) or just by looking around the city while riding a bike. Those using Google point to the importance for the clubs of having updated webpages. Those who actively looked for specific club offers contacted the clubs themselves and asked if they could participate in training sessions. Knowing people who are already club members helps gains access to the club and reduces anxiousness. There was a general notion that it is much easier for children to gain access to the club and make their first steps than adults, as 'kids are generally integrated quickly'. Having like-minded people in the training group also reduces the barriers to entering the club. For example, it is easier if all people are beginners in the specific sport. However, the migrants did not always select the first sports club option. Some tested several clubs to determine which one suited them best. Criteria for choosing the club are the feel-good factor, the chemistry with the coaches and the location, which often has to be close to their home.

These are some earlier cases (when there were fewer immigrants and the work with immigrants was less institutionalised) where immigrants seem to have been left to their own devices and then looked for a local sports club without specifying how they did this, as with the father in the Swedish case.

Two examples from Sweden illustrate how migrants find their ways to VSCs. A male football player (Interview 1) told us that his entry to a VSC was not a result of an offer targeted at migrants. He admits that it is rather difficult to remember (he arrived in Sweden some 10 years ago and was 9 years old at the time), but still maintains that he just joined a regular club training session. When asked to reflect on it today, and pre-

sented with the purpose of the research project he has agreed to take part in, he still does not think of his early experiences as integration activities:

"Of course, I cannot swear. I mean, I was just a kid. But I saw these types of teams [especially established for integration purposes] when I was growing up, and I'm quite sure my team wasn't one of those. Almost half the team was made up of blonde-haired boys, you know." (Interview 1, Sweden)

With the big difference of being an adult when she arrived in Sweden, the elite athlete (respondent 5) also described seeking out the club rather than the other way around. As she was already an accomplished athlete when leaving her previous homeland, it was only natural for her to look for a context in which she could continue to pursue her dreams of making it as a professional athlete. She realises that her background and level of proficiency probably made her entry easier than would have been possible otherwise. She is still rather amazed about the kind of welcome she received in the club, the city and the country. Respondent 6 shared this view, as well as the experience of not being a child when coming to Sweden and joining a club. Almost echoing each other, they both emphasised how they approached the club themselves and how important they think that was. They also believe that it is unreasonable to expect clubs to keep track of everyone who moves to a place, let alone have the capacity to reach out to them.

Common to all respondents, regardless of whether they were approached, found a club on their own, or just joined a training session, is their rather unanimous experience of access. None of them reported any difficulties in getting in or being included. As previously suggested, some of them associate access and the feeling of being welcomed with the fact that they already had sporting experience when they

came into contact with the club. The access experience is not restricted to just sport activities, but they also agree on having been welcomed to participate in non-sport activities.

A short reminder of the data material we have is necessary at this point. The ones we interviewed are the ones who do participate in sports activities – and most of them were recommended by the clubs. It is therefore no surprise that they are positive about the clubs. Those who left the sport due to not fitting in – or bad experiences – are not a part of our data material.

The role of previous sports experience in the migrants' country of origin

Again, it is useful to distinguish between TGIs. For those who are well-established in their respective nations, they have either been part of the club for years or they moved from other clubs – often because these other clubs were too ambitious – to the club in question.

For those who are less settled, the question of how sports in their country of origin matter is answered in several ways. In general, they have some experiences (mostly) from football as a resource, or from other sports, but in other contexts and cultures. One could assume that previous sports experience is a prerequisite or at least an advantage for approaching sports clubs in a new setting, and that sports experience is important for how one does so. Interestingly, several of the NAMs address how previous sports experience is relevant, but there might nevertheless be cultural differences in terms of how the sport should be played. And some sports require more previous sporting experience-. Perhaps previous experience is important for those looking to find a sport for themselves. Among the Swedish interviewees, it was expressed that you have to know the sport and both like and excel at it. If not, you won't make any effort to look it up. Previous sporting experience might lead to a confidence that you will find a place in the approached club. This might also be similar



for native participants i.e. being older (than the most common entry age) and seeking out a club often require some sort of previous experience. However, the interviews with immigrants in Denmark who swim in an association also show that the desire to practice an activity that individuals did not have the opportunity to pursue in their home country can also be a reason for becoming a member of a sports club.

Parents introducing children to sport

A sports-related group that has not yet been addressed is parents. In the traditional Western European sports club model, parents play an (increasingly) important role as recruiters first and later as volunteers of various sorts. In a typical middle class family, the idea of involved parents is well-established (Lareau, 2003; Stefansen, Smette, & Strandbu, 2018; Strandbu et al., 2019) and, when combined with the expectation that one should volunteer, there are both high levels of involvement and pressure for parents to take part in sport.

Yet, the “involvement culture” is not straightforward for parents with lower incomes and less flexible jobs and not easy to catch and grasp by people who come from countries without these experiences (Espedalen, Bennich, & Strandbu, 2021). Hence, there is a class division in sports, where clubs located in areas with a high socio-economic status have much easier access to parents than other clubs. Some clubs have responded to this lack of involvement by introducing special efforts – more or less successful – that are directed towards the young members “themselves”: “You can’t change a hardboiled egg” was one of the respondent’s description of his father. Her point was that several migrant parents simply do not understand the point of it all: why sports for children and why volunteering? Don’t we pay for it all? The clubs that arrange young leader programmes were all situated in areas with

a high number of immigrants and where sports clubs are striving to get parents involved as coaches and volunteers.

“One of the positive things is that when the children come to the club, the parents also come. We offer them a place to sit down, chat and have a cup of coffee.” (Interview 17, Norway)

Some of our interviewees saw parents as the solution to getting more children and youths with an immigrant background into sport, especially parents who have been in the new country for a while:

“In my opinion, the easiest way is through adults who played sports and are immigrants. So, the people who’ve already been living here for a long time. Maybe they played soccer somewhere. If they get involved and go and talk to the kids in their native language, and then start the projects to bring kids in, that will be the easiest way to get this done. So getting those people who’ve already taken these steps to be their guide. They don’t need to be experts in sports but be active in the sport.” (Interview 12, Norway)

Interestingly, the idea of the Swiss programme is the other way around: parents should get access to the social environment of sports clubs via their children:

“I think the best way for parents to find their circle of friends is through school or kindergarten.” (Interview 23, Switzerland)

In summary, the main form of recruitment to VSCs seems to be a question of refugees (and minorities) finding the clubs for themselves. They do this by looking around, cycling around or searching on Google. There is a desire for the clubs to have better websites and information with translations into different languages. Apart from some of the German and Swedish cases, we reported that few of the individuals seem to have been recruited through formal programmes.

Which sports?

When we undertake some more fine-tuned analyses, we are in a “predetermined” situation as already mentioned. The sport federations recommended clubs and, based on this information, we contacted clubs and the clubs conveyed the contact with interviewees (some cases deviated from this procedure). Given that the number of clubs in the study for each nation is small, we give some brief examples of what activities our interviewees are involved in, and more general patterns emerging from the analyses should be taken only as illustrations of the larger picture.

As expected, we find activities that to a large extent correspond to the idea of global sports with low cultural thresholds. In our dataset, football is the most preferred sport for the male NAMS. An interesting case is from Switzerland where a group of young men from Eritrea have been integrated into a Swiss club as a team.

“I also played [football] in my home country, but only [as] a hobby. I never played in a club, only in Switzerland.” (Interview 2, Switzerland)

In all five nations, football is popular and widespread among minorities, but primarily for men. It is the most common and available sport for TGIs. However, club football is a less global phenomenon. A major difference in sporting activities between the home country and the country of arrival is the form of organisation. While a popular form of sporting activity in Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Switzerland and Norway is participation in organised club sports, this is often not the case in the countries of origin, where the organisation of the sporting activities is often less structured.

Other “global” ball sports such as basketball and volleyball are also present and available and, even though less salient, probably play much the same role as football. The rules are well-known and many immigrants have some concrete experience of these sports from their country of origin. Two ball sports with less global reach also seem to have an impact. Some immigrants adjust to European customs and play handball, a sport that is mostly played in Europe (and to some extent also in Middle East and North Africa). Or the other way around: some European sport clubs (mostly through previously arrived immigrants) offer ball sports that are not common in the five European countries in this project, but in the nations from where the minorities have their origin. The example in our sample is cricket (but it could also have been other sports such as field hockey or baseball). The point is that these sports have rules that are familiar and easily understood. In the case of cricket, earlier research has shown how sport can establish a link between NAMS and immigrants who arrived several years earlier, and that the “veterans” provide important information to the newcomers (Walle, 2011). The sport practised in the home country is less known in the new country of resettlement – as in this example from Switzerland.

“Cricket, I would say cricket is my first love (laughs). Yes, I also played a lot in my home country and I can’t leave cricket. ... As I said, [the Swiss] don’t know so much about cricket. ... Where I live nobody knows what cricket [is]...” (Interview 1, Switzerland)

In terms of some of the fighting sports, the immigrant’s familiarity with these sports from their country is relevant. This is because, if immigrants are familiar with the sport from their country of origin, it makes it easier for them to access these sports in the new country.

Sports are often claimed to be good for integration because they are global in structure and culture and thereby have a low threshold in terms of the competencies required for participation. It is true that this is a factor that eases participation, but there are significant differences as to whether sports actually have such characteristics, as well as also other factors related to specific sports – costs and culture. The most expensive sports are out of reach for most immigrants. Some sports – at least “the most distinctive sports” – are also exclusive in a cultural way, described by Bourdieu (1991) as “social closure”. The social closure of these sports is not only due to economic obstacles: “No less than the economic obstacles, it is the hidden entry requirements, such as family tradition and early training, and also the obligatory clothing, bearing and techniques of sociability which keep these sports closed to the working classes and to individuals rising from the lower-middle and even upper-middle classes” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 838).

It becomes clear that every culture and/or every social status group, develops its own way of dealing with the body and body practices. This approach underlines that sport, like other social practices, doesn't neutralise ethnic and cultural differences. Therefore, access barriers to sport, which in turn can impede integration, can result from the incompatibility of physical and exercise cultures and a lack of experience with the sports practices of the host society (e.g. Bröskamp, 1994). Thus, “hidden entry requirements” matter in terms of the suitability of specific sports for integrative purposes – also in contexts dominated by the “sport for all” ideology of equal admission. Some examples of sports that are dominant in European nations but not among minorities and refugees add to this picture. Two sports that could illustrate this challenge in our data are the winter sports of cross-country skiing in Norway (in particular) and ice hockey in Sweden. These sports appear as less relevant for three reasons. They are unfamiliar, they are expensive, and they have a class profile and

require specific competencies (how to sharpen your skates, how to wax your skis). In addition, they are also part of the sporting identity of the nations where the activity takes place. Two focus group interviews (Norway) included young football-playing men from both the minority population and the majority population to illustrate how sport both unites and divides. When the participants in these groups discussed their experiences in sport in general, football united them while skiing functioned as a social marker between “us” and “them”: both minorities and majorities played football, whereas only the majorities took part in cross-country skiing and alpine skiing.

In short, there are obviously differences when it comes to the suitability of various sports for integrating migrants, and to the role they might play for integration in a broader perspective. Global ball sports seem to be particularly suitable for this purpose.

A necessary correction to the above story is the gender bias. The descriptions are valid for men, not for women. Gender differences are obvious on several levels. More refugees are men, more athletes (especially among minorities) are men (Strandbu et al., 2017), and this is reproduced among our interviewees who are mostly men. Most of our findings are men's stories and experiences. The female sport stories are exceptions and different: they swim or dance in most of our cases. Sports that are less competitive, at least as practiced in our context, and not always organised in VSCs are particularly appealing to women in our study. Our sample contains two examples: swimming (Danish case) and dancing (German case). However, not all the women in our dataset prefer low-key exercise. Among the TGIs from Sweden and Norway, there are examples of highly skilled female athletes who are NAMs. They have been part of a highly ranked team (in the Swedish case) and got a job as a coach (in the Norwegian case).

The three women with an immigrant background who swim in an association have lived in Denmark for several years and have families and jobs. All three started because they wanted to learn to swim. None of them learned to swim as children. None of them go swimming anywhere else, partly because they don't think it is as safe as it is in the context in which they currently go swimming. For all three, it was somewhat of a coincidence that they found the swimming club in question. Partly based on the recommendation of an acquaintance, partly because the club offers lessons where they live. Two of the women had some experience with other sports but very little in the country where they grew up. One of them had previously been both a lifeguard and a volunteer. They also emphasised that swimming is popular because it is offered in gender-specific contexts.

Dancing is described as the primary sport interest among the female TGIs in Germany, mainly because dancing is considered a more feminine sport (or activity) and because the female TGIs are familiar with dancing from their country of origin.

“There [country of origin] the children are motivated to do singing, languages and dancing, this classical dancing.” (Interview 4, Germany)

Football is not the preferred sport for our female interviewees. One reason could be that football has a masculine stamp in most parts of the world. This is also the case in European countries but it is not so pronounced and, in some cases, is also disputed. In several European countries, and especially Sweden and Norway, football is the most popular sport amongst teenage girls (Persson, 2022; Seippel & Skille, 2019).



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Sport in VSCs

Motives and reasons

Reflecting the type and level of activity, the motives and reasons for participation varied considerably, but the main message is the same as in studies of the general population. The respondents mainly focus on four motives or reasons for participating in sports in an association: the enjoyment of and a desire to practice a certain sports activity; a wish to improve, develop and perform; the social dimension; and the healthy aspect of being physically active. These four motives are similar to the motives found in other studies on reasons for playing sport (Espedalen & Seippel, 2022).

The enjoyment of sport - a wish to practice a certain sport

For most interviewees, the central motive for playing sports in an association is the desire to practice a specific sport. It was an interest in football that made the men who had come to Denmark from the Middle East join a football club.

"I love football. It's just in the heart. If I don't play football for a week, I'll actually die. It means a lot to me. It's also because my parents, they also love to play football, and that's who I got it from my parents, my father. Everyone in our family plays football." (Interview 2, Denmark)

To improve, develop and perform

A recurring theme in the conversations with the immigrants was that they play sports in an association because they want to learn something, develop, become better at the activity or perform. For the three women in Denmark who go swimming in an association, it was the desire to learn to swim and get better at it that made them join the association. The three women all emphasised that they go swimming to learn and get better at it. One of the interviewees said that she did not have the opportunity to swim when she lived in India. Her primary reason for joining the swimming club was that she wants to learn to swim. Another woman thinks that there is not enough 'real training':



'I miss a bit of technique training (...). I want to be taught'. She calls for greater quality in teaching. "It would be nice if there was more dedication in teaching." (Interview 6, Denmark)

One of the youngest football players said that he plays football to win; he wants to be good at football, develop and get recognition for his performances.

"When the adults see me play, they just come over and say "shut up, you're good" (...). It's nice to be seen, instead of just walking around in a club where you don't know anyone." (Interview 3, Denmark)

One of the slightly older immigrants, who has been a coach in several clubs, also attaches great importance to development and skills. 'I want to get better. At a high level and would like to become a professional trainer' (Interview 4, Denmark). He also follows courses at the Danish Football Association. He thinks it is important that the children he coaches learn something and become more skilled.

Health

What is perhaps remarkable is the low salience of arguments about the benefits of sports for physical health. In the review conducted by Spaaij and colleagues (2019), health issues were reported as a central concern in several studies on sport and refugees. To keep fit, not become overweight and appearance are reasons mentioned in our interviews. Nevertheless, these concerns seem less important than the other three in our study.

One of the women in the Danish data underlined that swimming gives her a sense of well-being because she likes to exercise and keep in good shape. In addition, it means a lot to her that she has learned how to rescue others in the water. But 'it doesn't matter that much to me that it's an association, for me it's important that it's swimming'.

In particular, many refugees struggle with mental and emotional health issues. In the German cases, the motive for doing sport to reduce aggression or stress was mentioned:

"I have problems with aggression. Nothing could make me calm. When I started boxing, this improved. [...] Since I started boxing, I am calm now." (Interview 7, Germany)

"I have been doing sport since my youth. I have fun with it. I don't play in a professional club but we come together to release the stress. We have a family environment here and get along very well." (Interview 3, Germany)

A similar statement comes from a young girl who described how participating in a club has helped her:

"I used to be very shy. Especially after the Covid pandemic, my social anxiety increased a lot. After I started going here and got to know many nice people, it has been so much better." (Interview 16, Norway).

The social element

A further aspect of TGIs well-being is social health. Therefore, developing social contacts and having an intact social life is important. The social dimension of sports and associations is important for most of the TGIs and is given particular importance among the immigrants who play football. The NAMS' experiences show that sports and participation in VSC might help people with migration backgrounds build social contacts and integrate. A factor that enhances social interaction is regular contact:

"And what is therefore good is that people meet 1-2 times a week and it is fun when you meet friends once a week," (Interview 1, Switzerland)

“Sport really truly helps people integrate in a country, no matter where they are. And even if you are an extremely extroverted person, it is always hard to break into the culture first, and then finding those chances to get to know people with similar interests, for example. It’s not like it’s easy to make friends at work, for example. So, sports are in my opinion the best way to do that.” (Interview 3, Switzerland)

One immigrant who has been a coach reported:

“There was no one who just came and went to training (...). You were part of the community outside of training as well (...). Everyone here is reasonably good at talking to everyone (...). If I come down here and someone is sitting in here, they say “just come in and join in”. Everyone knows everyone, as long as you’ve been here a year” (...). If we lost a game, they just said “The most important thing is that we had a good game and we had fun”. We all just have a great time together.” (Interview 3, Denmark)

The other young immigrant from the same football club reported that a group of boys, who now go to boarding school or play in another club, often meet.

“We have a football group all together on Messenger. If you write “shall we play today?” then everyone writes “I’m coming”, “I’m coming”, “I’m coming.” (Interview 2, Denmark)

The oldest of the interviewed footballers, who grew up in Denmark, emphasised the importance of the positive communities that he finds in football clubs. He tells how he was previously in contact with a criminal gang of which his brother had been part, but then others helped him into the football club, which gave him a completely different community.

Unlike the immigrants who play football, the immigrants who swim in an association do not attach any greater importance to the social dimension:

“We don’t talk very much together. The trainers may also be responsible for an interaction between the participants, but this does not happen. We greet each other and talk to each other if necessary, that’s all (...), not even in the dressing room.” (Interview 5, Denmark)

Another of the women does not attach much importance to the social side either. She knows a few other women on the team but that’s a coincidence:

“I just signed up because I want to swim (...). For me, the social side means nothing because I come to swim, to practice swimming and to get better at swimming.” (Interview 6, Denmark)

An often-heard assumption is that something more than the basic sports activity is needed to develop the social side of VSCs. However, most of the TGIs reported that basic sports activities are their main involvement in the club and that they do not necessarily do very much more. At the same time, most of them also reported that they very much appreciate the social relations or the social aspects of their sport participation if they do not talk about any extra social involvement, where does the social side of sport come from? Do our TGIs say anything, beyond concrete interaction, that points towards cohesion, solidarity and/or community? Such a social side might come from “inside” the sport, within the sport or from “outside” the sport.

A first observation is that sports in themselves are social. To understand how this works, Collins’ theory of rituals is helpful. Collins (2014) describe rituals as chains of interaction, as something that gives a



group – not necessarily more than two people, not necessarily devoted to serious issues – a common focus and this enhances a type of emotional energy. The point is that even though they do not necessarily participate very much in the clubs outside of sports, sport in itself provides a social energy. By underlining this, we also avoid the “instrumentalist” tendency in research on refugees and sport (Spaij et al, 2019) where there is a focus only on the integrative or health benefits. The social and emotional meaning of sport in itself should be emphasised and is underlined in several of our interviews.

The second observation is that sport requires and fosters friendships (Bergesen Dalen & Seippel, 2021; Jones, 2001) and links friendships across social arenas. Jones claims that the sporting activity itself generates friendships. A woman that is herself a NAM and also a coach describes her observation of the main motive for the young participants at her training:

“They just want to make friends. It’s the socialising and having something to do. Because otherwise they just go home and play video games all day. So it’s just about having a location to

go and meet other kids their age and just do something together. It doesn’t have to be (my sport), sometimes we play soccer. Sometimes we just flip the bottles for an hour, you know. So they play around and then afterwards they don’t usually go home, they go and walk around together and, you know, that’s basically a place to make a friend.” (Interview 1, Norway)

This is also the case in our study. Many of the participants reported that they meet up with the people they know through sport in other contexts. This is a factor that both explains where social networks come from (Small, 2009) and gives them some emotional energy.

The results show that the TGIs attribute a high contact potential to the VSCs with their different social structures and sporting opportunities, which enable diverse encounters between migrants and people from the host society. Such informal contacts – as long as they are of a certain duration and regularity – often result in ethnically mixed social relationships in the club.

Inclusion in ordinary sports club activities or segregated activities?

Various clubs offer different opportunities for participation (Tuchel et al., 2020). In most of the cases in our study, the TGIs are involved in ordinary activities in the club. In some cases, the clubs offer activities especially for newly arrived immigrants. Examples include training at housing facilities for migrants that is arranged on a voluntary basis by key persons in the VSCs. For integration purposes, there is an ambiguity in these two strategies. And in many of our interviews it was emphasised that it is important to be part of ordinary activities in ordinary clubs.

In the Swiss data, some stated that clubs with more members from their countries of origin are popular for migrants, since they show an understanding of the NAMs' current living situation and convey a sense of home and security.

An interesting case is from Switzerland with a group of young men from Eritrea who used to play football in Eritrea. They have been integrated as a team into a Swiss club. The team has also organised its own league and played against other Eritrean teams across Switzerland and Germany. Some of them have board positions in the Swiss club, so that they can both participate and also learn about legal issues related to founding a club. Their overall goal is to form their own club and be visible as a community through sport. This will enable them to prove that they do good and are not a burden to society.

One of the footballers in the interviews from Denmark believes that in an association you learn something about how society works - for example, by being responsible for an association. Therefore, he also does not think that it is a problem if the association is a "closed association" with only immigrants (Interview 1, Denmark).

However, these kinds of teams are not always applauded. "Friendship networks of minorities who play sport in a homogenous setting are often viewed with more suspicion by policy makers than those only consisting of members of socially dominant groups" (Elling et al., 2001, p. 418). Thus, the establishment of ethnic sports structures and participation in so-called migrant sports groups or clubs can often also be interpreted as self-exclusion, as the desired spatial, social and cultural demarcation of the majority society. Although this is certainly a social environment, ethnic sports groups or clubs integrate their members into their own ethnic community (no linguistic integration, return orientation).

The football player from Eritrea is aware of the criticism of ethnic-based teams and argues against it:

"Because I think the other [members of the club] are not Swiss themselves and they have already experienced the situation that we are experiencing now. That's why I think there is understanding here from others." (Interview 9, Switzerland)

The integration performance of ethnic clubs was also questioned and advantages for participation in these clubs were mentioned. The other members' familiarity with the situation of the NAMs is underlined as important:

"But like I said, the [indigenous associations] don't understand the situation of Eritreans... They don't know how to get young [Eritreans] into sport. But we now know how we [as an ethnic club] can get the people to integrate." (Interview 2, Switzerland)

In this way, ethnic associations could also address migrants who might not want to join a local association. This setting creates an atmosphere that enables the NAMs to

find distraction from everyday life. This is also an often-mentioned motive for participating in the sporting activity. From the point of view of the NAMs, sport promotes their mental and physical skills and has a positive effect on their well-being.

Another example of a "segregated" activity is all-female activities. For the three women in the Danish case, it was incredibly important for their choice of the swimming club in question that they could swim on an all-female team. One of the women told us.

'Yes, quite obviously, it's because we both (she and her sister) wear headscarves. (...) If I were to learn to swim on a regular Danish team, I would have to wear a burkini, and there's nothing wrong with that, it's also cool, but I just don't think it's particularly comfortable. (...) so I would rather find another place where there are people my age who can't swim either and with a different ethnic background than Danish (...). If I was in an ordinary Danish swimming pool, and I had something around me while I was taking a bath - that would probably be looked at a little differently if it was in an ordinary Danish swimming pool. There are many women who are very shy and do not feel very comfortable being completely naked, and I am one of them (...). I wish I didn't care, but I don't like to stand out too much.' (Interview 5, Denmark)

This woman described a wish to follow Muslim traditions for gender-segregated exercise. She explained this as both a wish to follow some rules and also linked to a sense of shyness and bashfulness. This has been described by other Muslim women (Strandbu, 2005; Walseth & Strandbu, 2014).

One of the women believes that more women from countries such as India, Pakistan and the Middle East would participate if there were all-female teams. She also called for the training to be more targeted at immigrants and their prerequisites. She believes that is important in the beginning but then you can 'experiment' with training in teams where there are also men (Interview 5). The other female swimmer interviewed says that it means a lot to her that it is an all-female team, where there are both women with an immigrant background ('with a headscarf') and women from Denmark. And that it is a team for beginners:

"Well, I think we're all in the same boat, it's new for all of us. People are not afraid to laugh at themselves and none of us are perfect, almost all of us have had some bad experiences with swimming and we laugh about it. Yes, it is such a very light mood." (Interview 7, Denmark)



It means a lot to her that she is part of a small team, as it is also where she trains her fitness, where the participants have the same physical prerequisites and most have the same background.

“It is of great importance that these are women with a different ethnic background, of course it is. But it's not because I only meet women with a ethnic background other than Danish i.e. I also have Danish friends, but I would perhaps be a little more embarrassed if I had to tell my Danish friend that I can't swim. If I just told my other girlfriends, they wouldn't think it was weird, it would be fine” (Interview 7, Denmark).

However, in the contexts in which she has trained and exercised, she has always been met with great friendliness and an understanding for her background. When she went to gymnastics in an association when she was younger, the coaches told her “that if I don't feel comfortable changing my clothes in a communal room, there was always a place where I could change” (Interview 7). And when she went to the gym, there was a special gym that only women used. Both those with a Danish background and those from an immigrant background.

“I also think it was because a lot of women just don't like men staring so much when you train, but it was also super nice for me because then I could be there too!” (Interview 7, Denmark)

And when the lessons on the swimming team end and are followed by a team with men, the Danish women on the team are very eager to help.

“The women who are on the team with us, who are ethnically Danish women, they know that we are covered, so they always remind us that now we have to get out of the water, because the other team (with men) is coming now. In other words, they are almost more observant of it than we are, and I think that is very funny.” (Interview 7, Denmark)

This is a reminder that for some women training in all-female arenas is a prerequisite for their sports participation (Strandbu, 2005). It is also a reminder that such all-female arenas could serve as a way to strengthen weak ties and hence provide valuable knowledge across ethnic boundaries. It should also be added that all-female activities are not required for all Muslim women.

The three women say that they are happy that they can swim on all-female teams and in places where men cannot observe them. However, getting changed was a big challenge for them in the beginning, as they had to get changed together with other women.

“It was a culture shock at first. Being naked in the bathroom, with others. It took a long time to get used to it. But now I have learned to be naked with other women. Now I'm not ashamed of it anymore.” (Interview 5, Denmark)

Non-sport activities in VSCs

Social interaction within the club

Non-sporting activity in a club comprises all types of activities that are not primarily directed towards sports activities. Beyond the social side of the sports activity itself, there are often other opportunities for social interaction in the VSCs.

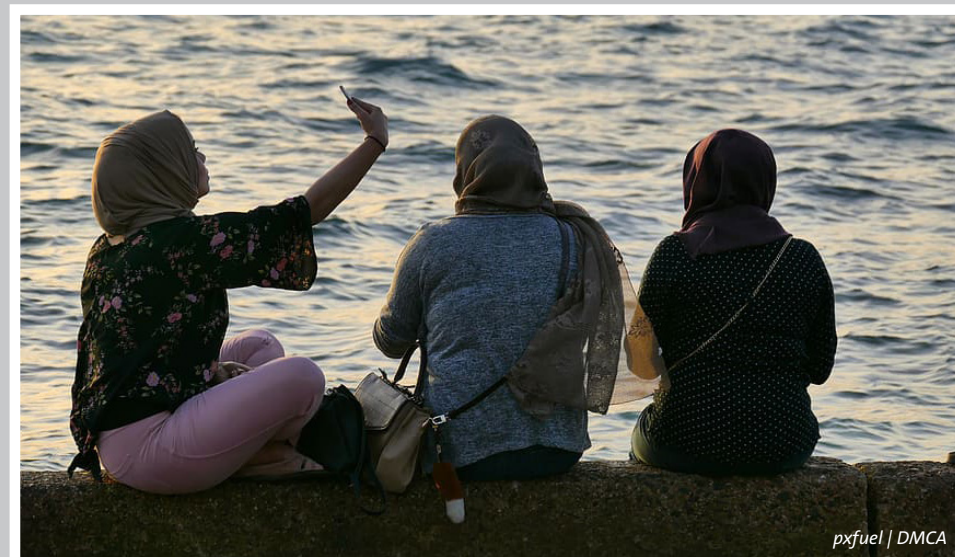
On one level, we have all the micro interaction and small talk around the sport activity itself: on the “field”, before and after matches, in the changing room, on the

way to and from training and competitions. This goes for most of the respondents in our study. For some, the sports activities themselves are just as much a social activity and a way of hanging out with friends.

For the skateboarder in the Swedish case, this is manifested through the nature of the sport (skateboarding) in which he participates. Even though skateboarding is also a competitive sport with competitions, tournaments and such, he described that it is not about any competitive elements for most participants. He admits that it is a cliché but cannot avoid calling it ‘a way of life’. He states one example in which he describes a normal get-together and makes a point of how little time participants actually spend skateboarding. It is just as much about talking about some clips they have seen on social media, taking and posting photographs and video clips, and watching the moves of other skateboarders on site.

For the football playing 40-year-old man in the Swedish case (respondent 6), it is not so much about the nature of the sport (football) as it is about the character of the

groups he frequently plays and socialises with. To him, football is just something they do while being together. It is indeed football that made them all meet in the first place, he added, but nowadays, he joked, it is doubtful if what they do can actually be called football. For that reason, he is very grateful that the team is still allowed to use the club facilities and make use of the administrative support that is necessary for booking the pitch, entering leagues and tournaments, and for being allowed to use the club house for gatherings. It probably helps, he explained, that most of them are also parents to children who play in the club's youth teams, which means that they help out in various capacities – as game hosts, as staff in the kiosk, and as general volunteers when the club organises tournaments, homecoming activities, bazaars and other social activities. To him, participation is almost as much about these things nowadays as it is a matter of actually playing football. He really likes being useful and takes pride in being someone the club can count on when it comes to helping out.



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However, it is not only low-key sport that is described as social. The ones with a more serious and elite level approach also underline the social interaction and the feeling of belonging to a team.

On a second level, and in addition to the general social interaction and small talk around the sport, many clubs organise “one-off” events aimed at improving the social qualities of the interaction in the clubs. These included parties, courses and travelling. Special sport events – e.g. organising a cup – could also have this social role. The non-sporting social activities mentioned by the respondents are team-building activities (often activities associated with other sports than the one they primarily engage with) e.g. movie nights and watching a competition/game (in their ‘own’ sport) on TV. Some also mention more spontaneous activities that are not organised by the club or team e.g. hanging out, enjoying a burger together or going to the cinema.

Thirdly, there is a significant difference between clubs that facilitate such interaction in one-off events and organising activities that imply more regular opportunities for social interaction (related to the activity). One version of this is clubs that once or several times a week provide space for low threshold activities, for instance an “open sports hall”. Some of

the clubs offer open facilities where anyone can show up and get involved in activities that go beyond sport. Several respondents (and clubs) reported that they have some kind of “open hall” arrangement, where “anyone” is welcome to organise and/or take part in physical activity, sports or just spend time there.

Many respondents, especially in the Norwegian clubs with a special focus on inclusion, talk about a broad range of activities. The activities that are part of these arrangements often have a more explicit social function. Sport is in these cases reported as more marginal – and probably also plays a more social role by bonding people. This is an arena that really invites non-sporting interaction in a sporting arena. Many of those involved in these less sporty and more social events were very enthusiastic and claimed that the social relations in the club contribute to the local community by making people proud of the place and making it safer.

The feeling of belonging or the presence of networks differs somewhat between the respondents. Some explicitly describe connections to and networks within their respective club, whereas others talk more about their more immediate context – the

section and/or team they participate in or to which they belong. One of the football-playing young men in the Swedish case (respondent 2), for example, referred mainly to teammates and was also explicit about how few people he knows outside of the team in the rest of the club. Similarly, the 16-year-old girl in the Swedish case even talked about how the specific group of girls that play handball together could just as well have ended up doing something completely different together. In her case, the sheer physical distance between the club facilities in the city centre and the place where her team’s activities take place seems also to matter for a sense of being part of the club (instead of the team).

An important factor for the social qualities of the interaction in the clubs are facilities that are inviting and available for use around the core sport activity: a place to spend time. Having such facilities was regarded as positive among the people we interviewed.

Networks within the club

When talking about the social relations in sports, the most common idea is to imagine some kind of cohesion. People have emotional links to each other and/or the group as such. Talking about social networks easily invokes a wider image with more concrete and even instrumental relations between specific people. There is also a large amount of literature on social networks that addresses their social consequences for the larger society. The most common conceptual version is of social capital, where social links at the lower levels matter for social trust at a general level (Putnam, 2001).

Some of our interviewees have taken this rhetoric on board and talked about how the clubs contribute to building trust in the local communities. Trust and social capital have both an instrumental and less instrumental side. Much of what we write about addresses the “unconscious” effects. People meet, start to cooperate and develop trust and norms related to cooperation. Yet, there are also more instrumental versions and one of the Norwegian clubs has tried – it is still in the test stage – establishing an alumni network. The point is to expand the sports-related network into the future and other social arenas. This can be seen as an attempt to formalise what are indeed shaky social relations in the life of people with often unstable family situations. TGIs from this club are also preoccupied with trust and networks in general. Their young leader programmes are a school in using sport to strengthen the sense of belonging to the local communities.

In another of these alternative clubs they also emphasise inclusiveness and community:

“Everyone knows everyone (...) and the leaders actually care and want to make a difference. I don’t think you will find the relations we have to the leaders in other places.” (Interview 18, Norway)

The participant in the “alternative” Norwegian club underlines how having an open sports hall in the neighbourhood is helpful:

“Our arena is ... it is where everything happens”, “coaching academies, football, all kinds of activity”, “social in the evening” (several of them agree), “that’s the nice thing about it. It has become a place for social gatherings”, “we have become more and more acquainted.” (Interview 17, Norway)

They said that even people who are not members of the club ask if it is possible to join the Friday activities.



An interesting observation is how the organisational form – democratic, open, voluntary – surprises some interviewees yet seems to facilitate social relations and trust in the system. In a direct mode, we see this in the Danish case where minorities are surprised, impressed and proud when they are given the key to the club's facilities. The organisational form (and the traditions and practices that come with it) itself supports the social relations in the group.

"I have been given a key to the club. So, I can come and go whenever I want. And then I have been told that it is as much my club as it is the club of all the members (...). It is very cool (...). I have the keys to the whole clubhouse. It's crazy that they trust that I have it under control." (Interview 2, Denmark)

An illustration of how VSCs might offer something more than sports in the sports setting comes from the "alternative" Norwegian clubs. These are clubs in a broad sense: besides offering sports activities they also arrange social activities for their members and other young people in their neighbourhood. These clubs are located in relatively poor areas and share common difficulties in terms of recruiting parents, as voluntary coaches are the standard way of arranging sports activities in Norwegian clubs. The club's response to these challenges has been to arrange young leader education courses. These courses are popular among young people in these neighbourhoods – they attract youths from both the minority and majority populations. Several of the participants from these clubs are part of the young leader courses and are very clear about the level of sport's inclusiveness as a factor that facilitates the social bonds and their belonging to the local community.

Volunteering as coaches, referees etc. in the club

One indication of how clubs might function as arenas for social integration is how, and the extent to which, they are able to recruit TGIs in a volunteering capacity. This could be, for example, as volunteers, coaches or referees. On one level, this might happen as part of the ordinary processes within the club. According to some migrants in the German data, the principle of voluntary work, which is seen as a pillar that supports social interaction, is learned directly through membership of the club. In these cases, the importance and role of civic engagement seems to be internalised. Correspondingly, one of the football players explained that his coaching work had a great impact on his integration.

"I meet with many coaches, people who like to play football. I also like to play and get better. As a football coach, I would like to use my experience to help others become good at football." (Interview 4, Germany)



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A few interviewees reported that they are involved as coaches or work as referees. Volunteering activities seem rather marginal, those who are involved do not emphasise their social meaning and only a small selection of athletes go in this direction. It probably differs very much between clubs, groups and individuals whether they – as youths – take on such responsibilities.

"No, unfortunately I am not active in another club, because I am very much occupied with my apprenticeship and I have a family. I can't spread myself everywhere." (Interview 3, Switzerland)

Three of the Swedish TGIs have also taken on other roles for the club apart from participating in actual sports activities, two of them as coaches and one as a more general volunteer. None of them has taken any courses (for coaches, referees or similar), although respondent 3 and 5 have been offered such opportunities. Common for all three, however, is their positive experience of being offered and taking on such roles. For the elite athlete, it is also almost a condition for her ability to continue pursuing an elite career. Whether or not they take on other roles, all respondents describe feeling part of the club that offers the activities in which they participate.

In the German case, the interviewees do voluntary work in the area of maintaining sports grounds or at club events. In addition, three interviewees are active as coaches, with one coach also acting as a referee. One interviewee is the captain of his team and another is responsible for social media activities in the club. Hardly any interviewee holds a position on the board or similar. An exception is the football team from Eritrea in the Swiss club.

In the "alternative" Norwegian clubs the young participants are also encouraged to take part in the board. And they consider this as very positive – and different from what they see in other clubs:

"In many clubs, the board members are forty, fifty plus. And they are supposed to handle young people. What do they know about what's happening among youth? You need to have young people on the boards." (Interview 17, Norway)

One of the young participants described their contribution to tournaments and arrangements:

"Sometimes we get paid. But we have no problem with doing it as volunteers either, because we can see how much the club is doing for us." (Interview 18, Norway)

It is difficult to get an impression of the amount of voluntary work that is performed. Nevertheless, we have some indications of how the mobilisation come about. In some cases, they are simply asked by coaches, either spontaneously or as part of a more systematic approach. In some clubs, this is built into the structure. If they take part in special arrangements, they are asked to contribute as volunteers. For others voluntary work was considered to be "payback time". They are "socialised" into the voluntary sports club model and want to contribute. For some, volunteering also includes taking courses (organised by the club or sport federations), including courses in coaching and/or refereeing.

Paid work in the club

If there is a thin line between volunteering and courses, the same sometimes goes for employment. Coaching and refereeing could open up an opportunity for making some money and some clubs employ their members as coaches or referees.

We found several examples of people getting jobs related to their sport participation. In the Norwegian case, the clubs with “young leader programmes”, the whole point is to educate volunteers and volunteering is a compulsory part of their programme. However, after finishing their education they take on roles in the club that are partly paid.

There are also examples of highly skilled coaches who get a job as a coach – based on their skills. And in some cases, the club uses its contacts to find other job opportunities for a part-time hired coach. An example is a NAM, highly skilled as a coach, who contacted several clubs and found one that could employ her both as a coach and in some programmes that the club were involved in.

“Then I learned about the situation with sports and payments. You cannot be a full coach in Norway, because mostly it's volunteering. So, I've been very blessed that this club was able to find me other external jobs. I've been coaching full-time, I've been helping on this project, for example.” (Interview 12, Norway)



Programmes and measures for integration

There is a wide spectrum of clubs: from those that don't do anything special in terms of integration to those that have inclusion in general and integration of minorities specifically on the agenda. In some countries, there are programmes explicitly aimed at integrating TGIs, minorities or immigrants. Again, we have to be aware that it is a complex situation because we have so many types of TGIs – NAMs, minorities, and in some cases even majorities – as well as policies and programmes aimed at refugees and those that target integration in multicultural communities. The members are aware to various degrees of being part of a programme.

It is especially in Sweden and Germany that we find such programmes, and we will describe the experiences of TGIs from these programmes. We pay particular attention to the data from Germany in this section. Four sports clubs in the German case are so-called programme implementers of the national "Integration through sport" programme. The other clubs integrate migrants without participating in any specific programmes. In this section, we pay attention to the experiences of participating in activities on the programmes.

Perception of measures and contact persons in the clubs

Most of the interviewees in the German case did not initially perceive any specific integration programmes in their clubs. Nevertheless, 13 of the 15 interviewees stated when asked that there were specific measures in the clubs. One person could only state from hearsay that there are probably children's tournaments and open days at the club. The two exceptions stated that they were not aware of any measures but that, overall, the club was very inclu-

sive. Everyone in the club was very open and very friendly, which can be seen by the following quotation:

“So, there is this famous sports slogan in Germany, "sport unites", which has been around for ages, you know. You simply can't be integrated into society any faster than in a sports club, where sometimes there are up to two or three hundred members, where you are always in lively exchange with people. So, it can't happen any faster, because in the professional world you just have to function, you have to do your job and then it's closing time and then you have no contact with the people, and in the club it's simply on a different level.” (Interview 15, Germany)

One migrant stated that team evenings and spring tournaments are organised in his club, to which external people and clubs are also invited. This is made clear by the following quotations:

“Yes, well, as you know, we call it team evening. We've always been together like that. We either have a group in the club house and eat together, celebrate together or we meet somewhere and have our party there.” (Interview 11, Germany)

“For example, in 2018, we organised a so-called refugee tournament together, me and (person's name). We also had a football tournament like that at his place. There were over 150 people. There were over 37 clubs, let's say Syrian clubs.” (Interview 11, Germany)

Eight of the interviewed migrants from the other clubs stated that spring tournaments, summer festivals, national youth games, family celebrations and open house days are held at their club to promote integration. Two clubs seem to put a lot of effort into the integration of migrants.

The two interviewees from one of these clubs stated that, in addition to the festivals, neighbourhood parties – where the mosque next door is specifically involved – tournaments and special events already mentioned, charitable measures are also carried out in a very targeted manner. Every year at Christmas, those responsible and the members go to a hospital for disabled people and distribute gifts.

“So, I know that I was once here with my trainer (person’s name) and we once went to (place name). There are disabled people, I don’t know exactly what it’s called, at (hospital name) nearby. [...] we definitely bring presents or something else every Christmas, we also support them. Maybe that’s one example, there are several more, but I can’t think of any now.” (Interview 13, Germany)

The four interviewees from the other club (Interview 19) stated that there is also a cooperation with the anti-discrimination agency ARIC. In this context, special cultural awareness is integrated and lived in the club. This club even offers German language courses. Another feature mentioned by two interview partners regarding their club was that the club checks the school grades of the young migrants and, if necessary, offers auxiliary courses or excludes the student from training for a few days if they receive poor grades. This club even offers internships for migrants. All migrants who indicated that there are specific measures in the clubs also indicated that they could contribute and help with the measures (and have already done so in some cases).

All interviewees said that there are contact persons in each of the nine clubs. Even if it is not always known whether the trainer actually holds an official position as an integration officer, all participants indicated that the trainer is a central contact person. In two clubs, the trainer is also the integration officer (almost acts as a social worker). For one club, the migrants indica-

ted that other supervisors are always available. And in another club, there were also many mentors and the chairman essentially works as an integration officer. In addition, this club even employed a social worker, a social pedagogue and a psychologist.

Are those taking part in the sport activities expected to be full members? The answers vary from talking about it as obvious and not in need of problematising (except for it being expensive) to the most important part of being to include those in need of a place to hang around: “We use sports to do this and it’s fine if people become members, but we don’t care too much about it”. In these cases, the purpose is to be inclusive. What is it about these clubs that makes it possible to go without revenues from members? Allowing some members not to pay fees requires resources, a topic that is not discussed at the grassroots level but more in other reports for the INAMOS project.

Evaluation of the measures

Do the members experience the organisation of the measures in the same way as the representatives of the clubs? The clubs report that they work through schools, childcare, welfare and that they are on the look-out. But the members do not seem to see these backstage processes – or maybe we did not meet people who were recruited through these processes.

All interviewees said that integration work is very important to them and that the clubs also have an obligation here in their point of view. The opportunities to actively participate in and to help with the integration of others were also emphasised very positively:

“So, I am also quite satisfied with the integration work here. They offer new opportunities, and we use them, and that’s all I can say.” (Interview 18, Germany)



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The measures and cooperation for integration that go beyond the club’s boundaries were also rated very positively. Five of the interviewees emphasised that language was the basic prerequisite for being integrated at all. The structural conditions in the club are also positively encouraged with regard to integration. However, one interviewee put this aspect into perspective and pointed out that the networks and contacts are much more relevant for integration than the existing materials.

“So, I would say the only thing that’s important is the network and the people who are there. It’s about the material, whether the network is okay or broken or the clubhouse is big enough for something. I would say what’s important is the network and the people who are there.” (Interview 16, Germany)

What was also seen very positively by one interviewee and helped him with integration was the offer of study rooms to do homework and supplementary courses.

The staff in the clubs were seen as positive and competent by all interviewees. They actively ask about the needs of the migrants and respond to them. Some of the participants even described the whole club as a family relationship and called the club a “second family”. One migrant positively highlighted the friendliness of the staff, which had been a major factor in his integration, as he had always felt welcome.

Deficits, wishes or needs

No specific deficits, wishes or needs were mentioned at first. All migrants saw the clubs as well positioned as they are. In response to further enquiries, it was then said in each case that clubs should continue to work in an open, unbureaucratic and friendly manner. It was also pointed out that it would be nice if the club had more infrastructure and more staff and if, in this way, materials could also be provided for people who firstly come for initial training or who cannot afford sports equipment straight at the beginning.

“Yes, exactly, because as (name) says, you forget sometimes or at the very beginning, maybe you have some financial problems and can’t buy gloves directly. So you can also use them for a certain time.” (Interview 18, Germany)

Another interviewee felt that the club should advertise itself and its programme more so that more migrants could become aware of it. Two interviewees from two different clubs expressed the wish for a language course that the clubs could possibly offer. This was added to by another participant who would appreciate the integration of school subjects into the sports club. Even though he had not experienced it himself, one interviewee expressed concerns/fears about racism. The club should continue to ensure that racism does not find its way into everyday sports life. As a suggestion, it was also occasionally said that more sporting activities should be designed for good integration and that sport should simply be allowed to run without many interruptions.

The Swedish TGIs resemble the German ones in several ways. When asked specifically about the national programme set up for integration through sport, only a few of the Swedish TGIs were vaguely familiar with the concept, even if most of them had taken part in programme activities. For one of them (respondent 2), the programme was promoted in the form of flyers and posters at the asylum housing he lived in when arriving in Sweden and, for respondent 3, knowledge about the programme developed gradually as he became involved as a coach in such activities. For most of them (respondents 1, 4, and 5), club activities are experienced as just regular club activities and not as specific programme activities. This means that those who participated in activities that are clearly established specifically for integration purposes do not conceptualise them as such. They are just sport activities. Even the 16-year-old girl who has very little experience of organised sports activities in her previous homeland still has a rather clear picture of what such activities are. To the 40-year-old father who has lived in Sweden for more than 20 years (respondent 6), on the other hand, the programme, previous versions of it and yet similar activities are well-known features of the Swedish sport landscape. They are also features he applauds and appreciates. Not so much for his own sake, since his entry into Swedish sport was not contingent upon such initiatives, but more for those coming to Sweden nowadays. In his view, being an immigrant today is completely different from being an immigrant when he arrived. Back then, he recalls, it was so much easier to just enter a club and play. From his point of view and experiences of being a member, player and volunteer, it is much more difficult today.

Since knowledge about programme activities is mostly lacking, respondents have difficulties voicing their experiences of the programme and the activities it entails more than on a very general level, as

in the example taken from the interview with respondent 6 in the previous paragraph. This means that, when asked, respondents reflect on the potential function and importance of such programmes and activities in general – what they would like to see in such activities and where the integrative potential lies. One exception is the young football player (respondent 2), who started out in a team established specifically for those living at the asylum housing facility. He, in contrast, was very explicit in what he liked and disliked about the activities in which he participated. To him, it was important that the offer contained an activity he was familiar with, to which he could relate and that he felt he was capable of doing:

“It wouldn’t have worked with anything else than football. I know now that I really enjoyed everything around it [social activities and such]. But I didn’t know that back then and I can’t see myself signing up for something just for the social stuff. You want to be able to contribute, not just be helped if you know what I mean.” (Interview 2, Sweden)

So, to him it was both about the specific activity (something he knew and liked), and his background (something that he knew he was fairly good at). The other exception is the skateboarder (respondent 3), who also placed great weight on the fact that he needed some sort of match between the offer he was presented with and the interests and competences he already had. Even though he was actively approached by the outreach activity for which he now works, he remembers how important he thought the skateboarding part of it was. Like the experiences of respondent 2, the type of sport was the most important factor for him when deciding on how to respond to the offer with which he was faced.

In addition to these experiences from programmes for including refugees in sport, there are also other types of “programmes”. In the Norwegian case, many of the TGIs are part of “young leader programmes”. And even though these programmes are inspired by each other, entail many stakeholders (public, private, civil society) and are institutionalised, they are not programmes in the strict meaning of the term as we employ it in this research project. The participating TGIs are mostly very positive, supportive and enthusiastic about the young leader programme. Another observation from the Norwegian cases: lots of things are happening in relation to the members (of all kinds) that they do not know too much about. Hence their experience of the programme only covers a limited part of the actual programmes.



Reflection on the sport/volunteer model in their country of resettlement

Regarding their club experience, the interviewees explained that the biggest differences between their country of origin and their country of resettlement are the infrastructure (sports facilities, equipment), the behaviour of coaches and the club culture. In terms of the infrastructure, one of the TGIs described that there were no football pitches where he came from or that the infrastructure had been destroyed by war.

The coaches were in general described as caring and concerned about more than sport. Some expressed this with phrases like “coaches treat the kids like their own children” and that the club environment is very “family-like”.

Although the interviewed immigrants did not reflect so much on the fact that they practice sports in an association, they have nevertheless noticed certain values in their associations that they appreciate. One of the women who swims in a women's sports association has noticed the passion that characterises the volunteers in the club. 'That you try to engage the members

in the association to help, volunteer, etc. I can see that many of the trainers are volunteers' (Interview 5).

One of the football players has experienced a big difference between football clubs in Syria and football clubs in Denmark. Clubs in Syria are poor and do not have quite as many balls and equipment as the clubs in Denmark. And the clubs in Denmark are not corrupt, as he claims that the clubs in Syria often are:

“For example, if I know the coach, I talk to him and give him some money, or give him clothes so that he always chooses my son for matches. He doesn't play very well. But he plays. I don't like those kind of people.” (Interview 5, Denmark)

Another respondent from the German study states that the formal system is fairer:

“Back home (in Syria) you get a place on the team if you – or your father – know the coach. Here it is not like that and this is obviously a positive.” (Interview 16, Germany)

Regarding elite sport vs. “sport for all”, the TGIs describe activity patterns that seem similar to the majority of the population. Some exercise at a low level (and prioritise the social dimension of sports) whereas others are more ambitious.

Two patterns are interesting to note. Firstly, among the minorities with sporting ambitions there seems to be some frustration in terms of the inclusive approach dominant in many European sports. In the Norwegian case, a NAM coaching in team sport – mostly with kids from the majority population – described conflicts with respect to playing time, communication with the players and the parents. She referred to this as both misunderstandings and disagreement about the best strategies for coaching a team. In her opinion, both parents and children should respect the coaches, the same way as she always respects the children and youths she coaches. Parents should not intervene with the decisions made by the coach.

Secondly, many interviewees, and especially those in clubs with special “efforts”, had the impression that the sports activity was sometimes of minor importance; what mattered was having an arena to meet other people. Sport was the pivot point, but the focus was not on athletic ambitions. Some immigrants have trouble understanding or accepting the way of organising sports in the nations included in the study, and some, actually only a few, did not accept or like or understand the inclusive and soft way of doing sports. How serious sport for teenagers should be was a contested topic in some of the interviews:

“So, I think bringing kids up slowly and letting them explore all their options, letting them try every single sport in the book – I think it's a beautiful thing. I think it should stay that way, but for those who love one specific sport, it should be maybe once a week training

separate from the rest, so it can be focused on their skill level, because if new kids keep coming every week, it's hard for the coaches to develop those who are already good.” (Interview 12, Norway)

It could be important from the clubs' side that ethnic and cultural specifics are considered with regard to the design of sports offers. These findings also underline that the national sports culture must be considered, both in terms of which sports dominate and the meaning of sport. This is complex and there are also contradictions, especially in youth sport. As described in a study of a football team for teenagers, the “sport for all” ideology might be the dominant way of talking about sport, but there might still be a strong interest in performance and winning (Helle-Valle, 2008). There are also differences between clubs in terms of the emphasis placed on athletic ambitions compared with social inclusiveness. The ones from the alternative clubs in Norway, both majorities and minorities, compare their clubs to other “Norwegian” clubs more than to the system or other systems. In their view, the other clubs are more competitive and do not emphasise the social element to the same extent as their own clubs do. Such cultural complexities might be hard to understand as a NAM. We will return to these issues below in relation to the discussion of sports in the club. It also makes sense to analyse this for sports and physical activity that take place outside of the context of the sports clubs. There are significant differences when it comes to the meaning and type of the activity going on in the VSCs, and such club activity also takes place within a larger context of physical activity (fitness, national sports, fighting sports).



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Identification

Across all interviews, the interviewees feel to a large extent well received in their club and identify with it. The descriptions range from being happy and feeling good to being proud of the club. The respondent in Interview 6 from the German data explicitly pointed out that they can identify very well with the specific integrative measures of the club. In individual interviews, the interviewees described their club as home, family or homeland, as the following two quotes illustrate:

"With me, I feel like I'm at home here. And yes, we are the best. I like coming here too. Whenever I come here, I leave feeling happy. And they treat us very, very well and I'm happy to be here in (club name) as well. We are the best." (Interview 7, Germany)

"I would describe (club name) as home now [...]". (Interview 9, Germany).

One of the young football players reported how the club's chairman showed him a lot of trust:

"I have been given a key to the club. So, I can come and go whenever I want. And then I have been told that it is as much my club as it is the club of all the members (...). It is very cool (...). I have the keys to the whole clubhouse. It's crazy that they trust that I have it under control." (Interview 2, Denmark)

He also stated that even if you are no longer officially a member of the club, you are still considered part of the club:

"It doesn't matter if you've been away for a year. For example, XX (the other of the two young people who were interviewed) has not been active in the club for a few years, but when people from the club meet him, they still really like him. They say hello to him and ask how he is. They are really good at that." (Interview 2, Denmark)

For some the connection is mainly with the coach because there is much less contact with the club as a whole:

"The strong connection I think is with us and our coach, because with the rest of the club you don't have so much to do. [...] it's where I sometimes also think it's not only a coach and it's more [...] it's more a friend." (Interview 8, Germany)

When asked if they themselves had ever been discriminated against in their club, or if they knew other people with a migration background who had been subjected to discrimination in their club, all the German respondents stated that they had no personal experience of this and that they were not aware of any other club members who had been discriminated against. Furthermore, (almost) all interviewees stated that they had never had conflicts with other members of the club. An exception is interviewee 5, who also reported physical conflicts, but stated that they had nothing to do with his migration background, but that it was a matter of "normal youth conflicts" (Interview 5). These findings from the German data are surprising given the large amount of racism and discrimination in sport revealed in other studies (Burdsey, 2011). The findings can be interpreted as resulting from the overwhelming satisfaction with the programmes among the people interviewed in the German case. In the interviews from the other countries, some respondents mentioned experiencing racism related to sports, but not in their own club. It should again be underlined here that our sample consists of individuals who take part in sport. Experiencing racism is probably a reason for people leaving sport, and hence our study cannot say anything about racism in sport.

Promoting and inhibiting factors

Across all interviews, coaches and other athletes from the club were named as the central supporting factors that significantly facilitate the opportunities for people with a migration background to participate in the club context. Contact and exchanges with other athletes/members in the context of the club and beyond was of great importance to the interviewees.

The supporting role of the coach/supervisor was particularly emphasised in the interviews. For most of the interviewees, the coach is the central point of reference in the club. Almost without exception, the interviewees were very positive about their coach. They emphasised their special commitment, openness and active approach to the interviewees, as the following quote shows:

"So the coach took care of all of us and he also knew, for example, that in my case my grandparents always lived relatively far away, and if I couldn't go to the game because we were visiting my grandparents, then I was allowed to sleep at my coach's house. His son also played with us and it was unbelievable, the way his mum used to pamper me in the evening before I went to bed, just so that I could play (sport) the next day. And my mum was reassured that I had supervision." (Interview 5, Germany)

A lack of language skills is seen as the central factor that inhibits integration:

"To be well integrated, the language is of course immensely important. It's no use if I just go somewhere and do sports and leave again and that doesn't get me anywhere in life. So sure, I'm a bit healthier than someone who doesn't do any sports, but yes, I simply have to be able to communicate with people, otherwise I just won't get anywhere in life." (Interview 5, Germany)

In the short term at least, it can help if there are people in the club who can act as translators:

"At that time, I had a couple of players in my club who knew my language, and they tried to translate." (Interview 1, Germany)

The inhibiting factors mentioned here relate to the specific programmes for integrating refugees and minorities. Later in this report we will address barriers to integration in sport more generally and not just restricted to the programmes.



Barriers to participation and integration

The immigrants interviewed also mentioned several barriers that they have encountered or consider to have a negative impact on the participation of immigrants and their descendants in sports associations. Many of the described barriers do not differ from the barriers that often come up in general discussions about participation in sports associations (Breuer et al., 2017), whereas some are more relevant for minorities. The most obvious barrier is that there are so many other pressing tasks to handle. Hence, sport is for some considered a pleasure that you can enjoy once you have taken care of other tasks.

Costs

Several of the interviewees believe that costs can be a barrier for many immigrants and their descendants. The expenses for membership fees, equipment, transport etc. can be so great for some immigrants that it prevents them and their children from participating in the VSC. The main costs that potentially prevent migrants from accessing the sports clubs are fees and equipment costs. The fees range from none (the club renounces membership fees for refugees) up to, for instance, an annual family membership fee of €550 in the German data. Using commercial sports facilities creates financial pressure, so refugees joined clubs where they were able to bear the costs. Several studies show that the immigrant and the migrant population participate in sport to a lesser degree than the majority population, and that class, background and limited economic resources are an important explanation for this difference (Strandbu et al., 2017).

Lack of knowledge of sports culture and sports clubs in the host country

One of the interviewees (Interview 1), who has lived all his life in Denmark, believes that it is a central barrier that first-generation immigrants do not have knowledge of a number of sports that are widespread in Denmark. This applies, for example, to handball, badminton and team gymnastics. Furthermore, he believes that a number of sports are perceived as masculine in some immigrant contexts and are therefore not considered as suitable for girls and women. However, he has noticed that football is gaining ground among girls with an immigrant background.

One of the women who swims in a club called for more information about the opportunities to practice sports in the various associations. Among other things, information in languages other than Danish:

"It could be super cool if most associations, for example, had the option to switch to a language other than Danish on their website (...), and if some of the pictures were of people with headscarves, then you might also feel a little more welcome." (Interview 7, Denmark)

Another hurdle is that sporting opportunities are not sufficiently visible or even known in the home country:

"Because in our culture we don't have such offers and we might not even think about it. That the child can do sport somewhere at a young age. But with time you hear it." (Interview 8, Switzerland)

Sport as an activity for children might not be familiar to some migrants, since organised sport in their home country is mostly available to young men with sporting ambitions. The same argument goes for women's sport. It is not taken for granted that sport is an activity for women.

Lack of networks in sport

In general people are introduced to VSCs through their network – through family or friends (Seippel, 2005). For the NAMs in particular, a lack of networks and not knowing people who are familiar with sports clubs is a significant barrier.

The Swiss interviewees asked for some kind of welfare officer who could connect people. This is perhaps especially relevant for those not attending school (where, the assumption is, there is some kind of recruitment). This is also coupled to the question of language. In Norway, there is an arrangement, talked about by both experts and members, called the "Activity Guide" which is thought to link knowledge of sport for children with opportunities for parents.

Language barriers

One challenge when entering the club is the language. Most of the interviewees in the German case describe their initial problem as not speaking or understanding the German language. This resulted in anxiousness and insecurity when making first contact with other club members and coaches. Knowing club members beforehand helps tremendously in reducing problems when joining the club. For those who do not have connections, it is more difficult to get into contact with others, in particular when the language problems are still there. Sometimes coaches or team members proactively offer help, which decreases the threshold for getting into contact with others. A further problem can also be actually finding a club. If you search on your own, the language barrier amplifies this problem.



The interviewees with a migration background pointed out that having a command of the German language or learning it quickly is essential for successful participation in sports and other club activities. The same was observed in Switzerland:

“At the beginning it is always difficult, the first problem is always the language. And then, with the language, how can you find a circle of friends and be in a group, this is always a bit difficult.” (Interview 1, Switzerland)

A lack of language skills has a negative impact on the possibility for participation, as the following quote illustrates:

“I just didn’t have any nice feelings because I didn’t know German. I didn’t even know what the trainer wanted me to do and when he explained the exercises, I couldn’t understand what I was supposed to do. I always followed the exercises, but I still did them wrong because I didn’t understand what the trainer meant. But that was my only problem, otherwise the boys were all fine.” (Interview 1, Germany)

The interviewees reported that almost all of the clubs (trainers) also expect people to talk in German in the club so that everyone present can follow the conversation.

One of the interviewees explained that it was difficult in the beginning when he started playing football at the club, mainly because he did not understand what was being said:

“It wasn’t so good in the beginning. I didn’t feel so good about it because I was new, and I didn’t understand anything. I couldn’t understand what they were saying. Then there were some young players who bullied me. But today they are some of my best friends.” (Interview 3, Denmark)

Cultural differences

Different views regarding how sport should be practiced can also be considered barriers. In the most pronounced cases, this revolved around the degree of hierarchies in the club – and how important winning is for the team. A NAM who coaches children described the differences between sport in Norway and in her home country:

“Well there are pros and cons in both. I think this approach of sports for everybody and everybody gets to develop is incredible. And you guys have the finances, and the opportunity and the location for it. I think it’s a beautiful thing. But at a certain level, maybe after age thirteen, I think it should be a little separate, you know, for those who could become elite athletes [...]” (Interview 12, Norway)

Later in the interview, she expressed more frustration that there is less focus on the individuals with elite aspirations.

In several of the interviews, young athletes expressed a desire to win but, at the same time, they stated that the coach must not focus too much on winning at the expense of social welfare. However, this inherent conflict in sport teams – between winning and securing the welfare of everyone – was a persistent topic in the interviews, as it is in sport more broadly.

Conflicts in the football team due to internal competition were also experienced as a barrier for two of the interviewed young immigrants who play football:

“I was good, they told me that too today. I was the best on the team and someone else couldn’t stand that and then he just chose to treat me badly. And then I got mad, and then the coach said that I had to go home from training if I can’t behave properly.” (Interview 2, Denmark)

Behavioural and cultural conditions are also mentioned as a potential barrier. One of the interviewees reflected on this and stated that the behaviour of some immigrants in certain situations can be seen as inappropriate and contribute to negative ideas about immigrant groups that work against integration. Conversely, immigrants are also stigmatised in many contexts, especially in the way some media refer to immigrants.

A major difference in sporting activities in the home country and the country of arrival is the form of organisation. While a popular form of sporting activity here is participation in organised club sport, this is not the case in the countries of origin, where the organisation of the sporting activities is often less structured.

This different experience of sport in the home country compared to host country leads to different expectations of sport. Thus, local sports clubs were often perceived by the study participants as very performance-oriented. However, the experience of fun is a central motive for many NAMS. Several of the NAMS are less performance-oriented. However, there are also examples of migrants who question the “sport for all” ideology.

Transport and location

Another factor hindering participation was the location of the VSC, respectively the distance between the VSC, hometown and workplace:

“For the sake of cricket, I have moved again and have arrived in [...]. It has been difficult for me with cricket. The time...I always had to hurry, finish earlier, run home and get the last bus. The connection was not good. Then I decided to move, so that I could do my sport in peace.” (Interview 1, Switzerland)

Hindrance to participation thus already started with not being able to get to and from the location of the VSC. In contrast, VSCs located in a neighbourhood where there are more people with a migration background fosters their participation in a VSC because it gives them a feeling of familiarity and security. It also presents the opportunity for bridge building between, and within, the NAM and local communities and, therefore, the possibility for social interaction.



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Activity outside sport: integration through sports and beyond

So far, we have paid attention to activities in the clubs. In this section, we address the idea of integration through sport. A key question regarding integration through sport is how relations built in sport matter in other arenas. The relations in question could be both strong and weak ties (Granovetter's, 1973) and "other arenas" could mean access to things such as a job or other important arenas for integration. Integration through sport could be a question of having some kind of contact with people from sport in other arenas. Most of the interviewees do not think much about what the association and the activities they engage in mean for their integration. "It's only football, not much else" (Interview 3, Denmark). One of the women said that the association itself is not that important to her. 'I would miss the offer if it didn't exist, but my life doesn't depend on it' (Interview 5, Denmark).



Activities after training

Most interviewed NAMs stated that they also spend time together with other club members outside of the VSC. These activities include, for example, going out for dinner together, going clubbing and doing other sports activities. Several of the interviewees confirmed that the sports club is an important social meeting place for them, which offers many opportunities to build social relationships and friendships that often go beyond playing sports together in the club. With a few exceptions, the interviewees reported that they have contact with other athletes in the club. It is interesting that the interviewees made little or no distinction as to whether the contacts are with people with or without a migration background. The interactions take place predominantly in a sporting context. In team sports in particular, there are also reports of barbecues or meals together.

The relationship with the coach is important for almost all respondents. The interactions here often go beyond the sporting context, as the coach acts as a kind of "mentor". The networks among the athletes (often involving the coach) are also used to solve specific problems and challenges within and outside the club context, as the following quote illustrates:

"That's how it always works with us. We have had many people who sometimes had problems, and we have also helped them outside the group. If someone needed something, the trainer would write to them, the trainer would write to the group and then we would sort it out." (Interview 3, Germany)

In the case that the migrants are very young children, interactions between the parents help to address different challenges, as the following quote shows:

"And it's the same with the parents, when I have a friendly relationship with them. So, we can help each other. For example, today I took the neighbour's boy with me and, if I don't have the time, then the next time. So, it's already important and here I think you can do that a little bit, if you build up friendship, then you can support each other." (Interview 4, Germany).

Do they meet "off the pitch"? If so, where and what do they do? There are vague time and spatial structures to some of the clubs and their activities: they meet on the pitch and outside of training times. They use the pitch for other activities. They also meet in other arenas, and this accumulation of social arenas is useful and beneficial for social relationships in sports.

Many of the youngest participants (15-17-year olds) in the focus groups in the Norwegian case go to the same school. And it is interesting that several of the ones above 18 did go to the same school. In these instances, sport prolongs the social life of schools (at least for a period). Sport is a place where old friends meet when they have moved to other schools or started to work. This is an example of how sport promotes strong relationships.

Weak ties through sport

In addition to the strong ties from sport, there are also examples of how sport can create weak ties between individuals. A woman from the Danish interviews emphasised that people in the swimming team are good at helping each other.

"People are very open to helping each other (...). In general, I think people are super helpful and it's very nice to be here." (Interview 7, Denmark).

She then touched on the value of meeting others from other, unfamiliar environments. Through meeting others, she also hears about other activities:

"I don't know if it's just me who's been too busy with life and hasn't seen what's up with other events, but I think you're always hearing about something new that's happening close to where you live (...). Sometimes the things that you, as a Dane of another ethnic group, take up may be a bit similar, but when there is perhaps an older Danish woman who recommends something completely different that you may not have tried before, then it will also be exciting." (Interview 7, Denmark)

This woman alluded to the main point in "The Strength of Weak Ties" (Granovetter 1973) – how meeting people outside your primary network can introduce you to new information.

One of the women reflected a bit on the fact that she meets other people for swimming than those she normally hangs out with:

“The only thing you have in common is really just swimming. But being around a completely different group of people has also been cool (...). For example, there was someone who talked about getting a tattoo and then two weeks later, she had three small tattoos, and then we sat and talked about it (...). There is also someone from the swimming pool who asks me (...) how is your child or things like that.” (Interview 7, Denmark)

According to this woman, it probably wouldn't have happened if it weren't a women's sports association:

“Which gives women with a different ethnic background the opportunity to learn these things (...). There you also don't have to explain things like why you can't swim. There it's almost just yes, yes, of course you can't swim.” (Interview 7, Denmark)

Useful networks

A key question regarding integration through sport is whether people connected to sport have helped the TGIs in any respect, for instance in obtaining crucial information or getting a job.

In the Norwegian case, experiences from the young leader programmes in the “alternative” sports clubs have helped. The idea behind these young leader programmes is to make the participants trustworthy and equip them with a broad range of competencies in addition to sport. The participants get a certificate after training for one year, which makes it easier for them to get a job after school in the local community. So, it is perhaps not relations in the sense we immediately think, but rather in the sense of preparing people for other arenas

– as well as the sports arena. There are, of course, specific individuals beneath these formalities:

“I got some kind of trustworthiness from (the certificate and) the CV. It says something like “He has been working with children and knows how to do that.” And now when I work as a guard it's kind of the same – you are with people and you are supposed to understand the needs of different people.” (Interview 17, Norway)

For the skateboarder in Sweden, participation in sport has resulted in part-time employment and the possibility to make some money. He emphasised that it has also helped him in other ways. He mentioned, for example, the opportunity to practice the language in an informal and relaxed setting, the possibilities to take part in all of the other activities arranged by the club (both general social activities but also in the other sections' sport activities such as climbing and BMX), and the relationships he has formed with other members and club officials.



Other club members could help NAMs with issues beyond sport such as job searches, medical advice, or the translation of legal documents. Depending upon the issue, club members with or without a migration background could help.

In the Swiss case, one of the interviewees told us about a case of medical help where friends in the club directed her to one hospital rather than another:

“When I had, for example, a problem with my finger or feet, they said go here because I really don't know anything about these doctors (...). They said go to this physiotherapist. Or when I had problems with my feet now that I have the finger, they said to me don't go to the Ansel hospital, go to this hospital, it's much closer, it's faster, they are so good and, yes, they are giving me some advice. The hospital was more for Swiss people because they know it better.” (Interview 7, Switzerland)

Structural integration through sport

Examples of structural integration through sport could include integration within the employment and education system, as well as dealing with and understanding institutional processes (Elling et al., 2001). In some cases, employment relationships were directly arranged through contacts with the club. In other cases, experience and knowledge about everyday working life were exchanged, which supported people's entry into the employment market.

“I've been blessed. This club was able to find me other jobs externally, so I've been coaching and I've been helping with this project, for example. And that is enough for my minimal income for citizenship.” (Interview 12, Norway)

Furthermore, the findings show that, in several cases, club membership has a supportive effect on integration within the education system, mainly through the organisation of homework help, advice on school matters and future career prospects. In individual cases, school performance was monitored by trainers. In one club, support was provided by arranging a school internship in the sports club. A negative effect of sports club membership in connection with school was mentioned in the sense that playing sports in the club was considered more important and thus school was neglected. This is a concern raised in other studies as well (Spaaij et al., 2019). Some refugees might be tempted to aim for an elite sports career and downplay more realistic ways of getting a job.

It is also evident that membership in a club and the contacts that go with it help immigrants to cope with institutional and bureaucratic processes, such as going to the authorities, filling out forms or visiting other public institutions (youth centres, anti-discrimination office).

Some individuals reported no transfer effects along the structural dimension. It can be assumed that this is due to the fact that the interviewee had already been living in Germany for a long time when they joined the club and was accordingly integrated into the host society.

Social integration through sport

Social integration through sport means building inter-ethnic relationships that are not restricted to the sports arena (Elling et al., 2001). Through contacts with other club members, new relationships are also established with people from the host society who are not themselves members of the sports club. This can lead both to increased bonding and bridging and the building of social capital. It seems to be irrelevant how

long the migrated person has been living in the country of resettlement or whether they have had migration experiences themselves.

According to the interviewees, membership in a sports club can help people to establish inter-ethnic contacts more quickly and find friends within the host society. One of the interviewees emphasised that they were able to make friends from the host society in a shorter period than other migrants who had migrated to Germany at the same time. Furthermore, it is evident that the social contacts and friendships that have developed within the club facilitate access to new social contexts, which is attributed to the confidence gained in dealing with people from the host society. One of the interviewees stated that, through playing sports together within a club, she has met people from other social backgrounds, which would probably not have happened otherwise in everyday life.

However, it has been shown that the development of social contacts that go beyond getting together within the everyday life of the club cannot be transferred to every club, but that this is always dependent on the respective sports club, the associated framework conditions and its members. Getting to know new social contexts is promoted above all by organising joint events. The organisation of neighbourhood festivals, to which people from outside the club are also invited, offers opportunities for the members of the sports club to gain easier access to other social contexts.

Cultural integration through sport

The cultural integration dimension includes intercultural exchange and the process of language acquisition in order to learn relevant cultural facets of the host community, as well as introducing the majority population to aspects of the minority population's culture (Elling et al., 2001).

The respondents attributed a decisive role in language acquisition to membership in a sports club. The sports club functions as a kind of protected space for learning the new language, in which the fear of making mistakes when speaking is less pronounced due to the familiar environment. It also becomes clear that initial language barriers are overcome by playing sports together and interactions with people from the host society take place without having to understand each other in the language of the host society. In all cases, the improvement in language skills is attributed to the regular interaction with other club members. One interviewee reported that he had learned "everyday language" through his membership in the club. In some cases, people took part in external language courses at the same time, but the central role of interaction and club membership within the language acquisition process was also emphasised. The improvement of language skills has consequences that support integration. It is reported that this significantly improves integration in the school context and in everyday working life.

In the course of their membership in the club, the interviewees in the German and Swiss cases are also confronted with social norms such as discipline, punctuality and honesty, which are also attributed great importance outside the club. In addition, reports of migrants' experience confirmed

that, through inter-ethnic interaction in the club, knowledge about different cultures and customs is also mutually exchanged. These German examples reveal how, on the one hand, migrants gain knowledge about the cultural rituals of the host community. On the other hand, by considering the migrants' cultural rituals, the club members can also learn about the customs of other cultures. For example, one of the clubs takes Ramadan into account in its training schedule, which also encourages club members with other cultural backgrounds to learn about other cultural rituals. Such mutual cultural exchange between the club members was reported in several interviews, as the following quote illustrates:

"It doesn't matter whether you're old or young, I think we have a very multicultural youth here now, which is really nice. And you always get to know people from other cultures and, yes, it is always very instructive when you talk to them, you always learn things about how people on another continent think, which is sometimes completely different." (Interview 5, Germany)

In addition to the interactions with other members of the club that initiate such exchange processes, it was also possible to identify club measures that contribute to cultural sensitisation. Such cultural exchange is mainly limited to the exchange of knowledge about the respective other cultural rituals and customs, but these rituals are not adopted by the host society. Overall, there is a consensus among migrants that membership of a club broadens their horizons regarding cultural practices in the host society and thus contributes to an improved understanding of different lifestyles and cultural customs.

One of the interviewed footballers, who has lived in Denmark for many years and has a pedagogical education, reflects a lot on the potential offered by practicing sports in a sports association in terms of integrating immigrants and their descendants into society. Firstly, he believes that it is very important that participation in the sports association is 'voluntary' and based on 'desire':

"All those who play football, they play because it's something they really want, otherwise you won't get them to play football (...). That they like it, that they find it fun." (Interview 1, Denmark)

Secondly, he believes that the association's location is crucial i.e. that the club belongs to a local area where there is a relatively high number of citizens with an immigrant background. In his experience, citizens in residential areas where there are many socially disadvantaged and immigrants do not take the initiative to do sports themselves.

Thirdly, the association must be more outgoing. Even if an association is in an area with many immigrants, this will not necessarily cause immigrants and descendants to participate in the association. The associations must make more direct contact with the target group.

Fourthly, he believes that a stronger collaboration between the sports associations and schools and the municipality in general would strengthen integration, and that professionals should be employed to a greater extent who can help support the individual child - as 'compensation' for a lack of support from parents (Interview 1, Denmark).

The interviewees' experiences from the associations they are active in show that participation has had an impact on them in various ways.

Norms and values

Two of the young footballers talked about the social side of playing football. They do see the point of learning to behave properly and respect others, but they think that it is sometimes exaggerated:

“Our coach could send us off the field if we spoke to the referee, if we spoke to their coach. If we were disrespectful to other players, they kicked us out. But the others (players and coaches on another team) called our players clammy gingers who run around the field, and then I answered back, and then I got scolded by my own coach (...). It was a setback (...), we should have defended ourselves. If the coach on the other team is allowed to screw up my teammates. Then I'm allowed to screw them up (...), it's the worst when the coach cares more about that than the team winning (...). Then he sat there after the game and talked about how we should behave, but we're going to play football for hell.” (Interview 3, Denmark)

This quote reveals frustration, both in terms of experiencing racism and mistreatment – and the fact that coaches place an overwhelming amount attention on their

behaviour. There are few other examples of such frustrations in our data material – which probably reflects the fact that the ones that were willing to participate in interviews were the ones who had enjoyed positive experiences from sport. The overall impression from the interviews is that sport is a suitable arena for sociocultural integration.

One of the interviewees reflected on the fact that in associations you acquire important norms and forms of behaviour and get a sense of community:

“After all, I have been part of a community through football. I have found out how important it is to be part of a community, how you can gain strength through a community of self-confidence and increase your self-esteem. It is clearly what has made me stronger through football.” (Interview 1, Denmark)

Another example from Denmark is the three women who said that they are happy that they can swim on all-female teams and in places where men cannot observe them. However, changing clothes was a big challenge for them in the beginning, as they had to change clothes together with other women.



Summary

We interviewed TGIs based on a predetermined set of topics. The predetermined character of the analyses came from the challenges of doing cross-national qualitative studies. What our data can provide is a kind of catalogue of the diverse characteristics of the phenomena we are studying. In this summary, we will go through the main findings related to each research topic.

A first and overall finding, which should come as no surprise, is that the TGIs are in themselves a diverse group of individuals (NAMs, various types of minorities, and even some majorities) and they are, in turn, part of diverse sport groups and clubs. In this way our sample is realistic – reflecting that participants in VSCs with integration ambitions are a diverse group of people. Both our findings and eventual policies emanating from this study should take this diversity into consideration.

A second, overall premise for interpreting and using our data is the fact that our sample is special: we interviewed clubs and individuals from clubs who take part in VSCs that are recommended as part of the study because they are successful with integration. We did not conduct any interviews with clubs that are not concerned with integration and people that have not found their way to the VSCs. Their voices could also have added important insights. We tried to remedy this bias by asking the ones we did interview not only about their own experiences, but also about what they see as important for other people with a refugee, immigrant or minority background.

A final general result is that, contrary to what is often assumed, the idea of sport as a “universal language” is problematised. Firstly, some sports are more globally widespread than others. Secondly, the way in

which sports are played around the world varies. Thirdly, the target individuals for the sports also vary. In many countries, sport is seen as an arena for young talented men and not for women and children.

Sports activities

The most common activities seem to be traditional sport activities with strong positions both in each nation and internationally e.g. football. Also important for some migrants is that popular sports activities in migrants' country of origin are organised e.g. cricket. Some of the interviewees emphasised that they appreciate that sports are inclusive and not always very competitive, while some also have the opposite experience: sports are too inclusive and not serious enough. In some clubs it is also emphasised that non-sports activities are important. This could be social gatherings without any clear objective and more specific activities e.g. help with schoolwork.

Recruitment and access

Research shows that social networks are important for recruiting people to sports organisations, especially parents/family or friends. The same applies to most of our interviewees, especially those who have been in the new country for longer. In this group (newly arrived) some are linked to clubs by programmes or other institutional stakeholders. Some also reported that they took the initiative themselves and contacted a local and/or relevant club. Previous experience matters for the type of club and sports that people choose. It is, however, important to see, in line with the previous point on activity, that sports are diverse and not universal. National background, sports experience and gender all matter when deciding which sports organised in which way to choose.

Why sports?

Even though motives for sports vary, the main impression is that motives in the minority and majority populations are the same: sports are fun and a way to meet other people.

Some just want any kind of activity, others are attracted to specific sports, some want to perform, others want to acquire specific competencies (e.g. to learn to swim). The impression is that fewer people than in the general population do sport for health reasons. An important finding is that both the reasons for doing sports and the activities themselves are often gendered.

Non-sports activities in the sports club

We find a spectrum of club activities that are more or less sport-related. Without that being a central topic for many interviewees, one could assume that much of the social interaction aspect is about ever-

yday activities, small talk, communication in the locker rooms and travel to and from the sports activity. Activities on the boundaries of sports are mentioned by many as important, and some make the argument that low-level competition is especially apt for social interaction. There are also activities that are (more or less) open to all (open hall), and where participants themselves decide on the type of activity. Some clubs have facilities that are supportive of such interactions.

Some members and TGIs also volunteer and take part in education programmes. Some are also employed in small positions in the clubs and others also try to include TGIs on their boards. One of the clubs is trying to establish some kind of alumni to strengthen the social networks in the club - for the future and for society as a whole. One-off events – gatherings, parties etc. – are also mentioned as important means for establishing social networks in the clubs.



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Activities outside sport and integration in and through sport

We could distinguish between three types of interaction outside sports that result from sport. Firstly, there are direct outcomes in the form of meeting the same people as an extension of sport: going to see a film, having something to eat together. Secondly, some athletes meet at other institutional settings. Some exercise at fitness centres, others take part in other sports (fighting sports). The most common is probably going to the same school. Educational efforts are also, in some cases, supported by help with schoolwork in the sports setting. Thirdly, some immigrants reported that they acquired competencies and contacts through sports that helped them in the employment market. Those with such experience mostly took part in special educational arrangements through their clubs. These three forms of interaction and integration also illustrate how sport can play different roles for integration. Whereas the two first forms of interaction strengthen some type of bonding, the third and more consequential way – e.g. getting a job – requires special efforts from the clubs.

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