



SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND PRACTICAL  
RECOMMENDATIONS/POINTS OF AWARENESS

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

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## Introduction

There are great political expectations regarding the contribution of voluntary sport clubs (VSCs), to the integration of immigrants into society. Therefore, VSCs, with their integrative potential and valuable contribution to public welfare, are increasingly trusted as implementers of integration policies within different countries. Despite programmes and policies at national and regional levels, only a comparatively small number of VSCs are directly involved in such targeted 'integration through sport' practices for migrants and refugees. To successfully scale-up the number of VSCs that are willing and able to implement targeted integration measures significantly, it is necessary to understand how national or regional 'integration through sport policies' can actually reach the local level and impact practices. At the same time, a more in-depth understanding of the underlying processes within the local voluntary VSCs is urgently required. This knowledge could help to identify practical concepts and examples of good practice that guide VSCs to use their potential and become more integrative and migrant friendly.

The general objective of the INAMOS project was to provide insights and knowledge to further mobilise the sport sector's motivation and ability to integrate increasing numbers of migrants into organised sport and society at large, without endangering the integrity and ability of local VSCs through requirements that exceed their resources and capabilities.

To comprehend how roll-out strategies – i.e., how national or regional 'integration through sport' policies reach VSCs at local level – are structured and the extent to which they resonate within the VSCs to implement integrative measures, it is necessary to look at the entire chain of effects in a more holistic manner. Accordingly, an analytical framework was

developed that seeks to understand key considerations for integrating migrants into organised sport by combining different levels (society, organisation, member; for details see the project manual / WP1 report). The three key considerations examined were (1) The integration programmes and roll-out strategies, (2) the integration willingness and capacities of VSCs as implementing setting dealing with migrants and refugees as specific target groups, and (3) the effects and consequences for the VSCs, their members as well as the migrants and refugees.

Addressing the multilevel perspective on social integration as a theoretical frame, the empirical findings are based on a qualitative research approach with a broad database. To map contextual features, integration policies, and programmes, data from five European countries (Denmark, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland) were collected by desktop research and document analysis. Data from Australia and Canada were also generated for contrast. In addition, case studies were conducted in 31 VSCs in the five European countries to gain a differentiated and comprehensive



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sive picture of how the social integration of immigrants in VSCs works and what it looks like. Considering different perspectives, interviews and focus group discussions were carried out with club decision makers (n=51), club members (n=61), and migrants (n=80). (For further information regarding the research design of the entire project, see the method report and the findings reports WP 2,5,6 for; <https://inamos.org/home/results/>).

In this report, we present a summary of the main findings of the empirical part of the INAMOS project and discuss country-specific differences. In doing so, we reflect on the key findings and provide practical recommendations, as well as some guidelines that could help political makers, practitioners, and managers in ministries, municipalities, VSCs, and federations address current challenges to further improve and enhance the design and measures to promote social integration of (newly arrived) migrants at the local level.

A second stakeholder validation process was carried out to ensure that the recommendations and awareness-raising measures were in line with the needs and wishes of practitioners.

As a first step, we presented and discussed the key empirical findings of WP 2, WP 5 and WP 6 with our practice partners at a project meeting in Bern in November 2022. The associated sports partners critically questioned the central findings of the project and compared them with their practical experiences. As a result of the discussion process, it was possible to identify the findings that were most relevant to the topic of integration in voluntary sports clubs from the perspective of both the research group and the practice partners. On the other hand, with the help of the practice partners, recommendations were developed on how these key findings could be translated into concrete recommendations and awareness raising points, as well as into online learning modules.

In a second step, a short online feedback tool was set up on the INAMOS website. This provided feedback on (1) the current relevance of the topic of integration for volunteer sports clubs, (2) the relevance and comprehensibility of the key findings, and (3) the relevance and transferability of the (preliminary) recommendations and awareness raising points. The comments were used to refine the recommendations and awareness raising messages and to finalise the e-learning modules.

In terms of (1) current relevance, the feedback from the participants suggests that the issue of migration and integration is a particular focus for volunteer sports clubs. The issue of integration is an important concern for the clubs in their daily work. Particularly against the background of the war in Ukraine, the topic has once again become highly relevant. Participants also believe that the integration of migrants will be a relevant issue in the future.

“With what is happening in Ukraine right now, I see another big wave coming for us as a society. But there are also many well-trained athletes among them who we could really use in our clubs.”

However, this is not the only one of several current challenges. The issues of cost increases (or inflation) and lack of financial and human resources - especially since the COVID pandemic - are also high on the agenda of voluntary sports clubs. Clubs are currently struggling to recruit members and volunteers, while at the same time energy costs, in particular, are rising for clubs, further limiting their financial options. In addition, some clubs are facing increasing pressure to professionalise, for example in terms of digital expectations.

“Yes, the issue is important, but as a small club we can't do everything. At the moment, we are mainly trying to keep our normal training running. There is little room for extra projects.”

With regard to (2) the relevance and comprehensibility of the key findings, (3) the relevance and transferability of the (preliminary) recommendations and awareness raising points, the participants found them very helpful. The participants liked the fact that the topic of migration was looked at in a holistic way, including all levels. This allowed each club to extract the most important aspects for itself. The key findings, (preliminary) recommendations and awareness raising points were also seen as very positive and informative. Some of the key findings, recommendations or awareness raising points were not known to the participants themselves and led to positive surprise.

“So far, we have mostly discussed the issue of integration in our club as a problematic topic and not so much looked at the opportunities. Therefore, the report has changed our view a little bit, I think that was our main insight.”

However, it was also noted that the reports were very long and participants expressed concern that useful and important information might be lost. Therefore, it was positively emphasised that the key findings, (preliminary) recommendations and awareness raising points are/will be captured in a clear and compact way and communicated in different formats on the website. From the point of view of the participants, the different formats also help/will help to look at the key findings and recommendations from a different perspective and thus to perceive them better. Regarding the feasibility of the recommendations, participants noted that some of the points could be challenging, but that the extensive involvement of practitioners in the research made the recommendations logical, understandable and generally applicable in clubs. No other key findings, recommendations or points of awareness were raised by the participants, so these can be considered to be comprehensive.



## ○ Summary of main empirical findings

The summary of the main findings is structured according to our main research questions: (1) First, the findings present the political and societal conditions in the participating countries, and reflect which strategies, approaches, and programmes are currently used to influence, guide, or inform voluntary local VSCs to integrate (newly arrived) migrants. In this context we discuss how sport-based integration programmes for (newly arrived) migrants are “rolled-out” to the level of local VSCs and what kind of support structures and incentives are needed for targeted “roll-out” programmes.

(2) Second, VSCs as an integrative setting are analysed regarding the potential of their integration work and the motives and goals underlying this work. We also discuss factors relevant to the successful implementation of programmes and measures for the integration of migrants. Against this background, consequences for the sports club as an organisation are also considered.

(3) Third, at the individual level, we analyse how migrants as a target group gain access to VSCs and what their underlying motives, interests, and expectations are. Furthermore, we address how migrants experience participation in a club and to what extent they feel socio-culturally and socio-emotionally integrated within the club and how it has contributed to their integration into society. In this context, barriers of integration processes are also reflected.

## Integration Through Sport - Mapping of Context, Policies, and Programmes

The purpose of this section is to present political frameworks for conditions, initiatives, programmes, or roll-out strategies in the participating European countries and the comparator countries Canada and Australia that foster social integration of (newly arrived) migrants in organised sport. The focus was on the level at which (social) policy implementation of integration programmes intersects with the local community, that is, at the grassroots level of sport. This was considered and reconstructed against the background of the integration policy significance of sport in general and VSCs in particular in the different countries. The study asked which actors took the political initiative, how integration programmes and initiatives were rolled out from the national or regional level to the local level, and which instruments were used. Instruments include national and regional policies, strategies, and programmes aimed at sports-based integration of (newly arrived) migrants launched by public stakeholders (e.g., ministries and public agencies) or sport organisations (e.g., umbrella organisations). The mapping process does not completely cover all existing initiatives, but rather aims to identify different (contrasting) approaches and describe their roll-out strategies.

### To what extent do societal and political conditions frame the strategies and design of integration through sport programmes?

If we assume that both immigrant organisations and sport-specific organisations perform useful functions in different phases of the integration process, programmes will benefit from drawing on both. Although the data are somewhat broad in terms of specifics of the programmes used in the participating countries, there

are some examples that hold such integrative promise. One example is an aspect of the Canadian SportWORKS S4N initiative that aims to educate sports ambassadors and to develop partnerships. Another can be found in the Danish Get2sport that offers VSCs in vulnerable areas integration professionals so that existing sports club volunteers can focus on running sport activities, as refugees often experience problems and needs related to safety, health, well-being, and social welfare. Similarly, the German and Swiss initiatives carry such ideas as boundary managers and special education to coaches. We argue that such components have the potential to let VSCs do what they do best while simultaneously helping immigrants join them.

We argue that it is reasonable to expect VSCs to welcome all who are interested in taking part in their activities. In many countries, VSCs are required to do so by the laws regulating non-profit organisations if they want to enjoy tax exemptions, subsidies, public funding, and similar benefits. That said, we also argue that it is less reasonable to expect VSCs to arrange activities for people other than their members. There are certainly many VSCs that do this for a number of reasons (financial compensation, good will, prospects of gaining new members, etc.), but as large-scale solutions that affect the majority of all VSCs, the prospects are less optimistic, at least in theory.

Given that one of our main points of departure in this study was that actions taken by organisations must be understood relative to their organisational contexts, we argue that the insights gained here are potentially valid in contexts similar to those studied here. Considering Australia and Canada as contrasting cases allows promising comparisons of the extent to which different political and societal conditions lead to different concepts of social integration and roll-out strategies. Notably, Canada and Australia display a contextual setting and instrument design that is distinct from

the participating European countries. This means that findings pertaining to (a) Commonwealth type societies are likely to be meaningful for countries similar to Australia and Canada. Similarly, findings relating to the European type societies might resonate with other European countries and other countries with federative systems of membership-based sport organisations (b European type).

The primary point we would like to emphasise is that the programmes used in the two types of programme design and implementation context are consistent with the respective societies in which they are launched. In both cases, public authorities operate within existing institutional frameworks.

### What do instruments and implementation context look like in the Commonwealth type?

In terms of the societal role attributed to civil society and the interrelation with the state, the Commonwealth type countries emphasise the issue-based function of civil society (e.g., social justice, and thus features of co-governance are prominent in government-civil society relationships. In this type of country, sport is positioned as an activity that reflects values of national and community importance (e.g., fairness), and the positive effects on individuals and society (e.g., social, mental, and physical well-being, economic growth) are ascribed to the activity itself rather than the specific organisational framework in which it is delivered.

Furthermore, countries of the Commonwealth type have a sport-specific government agency that sets policy and recognises (national) sport organisations as eligible for government ‘investment’. Contractual relationships are established with individual NSOs, and funding and monitoring is carried out at the NSO-level. Although there are sport organisations

at the national level, there is no singular point of contact for the national government and no cross-sport central body to lead implementation efforts. Concerning funding programmes, direct funding to VSCs is limited, and when it does occur, it is in the form of project- or initiative-based applications.

When it comes to designing integration-related instruments in such countries, immigrant-specific stakeholders (e.g., social service agencies, non-profit organisations working to integrate immigrants) play a key role in developing programmes for integration through sport. VSCs may be enrolled as providers of sports activities, but the cross-sectoral approach does not typically designate clubs as the sole implementing agency.

### **What do instrumental design and implementation context look like in the European type?**

Sport is ascribed this role of a shaper of the citizens of a democratic welfare state. Therefore, sport's autonomy vis-à-vis the state is far-reaching, and high value is placed on self-governance through cross-sport national federative umbrella organisations. Whereas Commonwealth type countries have sport-specific national level government agencies, European type countries have national umbrella organisations that represent the entirety of organised sport in discussions with national government and have direct links to cross-sport delivery networks down to VSCs. Furthermore, club-based funding is to create favourable conditions for VSCs to operate on their own terms. Free or subsidised facilities along with activity-based block grants from national, regional, and/or local governments are therefore common in this type of country, but are supplemented by targeted subsidies.

The key position accorded to clubs in European type countries translates to the

instrumentation of integration through organised sport. Umbrella sport organisations, while funded by state sport and/or immigration/integration agencies, establish programmes that rely entirely on the willingness of VSCs to participate. Funds earmarked for integration are available from umbrella organisations or sometimes national or municipal programmes, but clubs often need to actively apply and adhere to instrument guidelines.

The European countries in the project, representing the European type of instrument design and implementation context, share many similarities in terms of working with the integration of (newly arrived) migrants through sport. This is visible in how the state (through its government and governmental departments and ministries) in most cases stands as the sender of programmes. Contributing to public welfare, sport organisations must not only be accessible to all, but also reach out to all social groups, in particular those who are underrepresented in their membership circles. This is evident in how the programmes' targets are specified (not targeted at all or targeted at groups assumed to have difficulty entering sport on their own), but also in the ways end users are viewed (as needing assistance and/or as underrepresented).

### **Are there any differences in the programme designs across the European countries?**

It is important to note that there are significant political differences in Europe. For example, between universalist welfare states (Sweden, Norway, and Denmark) and corporate, conservative welfare states (such as Germany and Switzerland). The findings reveal some differences in the programme design across the European countries in this study. One such difference is in how rules are constructed and how the concepts behind the specific programmes

are implicitly outlined. Taking the Danish Get2sport as an example, the programme theory is that the regular activities of VSCs are the best sites to integrate new participants, such as for (newly arrived) migrants, socially vulnerable individuals, or other underrepresented groups. However, as the existing human resources in VSCs are too strained dealing with existing activities and members, club volunteers need to be relieved of some administrative duties and challenges in general regarding the integration of migrants into training in the sport club. This theory shows that there is great trust in Danish VSCs, in that they know best how to run their activities. In the Danish case, this high level of trust is also visible in the distribution of mandate between sender and recipient, and in the view on how programme delivery and goal attainment is monitored, measured, and evaluated.

This approach is slightly different from the one implicitly constructed for the Swedish programme, despite their geographical proximity, their similar societal structure, organisation of sport, and views on social integration and democratic fostering. The basic assumption is similar though – VSCs lack the resources needed to reach out (more) to groups in need. The Swedish programme therefore offers professional and financial support in the form of integration and inclusion officers and funding to projects. Offering both professional and financial support incorporates the approaches implicitly backing the German Integration Through Sport (professional integration facilitators) and the Norwegian Refugee fund (financial support).

The Swiss MiTu Move Together stands out in comparison, placing its implicit approach on the other end of the spectrum relative to Denmark, with Sweden, Norway, and Germany between the two. Instead of implying lack of capacity in VSCs to take on more participants (and especially more participants from groups in need), the idea

behind the Swiss programme is that VSCs need incentives to actively seek out families with special needs. Thus, the assumed challenge is not that VSCs cannot take in those who approach them with a wish to participate. The main challenge is instead that some groups do not have the capacity to approach a sports club. As such, the main challenge is associated with the circumstances surrounding potential participants, not the clubs.

When looking specifically at the distribution of mandates, the Nordic countries (Denmark, Norway, and Sweden) differ from the continental European countries (Germany and Switzerland) in the sense that sport organisations in the former appear more independent and sport organisations in the latter more accountable. However, there are also differences between Denmark and Norway in this respect. Even though the Norwegian and Swedish programme theories are similar to the Danish in terms of overall high levels of trust between sender and recipients at the outset of the programmes, there are explicit monitoring activities incorporated in the Norwegian and Swedish programmes.



## Perspectives of VSCs as an Integrative Setting

In the following section, we present the main findings from the perspective of clubs as an integrative setting and their potential to contribute to social integration of people with migrant background. The findings are based on case studies of 31 European VSCs, including interviews with decision makers (n=51) and interviews and focus group discussions with members (n=61). The interviews were analysed based on qualitative content analysis (for more detail, see the methods report and the club study report).

We address the relevant factors in the process of successful implementation of programmes and measures to integrate (newly arrived) migrants. We reflect how VSCs create opportunities to include migrants into existing sports and social services and what their ad-hoc (practical) measures look like. VSCs need to build capacity to implement integrative services. Therefore, it is not only important to know what capacities they rely on, but also whether they have struggled to build capacity. Furthermore, we reflect the associated consequences of VSCs' integrative engagements.

Most of the clubs in the sample are somehow successful in integrating migrants via specific programmes or measures. The respective initiatives show a broad variety of whether clubs implement a certain policy programme or create their own initiatives. Furthermore, we could not find any major differences between the clubs from different countries with different sport systems. Therefore, we present the results and summarise them not along the five different countries, but in a comprehensive view. The findings are structured along our research-guiding questions addressing specific issues of the integration work of VSCs.

## What are the goals and motivation of VSCs regarding integration of migrants as a specific target group?

The clubs in our study focus mainly on sports activities that are open for all population groups. Not all of the interviewed clubs have specific goals with regard to the integration of people with migration background. Clubs want to organise sports in the communities, and if these communities include minorities/refugees, then they create something for them. Thus, integration work often emerges in the context of the regular club activities. However, there are also clubs that address specific target groups like women. It becomes clear that specific goals are less important than what actually goes on within a club and in what context the activity takes place.

For most of the clubs, normative attitudes are relevant for their integration work. Clubs do it because this is what they consider proper based on humanitarian reasons or processing ideal claims ("sport for all") to contribute to social integration in their community because they are located near a vulnerable residential area. It is evident that the motives for being active in integration work are mostly aimed at generating added value for the migrants and society. These are clubs that find integration work to be a good fit with their own club DNA and that integration work itself represents a goal for the club.

Some clubs combine normative attitudes with functional motives; clubs are motivated simultaneously by altruism and self-interest. Sometimes dealing with the topic of integration begins with challenges or problems within the club (e.g., declining membership, lack of volunteers), which should be solved by addressing migrants as an interesting target group. This also creates the desire to receive more positive attention from the community, which in turn leads to more resources and 'goodwill', as well as a more prominent position in the local community.

## How do VSCs implement (roll-in) integration programmes and measures?

Our case studies show that it is generally difficult to differentiate top-down from bottom-up clubs. Top-down means that clubs implement national or regional 'integration through sport' policies and programmes, whereas bottom-up clubs create and practice their own immigrant integration initiatives, without any relationships to political programmes, based on their own goals, self-image, or institutional logic. Top-down clubs receive resources to either strengthen their integration efforts and/or to start new integration initiatives, but no club started any integration initiatives before becoming a programme implementer. Therefore, it is imperative to consider the structure and the local context of each club individually.

The clubs in the sample are successful in integrating (newly arrived) migrants via specific programmes or measures. The respective initiatives show a broad variety of clubs implementing a certain policy programme or developing their own initiatives. Roll-in describes the implementation and incorporation of integration initiatives and practices. Our research shows that there is no one roll-in model that fits for all clubs. Different integration-related measures and projects in clubs are not based on strategic goals or integration concepts; rather they are further developed from measure to measure based on experience (sometimes trial and error procedures).

Some clubs approach migrants directly, whereas in some cases migrants approach the clubs or their volunteers and inquire about possible participation and membership. Sometimes, contacts can emerge by chance (e.g., open spaces at club facilities where non-members also do sports). Having people engaged in the club who are well-known in the local housing area (e.g., vulnerable residential area) can help foster recruitment. They also found that recruit-

ing the first members was the most difficult, and then others started to show up via word to mouth. In addition, coaches and instructors from the target group can help with recruitment, especially when there is a language barrier.

Overall, the implementation of sport-based integration programmes can be roughly described by the following types, which can overlap to some extent. Some clubs already have integrative measures and extend and complement by policy programmes. Other clubs intend to solve club-specific problems (e.g., member recruitment) or address social problems (e.g., social cohesion in their neighbourhood). A third type can be characterised by the high willingness and motivation of driving key actors.

Often, small selected groups of people (primarily engaged volunteers like coaches) who initiate integration efforts are rather important. However, it is important to note that the club board in most VSCs supports the efforts of these persons or small groups on a leadership level. During implementation processes, VSCs often develop trust in engaged persons who have experiences and competencies in work with migrants. These actors autonomously develop and promote measures and offers for migrants.

The implementation of integration work in clubs can be characterised as an evolving process: Clubs want to organise sport and be inclusive, there are funding opportunities, there are helpful actors, and together they develop something that works for integration.

### Which capacities are relevant for integration work in VSCs, and how are these capacities built?

The following organisational capacities are relevant for the implementation of programmes: human resources, financial support, relationships and networks with stakeholders, the availability of sport facilities, long-term planning and “good” communication. Motivated, enthusiastic, competent and skilled club members and volunteers, and sometimes paid employees, are often the most important pillar and driving forces for the social integration initiatives in VSCs (person driven approach). However, if VSCs lack these resources, they face challenges in implementing programmes for social integration.

If the clubs have qualified and dedicated volunteers, they are strong regardless of the large differences in club size. On the other hand, most clubs’ integration efforts are implemented by relatively few dedicated volunteers and in some cases paid staff, which makes these programs vulnerable to member fluctuation. For clubs, this means that member retention/recruitment is important and that continuous funds are necessary, as well as the acceptance and the support of the club board and other key actors.

Financial resources also play a role in the process of implementing initiatives, particularly specific subsidies and funding. Top-down clubs receive financial support or professional assistance through their participation in the programme. This enables them to continue and intensify their integration work, which would not be possible to this extent without the financial support. This makes it possible, for example, to hire full-time or part-time staff to take care of administrative tasks, development work, coordination tasks, and/or coaching tasks. It also enables the clubs to buy clothes and equipment, and to pay for transportation for their players. As most

grants are one-off or time-limited and tied to 'projects', the continuous search for funding opportunities is a challenge, especially for those clubs that do not always feel that they have a stable financial foundation on which to continue their integration efforts. In addition, applying for funding can be challenging for some clubs. However, the funding programmes differ from country to country, and their rules range from “no strings attached” but implicit expectations, e.g., Sweden/Denmark, to strict regulations in Germany. Here, clubs are somewhat annoyed at applying for funding, bureaucratic procedures, and evaluating the programmes on a regular basis. It binds resources that could be used for other purposes. The ongoing need to reapply to financial programmes reduces the predictability of whether they can proceed with their initiatives in their current forms.



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The findings also show that the process of programme participation and implementation of integrative measures can help clubs build and develop the relevant resources and improve their capacities for integrative work. In particular, they can gain more access to sports facilities and recruit more volunteers and/or paid staff. The volunteers and members acquire intercultural competencies, knowledge, and specific experiences. This enables an open club culture to be developed. Furthermore, volunteers can build funding opportunities and new relationships and networks, as well as improve the reputation of the club.

To promote their integrative work, several clubs have built-up networks and collaborations, particularly within the local community with municipal authorities. These are mentioned as the most important contacts, but they also mention schools, kindergartens, the local crime prevention team, social workers, and other VSCs, as well as private organisations and sponsors.

Furthermore, the availability of and access to sport and training facilities support the implementation of sport-based integration programmes and measures. When speaking to their municipalities, clubs often experience that their requests regarding sport facilities are looked at more favourably because of their social responsibility in the local community. Overall, the local context of the club – e.g., the density of the migrant population in the immediate vicinity – is relevant for the integrative work of sports clubs.

Understanding the diversity anchored in the club culture determines the ability of clubs to deal with the integration of migrants. The better the integration efforts are rooted in the culture and values of the clubs, the easier it is to implement these initiatives.

### What challenges and problems confront VSCs regarding integration work?

A relevant obstacle in integration work is to gain access to migrants. Some clubs explained that it is difficult to reach (newly arrived) migrants, as they rarely appear as one cohesive group. The circumstance that particularly refugees only stay in reception facilities for short periods increases the problem of access. Accordingly, another challenge for the clubs is that people often move to and from the vulnerable residential areas, resulting in a large turnover of members in clubs. Clubs report that recruitment was a continuous challenge, because migrant people - as they became better integrated (e.g., got jobs) - would tend to leave the vulnerable residential areas. In their place, new migrants would arrive that had not yet received the same integration status. Thus, the well-integrated migrants continuously moving and leaving the clubs challenged the integration work provided in the VSCs. Therefore, clubs often feel they have to ‘start over’ with their recruitment efforts regarding both members and volunteers.

Three of the main challenges for clubs are the lack of involvement of parents of children with an immigrant background in the clubs, administrative matters (e.g., membership fee payment), and lack knowledge about sport club culture among the target group. Most clubs are aware of these challenges and work to mitigate them through different types of initiatives. The practice of reducing or completely nullifying member fee for migrants and refugees sometimes proves problematic. Migrants can experience not being a full member or not being a member at all without paying the fee. Sometimes, they are prohibited from performing duties that “regular” members can do, such as voting for the board of directors.

Furthermore, clubs sometimes struggle with capacity building (recruiting volunteers, gaining access to infrastructure, less in relation to finances). It also becomes clear that some clubs have a lack of people who are responsible for and engaged in work with migrants. One main challenge in most clubs is that there are only few people working with and addressing integration at a leadership level.

### **Which intended and unintended consequences can be observed within the clubs?**

It is not easy for VSCs to assess the consequences of their integration work. On the one hand, because cause-effect relationships are not clearly determinable and, on the other hand, because clubs are not aware of them.

Most of VSCs do not view integration work as a burden or only as an effort for the club. Rather, clubs recognise that integration and diversity can be a productive resource, and clubs can benefit for development and capacity building. Particularly, they gain more access to sports facilities and recruit more volunteers and/or paid staff. The volunteers and members acquire intercultural competencies, knowledge, and specific experiences, and thus, an open club culture can be developed. Furthermore, clubs can build funding opportunities and new relationships and networks, as well as improve the visibility, goodwill, and reputation of the club in the local area and towards the municipality.

From the member perspective, there is an ambivalent picture regarding integration measures and programmes of their club. Overall, club members show great openness when it comes to the integration of people with migration backgrounds.

However, the awareness of the integration programmes among members, especially members without decision-making functions, seems rather low. The members report that integration work can improve membership numbers, the club's reputation, and its image of openness in the general public. Integration measures and programmes can raise the diversity within the club, as well as member identification with the club. However, intended integration measures and programmes can also lead to exclusion, aggression, and sometimes even racism. In addition, having many members with migrant backgrounds can lead to host members feeling left out or excluded from the club community.

Members are concerned about overburdening the responsible coaches and increasing bureaucratic requirements. Specific social and cultural skills are required for coaches to manage intercultural training groups, which are often not available and must be acquired through further education. There is also a risk that coaches will give up their posts because they feel overwhelmed.

Members are also critical about the integrative effect of the measures, and they sometimes expect some assimilation towards language, general rules, or values within the clubs. Cultural diversity is associated with a demand for assimilation especially in those clubs that are geared towards tradition. However, there are clubs in our sample that make religious adaptations as clear sign of pluralism.

### **(Newly arrived) Migrants' perspectives on social integration in VSCs**

To consider the expectations and experiences of migrants in VSCs in relation to targeted initiatives and practices for social integration, 12 focus group discussions and 23 interviews were conducted in the 31 VSCs mentioned above. In total, we interviewed 80 migrants (for more information see WP 6 report).

In this summary, we provide the main findings related to the following research issues: First, we address the questions of why and how migrants have found access to local VSCs, and what personal experiences they have already had in club-based sports activities and with specific integrative measures. Furthermore, we discuss barriers of social integration and to what extent migrants can also benefit from their sport club membership in other areas of society.

### **What motivates (newly arrived) migrants to gain access to VSCs and sport activities?**

Migrants as a target group themselves are a very diverse group of individuals (newly arrived migrants, refugees, various types of minorities, and even some majorities), and they are, in turn, part of diverse sport groups based on different needs and motives.

Thus, it is not surprising that migrants have diverse opinions regarding sport. From elite ambitions to no sporting ambitions, from participating in programmes for immigrants to be part of ordinary teams, and from having sport as an important part of life to seeing sport as a nice thing to take part in but not as being that important in life. This variety was also seen in the interviews from all countries. 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 place for meeting other people.

Some Migrants just want some kind of activity, others are attracted to specific sports, some want to perform, some want specific competencies (e.g., to learn to swim). The impression is that fewer migrants do sports for health reasons than individuals in the general population. One important finding is that both reasons for sports and the activities themselves differ between female and male migrants.

The most common activities seem to be traditional sports with strong positions both in each country and internationally, such as football. For some migrants, it is also important to organise sport activities that are highly valued in migrants' countries of origin, such as cricket. Some of the interviewees emphasise that they appreciate that sports are inclusive and not always very competitive, while some also have the opposite experience: the sports are too inclusive and not serious enough. Some clubs also emphasise that non-sport activities are also important. This could be social gatherings without any clear objective or more specific activities related to helping kids with schoolwork, for example.

The results show that the TGIs (target group interviews) attribute a high contact potential to the VSCs due to their different social and sporting opportunity structures, 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 that mainly remain inside the club, but very rarely develop into friendships 'outside of the club'.

The main recruitment to VSCs seems to be a question of refugees (and minorities) finding the clubs themselves. Looking around, biking, or searching the internet: There is a desire for clubs to have better websites and information with translations into different languages. Except for a few German and Swedish cases, we found that few migrants were recruited through formal



programmes. Some are linked to clubs by programmes or other institutional actors. Some also reported that they took the initiative themselves and contacted a local and/or relevant club. Previous experience matters for what type of club and sports one chooses. However, in line with the previous point on activity, it is important that sports are diverse and not uniform. National background, sports experiences, and gender play a role in determining which sports are organised how, and in such a way that they are chosen by specific people.

We find a spectrum of club activities that are more or less related to sport. Without this being a central topic for many interviewees, one could assume that much of the social interaction revolves around everyday activities, small talk, locker rooms interaction, travel to and from sports. There are also activities that are (more or less) open to all, and where participants themselves decide on the type of activity. Some clubs have facilities that are supportive of such interactions (e.g., open sports hall).

### **How do (newly arrived) migrants evaluate the quality of social embedding and integration within VSCs?**

Migrants see themselves well-integrated and accepted in the club context. They succeed in building social relationships and friendships, especially with other athletes in the club. In addition, they usually maintain a close relationship with the coach. In addition to the social relationships with other athletes, the coach is seen as the central factor that supports the participation opportunities of people with a migration background in the club context.

Identification with the club is generally high, with the club sometimes being described as their home, or family, but also sometimes it is 'just' a venue for sports participation, and nothing more than that. The migrants reported experiencing a high

level of trust, which they were not used to. However, the feeling of trust is not given automatically, because some migrants reported sometimes still feeling like a foreigner, although they had been in the club for some time.

Most migrants are involved in the club as active athletes, and some also take on voluntary tasks, mostly as coaches and instructors. Migrants participate in education programmes, and some are also employed in small positions within the clubs. Some clubs also try to include TGIs on their boards. One of the clubs was trying to establish some kind of alumni association to strengthen the social networks in the club for the future and for the larger society. One-time events – gatherings, parties etc – are also mentioned as important for establishing social networks in the clubs.

Migrants agree that the main factor that enables them to fully commit and participate in the club is using the common language. This refers not only to gaining access to clubs and building social relationships, but also to understanding and following instructions in sport courses and training (e.g., conducting exercises, training, tactics, etc.). Coaches are the essential reference points for the migrants and support them, at least in their initial stages. Migrants turn to the coaches as the most important people in that regard.

### **How can (newly arrived) migrants benefit from sport club activities in other social areas outside of sports?**

We distinguished three types of interactions outside of sport that result from sport: First, there are direct outcomes, meeting the same people as an extension of sport: Going to a movie, having something to eat. Second, some athletes meet at other institutional settings. Some exercise at fitness centres, other take part in other sports (martial arts). The most common interaction outside of sport is probably

going to the same school. In some cases, educational efforts are also supported by assistance with schoolwork in the sports setting. Third, some migrants report that they gained competencies and contacts through sports that helped them into the labour market. Those migrants with such experiences were mostly those taking part in special educational arrangements through their clubs.

These three forms of interaction and integration also illustrate the different ways sport plays a role in integration. Whereas the two first forms of interaction strengthen some type of bonding, the third and more consequential form – e.g., getting a job – requires special efforts on the part of the clubs.

### **Which barriers exist for (newly arrived) migrants to gain access to VSCs?**

For migrants, not being able to speak the language of the host country seems to be a very strong inhibiting factor regarding integration in the club context and beyond.

It is clear that migrants, in particular refugees, lack social networks they can work with to gain access to various offers in the community.

Sometimes, migrants show deficits in knowledge about the (sport) culture in the host country, resulting in initial issues when getting into contact with providers of sport activities and in joining clubs. There is also a challenge due to lack of knowledge among the migrants about sports club norms, culture, and values. Lack of understanding of these norms makes it difficult to join a sport club or to know what is expected of members in VSCs. This lack of knowledge may lead to a distorted perception of the migrants from the host members. We met migrants who reported that they were seen as 'bulleys' from the beginning when they joined the club or when playing matches. This made it difficult for them to be accepted.

Inhibited mobility can reduce migrants' possibilities of accessing sport activities and clubs. Either by the lack of transportation options (e.g., there is no regular public transportation) or the restrictions they face while residing in an initial reception facility.

A minority of migrants mentioned that costs related to specific sports can hinder the access of migrants to those activities and clubs. For some, the membership fees lead to reluctance to participate, others do not have the ability to purchase sport-specific equipment.



## ○ Recommendations and points of awareness to scale-up the social integration of migrants in VSCs

Which practical recommendations and implications arise from the data and underlying analyses to enhance VSCs contribution to integrative work for migrants? The aim of the following section is to highlight various aspects of how to improve the social integration of migrants as an important field of sport policy and the function of VSCs. This can be located at different levels of action and addresses various actors and stakeholders. However, the following recommendations should not be understood as concrete measures or even general “if-then” instructions for the practice of social integration, which automatically leads to success in all VSCs in different countries. This would not correspond with the complexity of the issue of social integration and the associated challenges and management perspectives. Such an approach would assume that (1) all countries operate according to similar integration programmes, roll-out strategies, and with the same measures. The findings show that there are some commonalities in the approach and the handling of social integration in club sports in European countries. Nevertheless, the contextual conditions are different and there are different traditions and rules regarding the roll-out of sport policies, so that an unreflected direct transfer does not seem useful or possible. Nevertheless, it is possible to learn from each other. Therefore, reflecting possible recommendations and points of awareness should always be done against the background of political framework conditions and country-specific characteristics (structural anchoring and content design of integration programmes, areas of responsibility, equipment, etc.). (2) VSCs are related to different (external and internal) conditions, and they are also confronted with different problems in the

context of integration work, so that it is not possible to fall back on specific solutions for certain problem situations that lead almost automatically to success. Rather, integration work in clubs represents a multi-layered and complex field of action for which no simple solutions can be provided. Furthermore, VSCs are not “trivial machines” that can be controlled directly from outside. Rather, VSCs are social systems that can only be stimulated/irritated from outside and decide for themselves whether external impulses have any resonance in the club or not. (3) Regarding the target group of migrants, we can hardly speak of a homogeneous group that can be addressed by standardised integrative programmes and measures. Rather, a broad diversity should be considered in terms of cultural origin, social and economic conditions, experiences with the country of origin, refugee (yes/no), etc. Equalising and thus ultimately culturalization approaches to social integration are therefore not very promising. Action strategies and measures should be developed that take into account and address the diversity of migrants in terms of their interests, expectations, and needs.

Given this complexity, we set several points of awareness based on the empirical data in this study that are intended to stimulate processes of reflection and discussion among various actors and stakeholders in policy and practice. The overall goal of this is to increase the integration potential and future opportunities of organised sport, to create new perspectives for initiatives, strategies, and supportive structures, and, last but not least, to reduce decision-making uncertainties.

In the first part of this section, we provide fundamental reflections on the key actors involved: (i) VSCs as policy implementers, (ii) sport federations and public authorities as (sport)political actors, and (iii) migrants as a target group. Building on this, in the second part we discuss nine specific issu-

es and points of awareness that address different strategies and practices of integration work. These issues are addressed in an overarching manner, not just separately for one specific actor. In doing so, we take in account that certain issues, due to their complexity, can only be adequately addressed by different actors at different levels. Furthermore, there is a kind of trade-off on some issues that will be discussed in terms of promoting and limiting factors.

### VSCs as policy implementers

The analysis of the different VSCs in our case studies shows that VSCs have developed various concepts and a great diversity of measures to specifically address migrants. Accordingly, there are numerous examples of good practice in VSCs for initiated, developed, and implemented integration projects. However, it also shows that the implementation strategies and practices are linked to specific internal and external conditions. There are clubs located in

residential areas with many immigrants, while others have fewer immigrants. Some clubs differ regarding access to a more or less good public sports infrastructure, and some clubs are integrated into national/local integration programmes and receive funding, while others do not. In addition, the internal conditions are different in terms of club size, specific resources and competencies, strategic objectives, and institutional logic. Based on internal and external circumstances, clubs are confronted with different challenges, problems, and needs that must be taken into account in the supportive structures. To increase the number of clubs that are willing and able to implement targeted integration measures on a significant scale and successfully, individualised concepts are therefore needed that more consistently take into account the diversity of VSCs and their different preconditions. In this context and to develop different approaches and strategic thrusts of management and support, we propose grouping clubs as follows:



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(1) There are VSCs that do integrative work. Here we must distinguish between clubs that implement programmes and clubs engaged in integration work without any external support or programme participation. These clubs realise measures using their own resources and capacities. Here, it is important to support the clubs in strengthening and stabilising the existing initiatives, and if possible, in expanding them moderately. The aim is to consolidate the integration work within the club by permanently anchoring it structurally (see Issue 7) and stabilising capacities (see Issue 6). At the same time, however, it is also important to know the limits of what is possible and reasonable to protect clubs from being overwhelmed.

(2) There are VSCs that are willing to do integration work, but they communicate that they are not able to do so due to lack of resources and competencies. These clubs have a certain interest and willingness to become active in relation to integration work, so that no persuasion is necessary. Rather, it is about showing ways in which clubs can take the initiative under their existing conditions and how missing resources can be mobilised and developed. These clubs should receive support particularly in terms of the resources they need, e.g., funding, facilities, coaches – not in the form of standardised support that fits all clubs, but which might differ from club to club depending on their specific situation and context.

(3) There are VSCs that do not do any (explicit) integration work. Therefore, the question arises as to how the issue of social integration can find more resonance

in the club and be anchored in the minds of the club members? Willingness should be achieved or stimulated through appropriate persuasion and communication by internal actors (e.g., interested members) or external actors from the sport federation (e.g., club advisor in club development programmes). These actors can raise awareness for the issue of social integration through functional arguments addressing specific challenges and club problems that might be solved by integrating migrant members (see Issue 1). VSCs are much more willing to take integrative measures if the arguments are functional from their unique logic and fits with their guiding principles. For example, regarding new member recruitment to identify potentially talented athletes, to improve the club image to become more “coloured” or intercultural, or the legitimisation of public subsidies. At the same time, it is important to note that VSCs can be characterised as interest organisations based on the organisational logic of self-organisation and the pooling of resources to realise the common interests of the members. In terms of their specific characteristics, the members’ common goals are generally sport-related (such as playing football, participating in swimming competitions, or learning how to ski), while the objective of tackling specific social problems (such as the inclusion of refugees) is usually not a direct objective of the club and its members. Therefore, the autonomy of VSCs should be considered and respected, which can also mean that they do not implement any (specific) integration measures.

## Public authorities and sport federations

At a policy level, public authorities as well as sport federations are important players in integration work, because they are responsible for creating framework conditions, incentives, and opportunity structures to encourage VSCs to integrate migrants. The following premises are relevant regarding the construction and roll-out of programmes or supportive measures at the political level:

The findings show that it is mainly clubs already active in integration work that apply for funding for integration work, rather than clubs that should be stimulated to do integration work via support programmes. Therefore, the public authorities and sport federations as programme leaders should take steps to avoid subsidising clubs that already have the capacities to do integration work. Instead, they should identify clubs that do not exert any integration efforts or clubs that need specific support for integration work (type 2 & 3 clubs). However, this is difficult and resource intensive. Funding pools can promote integration efforts in clubs, but accessing this funding is time consuming for the clubs and tends to generate more activity in clubs already working with integration. Furthermore, such an approach is also costly in terms of announcing funds, seeking out clubs, and evaluating applications. Thus, funding pools are not the best way to get more clubs to work with integration.

Policymakers should consider formulating policies that focus more on guidelines and incentives than on restrictions and rules to reduce barriers for clubs to apply for the programmes. In general, it is important to think about (top-down) programmes and their bureaucratic processing (control, accountability), which is associated with a considerable additional burden for clubs, which in turn ties up resources that they cannot invest in other issues and causes

these programs to become less attractive. Therefore, for clubs that choose to implement programmes in the future, the “barriers” to programme implementation and administrative requirements and resources for application should be reduced, and more flexibility should be provided in implementer-focused activities (consideration “trade-offs” within required programme design and implementation). Such an approach would also have lower costs for “senders”.

As the findings from club practice show, various integrative projects and measures have developed from the bottom up, beyond formal programme structures, through which VSCs can carry out very successful integration work. Political actors should therefore trust in the capabilities of civil society, i.e., consider existing structures and the club dispositions they have created. Therefore, it would be most efficient to make incentives available and let the clubs decide how they want to implement integration activities and what action they want to use for that purpose. This may be the only way a voluntary club can function; they simply do not work ‘rationally’, and integrative initiatives and measures somehow emerge.

Consequently, support should be given in the sense of ‘help for self-help’ in order to strengthen and further develop clubs’ abilities, which corresponds to a systemic understanding of management. Therefore, programmes should offer more supportive instruments and opportunity structures than just delivering money. Broader support could contain incentives and consulting for implementation. Additional workshops on this issue could also be offered, and individualised counselling concepts could be provided if clubs, groups, or individuals need this. Sport federations should work on creating ideas to support the clubs in initiating and conducting integration work, but this should be integrated

in a broader context of diversity and club development. In this context, sport federations can use knowledge and experience from outside the sport context through collaboration. In sum, sport federations and public authorities need to develop or strengthen their own resources and competencies to support VSCs. This is consistent with the fact that sport federations are also independent entities (like VSCs), and are therefore free to set their own priorities.

### Heterogeneity of migrants as target group for VSCs

As mentioned above, “migrants” is a container term applied to a broad range of diverse groups with different cultural, linguistic, religious, and social backgrounds, and no or different (primary) experiences in the country of origin. This is reflected in the different values, preferences, and attitudes that need to be considered and addressed in integration processes. This poses a major challenge, especially for VSCs. Refugees are a specific group of migrants that can be traumatised by flight and/or war experiences and find themselves in a country whose language and culture they do not understand. Furthermore, it should be noted that refugees are not among the usual target groups of VSCs due to uncertain prospects of staying.

In a first main premise, information and low-threshold accessibility are key aspects for migrants to find relevant sport offers. Immigrants often cannot find information about existing VSCs for different sports. In this context, supplying that information together with where the clubs are located and how they can be reached is important. The clubs can provide information about the different sporting and social opportunities within the club that correspond with migrants’ needs and interests (for more detail, see Issue 2 and Issue 3), and thus reduce fear/concern about assimila-

tion pressures when joining a sport club. The observation that migrants sometimes find it difficult to access to VSCs is related to the fact that clubs often do not appear as diverse or culturally open institutions in their external presentation. Such externally communicated self-images of traditional clubs can lead to attitudes towards clubs with negative connotations. If a sport club develops an image among migrants as having assimilative ambitions, migrants can feel reinforced in their assumption that they are not wanted as members. Therefore, clubs should make their integration work and openness more visible to the general public, and also signal how migrants can benefit from becoming members.

Our second main premise is not to treat migrants as a passive and vulnerable group that only causes difficulties for the club. Instead, migrants should rather be considered an active part and productive resource within the club. The aim should be to make migrants visible and to give them a voice within the club by involving migrants actively in daily club business and decision-making processes. This kind of empowerment of migrants within the club goes far beyond “only” including migrants in training and competitions, and can be seen as the initiation of deeper and sustainable social integration processes. It is necessary to overcome the idea that integrative measures are created ‘over the heads’ of the target group of migrants, and instead to actively involve those who are affected into of the integration process. Such a participatory approach and active inclusion of migrants can be a catalyst for further integration processes and increase cultural diversity in VSCs. One way is by migrants initiating processes and measures in the club. Especially when taking on positions and tasks, migrants can increase the VSCs’ readiness for integration work. In addition, they can strengthen the VSCs’ resources through their specific knowledge or by refreshing existing networks. Another

way is by strengthening the sense of belonging through interethnic interactions and relationships between people with and without a migration background: This corresponds with our understanding of social integration in VSCs as a reciprocal process of exchange and approximation, which is based on equal participation and mutual acceptance dealing with cultural differences.

### Specific issues

Against the background of these basic premises, integration work in organised sport should be goal-oriented and backed up with mutually compatible strategies and measures. First, the question arises as to how people with a migration background can take advantage of sport offers in the club so that they can also benefit from the integration effects in other areas of life through joint sporting activities. Therefore, it must be ensured that people with a migration background can position themself-

ves appropriately within the club. Second, VSCs are also primarily oriented towards the interests of their members and are not explicitly oriented towards integrating migrants. This raises the question as to how resonance could be generated in VSCs regarding the topic of integration. This should be approached less in the sense of moral obligations and more in the context of functional necessities. This should depend in no small part on the extent to which VSCs succeed in seeing cultural diversity as a productive resource, e.g., in relation to competitive sports, the variety of offers, or social interaction, and not as a burden or even a problem.

With this in mind, in the following nine points, we address strategies and practices that can contribute to initiating and strengthening integration work in VSCs. These recommendations and points of awareness could help to raise the number of clubs that engage actively and effectively.



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### Issue 1: Expanding normative goals with functional goals

To increase the number of clubs that are active in integration work, the focus should be placed more on functional motives to make integration work “attractive” for other clubs. To address those clubs that are not already committed to the integration of migrants, the functional necessity of involvement in integration work – and not just the moral obligation – must be made clear. If engagement in integrating migrants helps to fulfil the club goals (e.g., getting new members and/or sport talents), clubs are more likely to initiate certain measures and initiatives. Therefore, a reorientation in the form of communication and advice should focus on and emphasise functional issues (e.g., in club development courses, advisory programmes). Furthermore, functional communication seems to be useful to avoid resistance of sceptical/critical members. That means the importance of integration work and efforts should be brought more into relation with realising club goals and solving existing problems. Thus, resonance is likely to be generated in many VSCs when they are confronted with developments or challenges that legitimise

the integration of migrants as a functional or rational necessity. A decline in membership can be the starting point for clubs to increasingly address target groups that were not previously represented in the club. In particular, this means that competitive VSCs can no longer guarantee the recruitment of young people, the promotion of talent, or the organisation of competitive teams if they do not make greater efforts to recruit children and young people with a migration background. In addition, the topic of integration could gain relevance in clubs to improve their status in the municipality by initiating integration projects to ensure stable access to resources (subsidies, infrastructure). Accordingly, there are functional reasons for clubs to actively address the topic of integration and to make appropriate structural adjustments to promote the integration of people with migration backgrounds. In addition to various functional issues, however, the more normative arguments remain important. Furthermore, some VSCs do not have specific goals and motives when integrating migrant people, but focus on their “core business” of offering sport activities to their members.

### Issue 2: Sport activities that correspond to and address migrants’ motives, experiences, and needs

The findings reveal that migrants have different motives and interests for practicing sport and exercise in a club. To gain access to clubs and for successful participation, migrant interests and sport club offers should correspond appropriately. Therefore, clubs should be aware of the expectations and sporting motives of migrants and, in particular, should assess their previous sporting experiences and skills. On this basis, a decision can be made as to whether and how migrants can be integrated into the clubs training process. Although being competitive in sport is often not the main reason for migrants to seek access to VSCs, it is still a strong pull factor for some. There is the intention to improve and to compete. Thus, different training groups with different competitive goals and levels should be considered to provide activities addressing the needs of both migrants and all club members. Sometimes it might make sense to initially provide separate sport programmes for migrants (e.g., refugee training groups) in order not to impede training processes too much due to heterogeneity sporting skills and to gradually merge the different.

At the same time, VSCs should communicate and make their sports profile visible. Is the club more active in competitive sport, or focused more on grassroots sports, or are there hybrid sport formats? Clubs should also provide clear information about where and how to access sport offers and which prerequisites (e.g., sporting competencies, equipment) are required.

### Issue 3: Creating opportunities to meet and communicate through activities besides sport

The findings from the migrants’ perspective reveal that, in addition to sport activities, other social encounters and interactions with other members - outside the sport group, but within the club - is also valued and seen as attractive. Such social opportunities after and alongside sport play an important role in the successful integration of migrants into club life. Therefore, clubs should also provide non-sport offers and create targeted opportunities in which the established club members can meet migrants outside of the sporting activities. Various forms of social events and opportunities are already practiced in VSCs, i.e., annual celebrations, summer events, Christmas parties, or joint cooking afternoons and common excursions. Such events could effectively prevent interethnic boundary making and ingroup-outgroup figurations among established members and migrants.

Some clubs succeed in creating offers that explicitly focus on migrants and address their needs and concerns. Clubs can organise language courses, offer children additional learning support with their homework, or with help and advice on official matters. In this context, partnerships with external partners can also be useful, e.g., social workers in youth clubs (see Issue 9).



#### **Issue 4: Considering and addressing cultural diversity of sport practices, norms, and rules**

Barriers to access or feelings of being unaccepted in VSCs, which in turn can hinder social integration, often result from the incompatibility of "native" and "foreign" sport and exercise cultures and a lack of experience with the sport practices of the host country. Despite the variety and different backgrounds of migrants clubs should also make efforts to integrate people who do not (yet) speak the language and whose values and norms are still largely foreign to them. In addition, clubs should be aware that most migrants come from countries where the sports systems are fundamentally different from their own.

It is important to consider that sport does not neutralise ethnic-cultural differences, but often makes different physical practices particularly visible. Therefore, in terms of designing VSCs offers, it becomes clear that ethnic-cultural specifics must be taken into account accordingly, especially regarding sport practices and body culture. Clubs should not only provide lower fees for migrant members, but also be open to cultural diversity and respectful handling of different cultural norms, rules, and values. This goes along with zero tolerance of discrimination and racism, and should be counteracted if such tendencies appear. Clubs should be aware of and address regarding culturally influenced clothing (e.g., the burkini for Muslim women in swimming courses), as well as and hygiene rules and eating habits.

Cultural diversity could be a valuable component of clubs in which sport practices from other countries and cultural regions are considered as enriching. Practicing sport together according to different cultural rules can stimulate intercultural learning processes, develop mutual interethnic understanding, and reduce experiences of foreignness.

At the same time, to strengthen mutual understanding in VSCs, awareness should also be created among migrants. It should be explained what voluntary VSCs mean as social organisations and the underlying principles of joint interest and solidarity, and how a sport club functions. VSCs are politically autonomous and democratically structured organisations, and voluntary engagement is a main pillar to provide sport services. This goes hand in hand with explaining what rights and obligations members have in the club. Teaching club objectives and culture more explicitly can promote understanding of what a sport club is and what is expected of members and parents from the target group of migrants. It facilitates the daily dialogue between club, members, and migrants.

#### **Issue 5: Addressing and overcoming language barriers**

The findings also refer to the challenges that particularly result from language barriers within the organisation of the VSCs. Both club representatives and migrants point out that a lack of language skills is one of the main obstacles for successful integration. This contradicts the ideal and widespread claim that "sport speaks all languages" and that language differences are only of little relevance for access to VSCs and to participate successfully in social relations within the club. Therefore, clubs should try to avoid assimilative thinking regarding language in the sense that "those who want to be members should speak our language". Rather, addressing language barriers is fundamental during integrative practices within VSCs. Accordingly, clubs should provide opportunities to learn the local language (e.g., language buddies with the club, mediation of language courses). At the same time, it is important to make necessary communication possible by providing translations

of documents or translators during sport courses and club events. Here, clubs can use different languages or create documents in the language of the target groups. Nevertheless, language issues should be addressed sensitively, because language of migrants represents cultural values that should also be considered and accepted in a pluralistic sense and a culture of tolerance and welcome. However, migrants who speak a foreign language should also be given the opportunity to learn and improve the local language, because this plays an important role for successful integration in general.

#### **Issue 6: Building necessary resources and capacities**

The study shows clearly that most VSCs involved in migration work have resource deficits. It also shows that there are clubs that are willing to do something but cannot be active in integration work at the moment due to a lack of resources, e.g., finances, facilities, coaches. However, depending on each specific case, some capacities are more important than others. For example, some clubs do not have enough volunteers or specific intercultural skills to create effective participation and integration opportunities for migrants, other clubs do not have enough sport facilities available to expand their sports offerings, etc. Therefore, VSCs should be empowered to mobilise or accumulate new resources. To build capacities, both an internal as well as external view are important.

From the internal perspective, clubs should first analyse whether there are 'hidden' resources that can be mobilised. This means, clubs should look for volunteers who are potentially interested in working with migrants, or if there are any unused training slots in sport facilities, or to what extent further sport equipment can be provided by the members.

In a further step, VSCs should reflect whether there are opportunities in their local context to reallocate existing club resources in a more efficient manner. Is it possible to use a sport facility for more than one training group or distribute money to provide more sport courses? However, it is important to consider that procedures for reallocating resources can be accompanied by conflicts of distribution between different interest groups within the club. Therefore, capacity building for integration work should be well balanced with other issues and goals of a club. Reallocation of resources within the club can be legitimised successfully, if the functional necessity is emphasised and how the club will benefit in its development (see Issue 1). Furthermore, social interaction with migrants can strengthen the intercultural competences and cohesion of all members and influence their life satisfaction. Therefore, migrant integration and cultural diversity can be a productive resource for the VSCs. To mobilise a reallocation of capacities, sport federations can support clubs through educational and advisory services.

From an external perspective, clubs should look for support and funding to increase their capacities. This is strongly related to organisational legitimacy. Organisational legitimacy is defined as "a generalised perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (Suchman, 1995, p. 574). As such, legitimacy is viewed as an asset that sustains the flow of resources from the environment, as stakeholders are more likely to support what is perceived to be a 'legitimate' organisation (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008). Legitimacy is closely related to the status and reputation of a club, and integration work for migrants can be a valuable social issue to strengthen the local reputation in a municipality to get better access to resources. Therefore, it is important for

clubs to understand the nature of several (external) resources so that capacity building efforts may be effectively focused. For instance, the request for further sport facilities could be linked to providing additional sport services for migrants and integration work as a socially desirable practice. The implementation of integration measures can contribute to the visibility and reputation in the local area and may promote stakeholders' perceptions and support. To gain external support and resources, clubs should develop suitable strategies for their relevant stakeholders where they communicate their contributions to public welfare more offensively and directly in the sense of "do good things and talk about it". Clubs should ensure that relevant topics and content also reach the appropriate addressees (stakeholders) to evoke resonance on their side.

### Issue 7: Developing and adapting organisational structures

One of the central findings of the study is that the initiation and establishment of integration initiatives and programmes in VSCs are fundamentally related to engaged key people (and less to specific club goals). VSCs therefore personalise practices in the area of integration work, in which people with experiences and competencies in working with migrants take on certain responsibilities, take coordinating roles, and make decisions. This person-driven strategy as an approach in migration work is functional and should be further supported by clubs. At the same time, however, this person-driven strategy is also risky for a club. Personal dependencies arise in relation to migration work and potential will be lost if people no longer want to work for the club or leave it. At the same time, it should not be ignored that certain formal structures, such as

boards and the general assembly, formally have the legitimate decision-making power in the club. Therefore, structural anchoring of integration efforts in the club are crucial for retention. Support and the necessary prioritisation of the efforts of the board of directors is decisive in this regard. However, meeting and network platforms for members interested in integration work might also be useful. Therefore, clubs should find a good balance between person-driven and club-driven procedures. Committed and engaged people as volunteers are needed, because they are proactive and initiate and implement projects and measures. At the same time, structures within the club are necessary that coordinate integration work in a systematic and strategic manner, develop goals, organise measures and projects, develop resources and request support from external stakeholders. This can give the topic of integration a higher priority within the club and ensure better planning and organisation that can help clubs to initiate and maintain integration efforts. Furthermore, this goes hand in hand with an expansion and specification of the understanding of integration. Finally, structural embedding allows the constructive handling of controversial positions, reservations, and concerns, which are an essential aspect for the establishment of integration projects.

To strengthen the organisational structures for integrative work, sport federations are also required to support the structural development of clubs regarding the topic of social integration in their educational and advisory programmes. This also includes opportunities for clubs to learn from each other - for sport federations to convey the good examples. This is related to the fact that clubs often learn more from other clubs than from abstract organisational charts.

### Issue 8: Developing intercultural competencies

The development of intercultural competencies is part of the capacity building process (see Issue 6), but it should be discussed separately, as it is an essential resource for integration work (see Issue 4). Our findings show that the successful integration practices of people with a migration background in VSCs depends to a large extent on the skills of the people who train and supervise migrants in the club, particularly coaches. Skills in dealing with cultural diversity in club work and in supervising training groups is therefore a critical resource ensuring that specific knowledge and competencies are available to meet the needs, expectations, and challenges of the target group. Clubs often lack these competencies, which quickly leads to excessive demands on the people involved. Therefore, clubs should mobilise hidden intercultural competencies in the club by looking for suitable members, who already have experience working with migrants in sport groups (e.g., calling up intercultural expertise from members). Furthermore, clubs should create and build intercultural competencies, which can be conducted via networking, educational programmes, and training on the job.

Networking means fruitful collaborations with institutions or persons outside the club who work with migrants on a daily basis and are interested in bringing migrants into VSCs. These include for example social workers in initial reception facilities, employees of municipal institutions such as schools or kindergartens, and other voluntary, humanitarian organisations dealing with the integration of immigrants and refugees, such as the Red Cross. Such persons usually have the trust of migrants, and thus, are important gatekeepers who



allow migrants gain entrance to clubs. Furthermore, they can sensitise and support acting members and volunteers of clubs to be aware of cultural differences and to take this into account sufficiently when planning practices and exercises.

Clubs should take care to support their coaches as much as possible to have competencies in dealing with cultural diversity through educational efforts. In most cases, they are the first and most frequent “official” contact for migrants. Therefore, they should be provided with all necessary help, from additional educational opportunities in intercultural education to language courses or translators in the initial stages. From the perspective of sport federations, who are usually responsible for coach education, the development of intercultural competencies should be addressed and integrated into regular educational programmes. As the language barrier is one of the biggest issues in successful integration of migrants (see Issue 5), additional educational offers in that regard may be helpful as well.

Furthermore, training on the job can also be effective. This method is based on the “learning by doing principle”, which means that volunteers learn from other colleagues in the club or another club from the same community who already have experience and competencies accumulated through working with migrants or education programmes. They impart relevant practical knowledge that coaches need to work with migrants. Creating on-the-job training opportunities in clubs makes it possible to impart knowledge in the field of application and gain practical experience. To recognise mistakes in dealing with cultural differences at an early stage and to avoid them in the future, regular feedback discussions are an important part.

### Issue 9: Creating and strengthening networks and cooperations

The activation and initiation of cooperation with other actors inside and outside the sport system also represents an important success factor for the emergence and development of integration. VSCs should emphasise creating networks, in which clubs exchange their experiences, challenges, and solutions in integration work. Findings reveal that it has been very fruitful for VSCs to build networks with other organisations within the municipality, such as schools, kindergartens, reception facilities for refugees, or other charitable organisations (e.g., churches, Red Cross) at the local level. It is crucial that networks are established within municipalities in which the VSCs and other organisations of other sectors cooperate jointly to successfully deal with existing challenges in the context of integration work with migrants. Networks open the possibility to develop new forms of cooperation and overcome restrictions by creating synergies within the framework of migration work of a municipality. It is important to support such initiatives in a more targeted manner in the future and to systematically expand and build up new networking patterns as a design instrument for integration work. In addition, such cooperations in relation to migration work offer the opportunity of freeing VSCs from their sectoral perspective in favour of common municipal interests (mobilisation function). Existing problems and challenges can be identified by exchanging different (intersectoral) experiences to jointly develop sustainable solutions (forum and innovation function). There is also the possibility of synergetic bundling of locally available resources and competencies, which increases the overall capacity of integration work.

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