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# *Integration by Sport and Physical Activities in Europe: An Introduction*<sup>1</sup>

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## **Abstract**

Sport is traditionally presented and used as a vector of integration and citizenship for foreign populations in all immigration countries. Leisure sports activities allow intercultural dialogue and offer opportunities for socialization. For this reason, in several European countries, sports associations and NGOs have initiated many sports programs open to migrants and refugees, the effects of which are often unknown to social science. Furthermore, the issue of welcoming migrants has taken on a new dimension in recent years: Europe is the region that quantitatively welcomes the largest number of international migrants. In this context, the use of sport to integrate newly arrived migrants raises many questions for social sciences. Can we thus identify practices and initiatives for integration through sport that can be generalized to all countries? How do the different European countries deal with the migratory phenomenon and with what reception arrangements and integration models? Comparing several sporting practices, programs and systems in different countries the paper investigates how inclusion and integration are translated into action strategies, and suggests a rethinking of some sociological categories. Doing so, the concepts of Integration, immigrant, migrant and sport are tested by Social Sciences in order to better understand the society we are living.

**Keywords:** Sport, Migration, European comparisons.

## **Preface**

Sport is traditionally presented and used as a vector of integration and citizenship for foreign populations in all immigration countries, (Gasparini, 2008, 2012, 2016; Porro, Martelli, 2018; Porro, Martelli, Testa, 2020). Leisure sports activities allow intercultural dialogue without necessarily mastering the language of the host country: they help to overcome learning difficulties, and offer opportunities for socialization. It is for this reason that sports associations and NGOs (Non-governmental organizations) have initiated several sports programs open to migrants and refugees, the effects of which are often unknown to the general public and to social science researchers.

However, the issue of welcoming migrants has taken on a new dimension in Europe in recent years, in a context of unprecedented growth of migratory flows. In fact, Europe is the region that quantitatively welcomes the largest number of international migrants<sup>2</sup>. Since the 2010s, this “old continent” has seen an exponential

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<sup>1</sup> This article is the result of active collaboration between the authors. In the final version, William Gasparini wrote Preface and paragraphs 1-3, Giovanna Russo wrote paragraphs 4-6.

<sup>2</sup> In 2019 2.7 million people immigrated to the EU, while 1.2 million emigrated, for a total net immigration of 1.5 million people (see: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-of-life/statistics-migration-europe\\_it#developmentsin20192018](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-of-life/statistics-migration-europe_it#developmentsin20192018); last view: 05.12.2021).

increase in the number of migrants from Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia (mainly Syrians, Afghans, Iraqis, Eritreans, Pakistanis)<sup>3</sup>. In most cases it is the economic conditions but also the conflicts and crises that have pushed these migrants to leave their country and their family.

This phenomenon has had important political and social consequences for European countries.

Although Europe has faced one of the largest migratory movements since World War II, in 2015 it did not adopt a common policy of solidarity and hospitality. Despite strong reluctance, a number of countries, especially Western European ones, have nonetheless offered institutional reception agreements. The national and European authorities first of all have dealt with the problem of the distribution of these migrant populations within the various Member States of the European Union. But beyond these issues, there is the question of their integration in the host countries.

The difficulties encountered by newcomers are numerous, starting with the language barrier. Alongside school, sport, as “universal language” and productive ground for the creation of social bonds, often seems to be a tool for promoting the integration of migrant populations. Since the early 2000s, various integration initiatives through sport have already been launched in Europe and these have multiplied considerably since 2015. These are both European-level projects, coordinated by the European Union Commission and the Council of Europe, but also of local initiatives led by sports clubs and associations operating in the social field.

Beyond the postulate and political communications on integration through sport, the use of sport to integrate newly arrived migrants raises many questions for the social sciences. Can we thus identify practices and initiatives for integration through sport that can be generalized to all countries? How do the different European countries deal with the migratory phenomenon and with what reception arrangements and integration models?

How does sport integrate newly arrived migrants and with what results? Which migrants participate in these systems? Men, women, young people? What are the results in terms of integration into the host society? In terms of integration through sport, can we compare the public and association policies implemented during the 20th century and those more recently developed to integrate migrants and refugees?

This social fact is indeed not new because throughout the twentieth century, many foreigners have integrated their host society through work but also through associations - especially sports (Beaud, Noiriel, 1990; Gastaut, 2003). But until then, most of the migrants came from southern Europe (Italy, Portugal, Spain), the old empires and the former colonies (especially Africa). They integrated mainly into their host country through work (Europe was undergoing reconstruction) but also through school for their children and through non-working time activities such as, for example, sporting activities. Currently the situation has changed, but in terms of intercultural dialogue and integration, sport remains an essential tool for public authorities and migrant aid associations.

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<sup>3</sup> United Nations statistics indicate that the largest number of migrants worldwide is settled in Europe (89,2 million); their incidence on the European population reaches 10.1% (IDOS, 2020).

## 1. Integration of migrants through sport: European practices and systems

Social inclusion and integration as a goal of sport in society are priorities for both the European Union and the Council of Europe, in partnership with sports NGOs.

For the EU, integration is a dynamic two-way process of mutual acceptance by all immigrants and residents of Member States. It requires the participation, not only of immigrants and their descendants, but also of every resident. It is within the framework of its action plans for the integration and inclusion of newcomer migrants and descendants of immigrants for the period (2016-2020 then 2021-2027) that the EU is supporting more and more projects using sport to promote the integration of migrants. Several initiatives had already been launched in Europe since the early 2000s, but they have multiplied considerably since 2015 with the massive arrival of populations fleeing the conflicts ravaging the Middle East. In September 2016, the European Commission published a study on how sport promotes the integration of migrants in Europe and which identifies good practices in the Union<sup>4</sup>. The Commission also supports projects and networks for the social inclusion of migrants through the European Structural and Investment Funds and the Erasmus + program. Thanks to the support of the European Union, several NGOs and associations have obtained funding from the Erasmus + program.

The Union finances projects such as the European Sport Inclusion Network (SPIN), Social Inclusion and Volunteering in Sports Clubs in Europe (SIVSCE), Integration of Refugees Through Sport (IRTS), Football Including Refugees (FIRE or the Fairplay project). Football plays an important role in promoting social inclusion, in particular through the participation of football associations (as in the Show Racism the Red Card project) or sports NGOs such as the Union European Football Association (UEFA), which helped the European Union to identify the activities of its members in favor of the social inclusion of refugees.

In 1981, the European Sport ministers of the Council of Europe, adopted a solution on sport for immigrants<sup>5</sup>, convinced that it was an important means for greater participation in the social life of the host countries. According to the Council of Europe, the positive values of sport as a tool for promoting human rights, encouraging peace and international understanding in a spirit of mutual respect between peoples, can be considered particularly useful in helping both host societies and newcomers to work together to strengthen the social fabric at the local level.

The Council of Europe in order to continue this policy in the framework of the action plan on the protection of refugee and migrant children adopted by 47 States, through the Extended Partial Agreement to Sport (EPAS), established in 2017 an operational exchange platform which lists all integration projects for newly arrived migrants through sport.

The project was launched following the EPAS annual conference held in June 2016 in Vienna on the following topic: "Integration of newly arrived migrants through sport". The platform's goal is to connect sporting initiatives, promote and enhance them. EPAS is also a partner of the ASPIRE project - "*Activities, sports and play for the inclusion of refugees in Europe*"<sup>6</sup>, led by the European Non-

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<sup>4</sup> Ecorys UK (2016), *Mapping of good practices relating to the social inclusion of migrants through sport* - Final report to DG Education and Culture of the European Commission, Luxembourg (see <https://op.europa.eu/it/publication-detail/-/publication/f1174f30-7975-11e6-b076-01aa75ed71a1>).

<sup>5</sup> Resolution on sport 81/4, Council of Europe (1981).

<sup>6</sup> See <https://www.aspiresport.eu/index.php/blog/aspire-activity-sport-and-play-inclusion-refugees-europe>.

Governmental Sports Organization (ENGSO). This project aims to understand how sports clubs can help integrate migrants and refugees.

## **2. Host clubs for refugees: a diversity of national practices**

In several European countries, including Italy, Germany, France, Belgium, Portugal, Sweden, etc., sports associations and NGOs offering sports activities have been at the origin of many open systems for migrants, through devices often unknown to the general public and researchers. It is generally a sporting practice in a club aimed for migrants whose presence on the territory is accepted. This pattern is mainly observed in the Nordic countries and in Germany, where existing sports clubs have welcomed many refugees.

Germany, the first host country in Europe, is therefore the most dynamic country in terms of sports programs for the integration of migrant populations. In many Länder, "Sport and Refugee" programs were established in 2016. It is a financial support for cities and villages that open their clubs to refugees. This dynamic is also explained by the important voluntary commitment encouraged and supported by the sports confederations of the Länder in collaboration with the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. Already in 2001, the German Olympic and Sports Confederation (DOSB) established the "Integration through Sport" program, funded by the German Ministry of Interior and the Federal Office for Immigration and Refugees. The goal is to financially assist the clubs in integrating people of immigrant origin, but also to raise awareness among sports organizations on the opportunity represented by interculturality in sport.

Parallel to this initiative, the Federal Ministry of Immigration and Refugees joined forces with the German Football Association (DFB) in the creation of an information brochure. Regional projects have also emerged. This is the case, for example, in the state of Hesse, where the Hessian Sports Federation launched the "Sport and refugees". This project aims to support towns and villages in their efforts to open sports clubs to refugees. Therefore "Sport and refugees" is part of a logic of decentralization of funds to local public bodies that interact with the reference target. Local public and private actors are the main coordinators of integration programs while the regional ministry provides funding.

In Portugal, the integration of migrants through sport is part of the government project "Programa Escolhas"<sup>7</sup>, a public policy aimed at young people threatened by social exclusion. It is therefore not a program exclusively aimed for migrants but the latter, as a public particularly exposed to exclusion, represent a priority target. The project is coordinated by the High Immigration Commission and aims to promote the participation of these young people in local life, particularly through sports clubs.

Furthermore, from 2015 to 2018, the Swedish Sports Confederation received funding from the Swedish government for its "work to welcome newcomers", based on the premise that sport is a way of entering society.

In addition to these few major initiatives supported by the national authorities of the Member States, many integration projects through sport have emerged in the territories under the impetus of sports clubs and in collaboration with associations welcoming migrants.

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<sup>7</sup> See [https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/portugal-sport-tool-inclusion-migrants\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/portugal-sport-tool-inclusion-migrants_en).

The Kraainem football club in Belgium, for example, includes around 20 young refugees every week in its training sessions. The provision of football equipment and the provision of French and Dutch lessons are also part of the project. The club has established a partnership with the Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers in order to maintain contact with the young beneficiaries of the program.

In France, the French Football Federation facilitates the integration of migrants and displaced populations into local teams through a solidarity action fund by encouraging cultural exchange, sharing, and acceptance of differences. Many cities offer similar devices and experiences. In Saint-Malo, since the opening of a reception center opposite the stadium, the football club has been mobilizing to offer migrants sports activities. Each week, two volunteers offer in addition to football, muscle building, beach volleyball, volleyball and swimming. In general, all of the activities enabled socialization between residents and outsiders. In Toulouse, the NGO Sportis (*Sport International Solidaire*) has developed a network of sports clubs ready to welcome populations of migrants or refugees, to facilitate their arrival and promote their integration. In Toulouse “The Run” association also offers running training for refugees or asylum seekers, the idea being to form "local-migrant" pairs to promote the social integration of these refugees. The O.N.G Sportis, headquartered in Samatan in the Gers, is at the source of this project. It seeks to develop in Toulouse a network of sports clubs ready to welcome these populations of migrants or refugees. The association is also aimed at a more family audience, women or children who have sometimes never had the opportunity to practice a sport in the countries they have left.

In Strasbourg, finalist in the Wellbeing Cities Award 2021 initiative, the city is committed to guaranteeing better access to sports activities for refugees and asylum seekers. The city has thus decided to make sport a vector for the integration of refugees and asylum seekers. The “Inclusion through sport” program is divided into three activities: riding, swimming, moving. For each of them, it is about offering a group of migrants the opportunity to learn to ride a bicycle, to swim or to discover a collective sport.

Since 2013, in Italy, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policies and the CONI (Italian National Olympic Committee) have worked together in order to develop actions aimed at promoting the social integration of the foreign population through sport and contrasting forms of racial discrimination and intolerance.

On this basis, in 2015, the report entitled: “Sport and integration: the best victory. Good Practices”, was born. It collects a selection of the most significant sporting projects spread throughout the Italian territory aimed at creating a common culture of coexistence between people of different origins, involving multiple sports disciplines (from football, rugby, volleyball, baseball, judo ...).

Among the best-known Italian experiences at national level, the following are mentioned: The anti-racist World Championships (organized by UISP – Italian Union SportforAll) born in 1997, have long been included in the UISP Great National Events, expanding to the most varied disciplines: from football to basketball, volleyball, cricket, rugby (just to name a few). This event has taken on the characteristics of a real multicultural “festival” of fight against all forms of discrimination, with very significant data: attendance of over 30,000 people, over 250 teams registered in the various sports disciplines and about 4000 participating athletes.

Another initiative is entitled "The football story. Stories of integration from the depths of football" promoted and created by Lega A (football) together with Uisp: the aim is to promote values such as integration and tolerance among football fans and their athletes. The project aims to reconstruct the value of integration and in-

tercultural exchange starting from the life stories of players, coaches and clubs who have experienced different forms of discrimination and contributed to affirming the dignity of Italian football.

Since 2007 "Ballon Moundial" has been held in Turin, a project of sport and reception of foreigners in Italy. It is a festival of sport and migrant communities, aimed at organizing an "alternative World Cup" among the migrant communities residing in the area, with the same characteristics as the actual World Cup. The initiative has the following objectives: creating a meeting space in Turin for migrant communities to exchange their cultural identity.

At the same time (2007) the Liberi Nantes - Free to play project has been taking place in Rome, aimed at promoting free access to sports by the so-called "forced migrants", i.e. all those men and women who have been forced to leave their countries of origin due to wars, persecutions and discrimination. The project gave rise to the football team, the first made up of refugees and asylum seekers participating in an official FIGC championship. Another successful project, born in the Emilia Romagna region and then developed nationally, is the "Rete project!" aimed at playing sports for unaccompanied minors seeking asylum from the Reception Centers of the SPRAR Network aged between 13 and 17 (ibidem).

All of these examples confirm how sporting activities have been forerunners of positive integration trends and the construction of a common sense of belonging, between young Italians and their peers coming from other countries, or who were born in Italy to foreign parents, with effects that have a positive impact on relations within local communities throughout the country.

### **3. Re-Thinking migrant integration by sport: a sociological issue**

Faced with the development of these new reception and integration practices for migrants, it is therefore important to understand what we are talking about. Integration through sport allows a migrant to access a human community, to get to know it better and to share a number of values. This mutual adaptation/adoption is a two-way street, between migrants and residents of the host country.

Integration is often associated with a social and political model of managing immigrants in a country. This model is based on the idea that immigrants form part, temporarily or definitively, of the national community, and therefore have the same rights (access to the system of social protection, education and health, sometimes even to the right voting in local elections) and are subject to the same duties (except those closely linked to nationality, for those who do not have the nationality of the host country). Everyone then agrees to be part of a whole.

The integration process involves the adaptation of migrants (men and women), who all have rights and obligations towards the new country of residence. It also concerns the host society, which should create the conditions for the full economic, social, cultural and political participation of immigrants. Therefore, Member States are encouraged to consider and include both immigrants and nationals in their integration policy by making clear to them their mutual rights and responsibilities. However, according to European countries, the integration of migrants is not perceived in the same way.

Observing integration or inclusion mechanisms and the reading of European publications around the theme "sport and migration", highlights both the convergence of the questions asked and the points of view around the integrative functions of sport and the diversity responses concerning the way in which civil socie-



ties (in particular sports and associative movements) and States (or local authorities) use sport to include migrants and their descendants.

Moreover, for sociologists, integration is declined according to the sociological rooting which gives it meaning (Schnapper, 2007). In the interpretative social sciences, many keywords – "community", "citizenship", "diversity", "integration", for example – constitute both categories of social and political practice and categories of social and political analysis. (Brubaker, 2001).

A polysemous concept, integration designates in sociology a social process when, in public debate, it is both an objective (integration policies) and a political issue (the "crisis of the integration model"). If we consider Durkheim (1922) or the Chicago School researchers, integration is the process by which the individual takes place in a society, by which he socializes. There, he learns the norms and values that govern the social body, this learning being done in particular through the intermediary of the family, the school or the groups of peers. This is how Émile Durkheim understood integration as a factory for future citizens. Originally, he used it to analyze the relationship between individuals and the community in order to identify laws concerning the degrees and forms of social integration. Then, the sociologists of the School of Chicago, in the American context of a society formed of cultural communities, gradually questioned the links between particular communities and society. They distinguish the adoption of cultural features of society ("acculturation", "assimilation", "cultural integration") -and participation in various instances of social life ("structural integration"). As this word belongs at the same time in the political and sociological registers, all the ambiguity of integration stems from the fact that the concept relates both to the integration of individuals into society and to the integration of society as a whole.

Sayad defines integration as a "process that we can only talk about after the fact, to say that it has succeeded or that it has failed; a process of moving from the most radical otherness to the most total identity" (Sayad, 1999, p. 307). The notion of integration does not actually correspond to any experience, but it can orient sociological questions, even if it is not directly operative in the research process. We cannot therefore study integration as such, but we can analyze its various dimensions at a given moment. As a practice that generates social ties in the settlement society, sport constitutes one of these dimensions.

If the practice of sport allows migrants to forge bonds with the local population and to join a group, investing in a sports association can also allow them to acquire new skills, to better understand local codes and customs and to develop a network of knowledge which can prove to be invaluable. Doing so, sport appears as a real springboard towards other forms of integration.

In this sense the integration of migrants through sport also becomes a category of practices that enters everyday language. As Brubaker remarks (2001), these are categories of everyday social experience, developed and deployed by ordinary social actors, in so far as they are distinguished from the categories used by sociologists, which are constructed at a distance from experience. The term "integration by sport" is thus used both in social science research and by those involved in the integration and reception of migrants (*ibidem*).

#### **4. Integration, immigrant, migrant, sport: categories tested by Social Sciences**

Like many functions "naturally" attributed to sport, the integration of migrants through sport is a falsely obvious question (Gasparini, 2008, Coakley 2011). We

have heard several times by media and in political communications, or speeches on the integration of immigrant populations through sport and, more particularly, of young people of the Muslim faith, "talking to us" almost too easily, thus producing a "reality effect" (Barthes, 1968). These discourses are therefore amply reinforced in return by televised images of high-level sportsmen from an immigrant background.

Analyzing the use of sport in order to integrate newly arrived migrants requires an effort of objectification that involves breaking away from the categories and beliefs that have formed outside of sociology and that are in no scientific way. Didn't Émile Durkheim say that the sociologist must "free himself from these false evidences which dominate the minds of the vulgar, that he shakes off, once and for all, the yoke of those empirical categories that a long addiction often ends up being tyrannical" (Durkheim, 1895, p. 32)? In other words, because the integration through sport issue "speaks" too easily to us, we cannot study it without this preliminary work of distancing and construction of objects of study which, while being socialization and integration into sport not an automatic process, and the role of sport in promoting the integration of migrants ambiguous (e.g. Dukic et al., 2017; Rich et al., 2015; Spaaij, 2012).

The many examples of measures and policies for welcoming migrants using sport and physical activities to "integrate" these uprooted populations into the new host society give credence to the idea that this is an appropriate activity because "it does not require mastery of the language of the host country". Sport would be one of those universal languages which make it possible to create links despite a language barrier or cultural differences. Likewise, it is assumed that sport can increase the generally rare contact between young migrants and non-migrants and other social networks, and thus have a significant impact on their engagement, well-being and sense of usefulness (Lagergren & Fundberg, 2009).

It is often said that the mechanism for increased participation in society, active citizenship and the building of social networks is social capital. Although the term is very popular, there is no uniform definition of social capital. The dominant definitions come from Bourdieu (1994), Coleman (1988) and Putnam (2000), of which Putnam is most frequently used in relation to sport and integration. Putnam (2000) emphasizes the importance of shared social norms, trust, and civic engagement that "bind" communities together and help people cooperate.

Should we then distinguish between integration in sport and integration through sport?

The first involves becoming a practitioner and a member of a sports community, and the second assumes that participation in sports creates opportunities for access to other social spheres (i.e. the labor market, education, citizenship) (Agergaard, 2018). However, integration through sport is generally difficult to achieve because there is no automatic transfer of competence between the sport world and other social worlds (Gasparini, 2005). Studies on the role of sport in the creation of social capital show that sport can play an important role in facilitating the constitution of a network within minority groups and in developing a social capital of rapprochement between migrants from different backgrounds ethnic communities. On the other hand, there is little effect on the creation of social capital between migrant and non-migrant communities (cf. Spaaij, 2012; Walseth, 2008).

Other studies show how migrants participate in sports club activities using ethnographic approaches. The results of a survey carried out in a Swedish club hosting Syrian, Afghan and Somali refugees show that activities strengthen feelings of trust despite racism in society (Flensner, Korp, Lindgren, 2020).

The gender issue is unfortunately little addressed. Indeed, many devices are primarily intended for young men through football for example. We therefore have very few studies on the contribution of sport to the integration of migrant women.

Depending on the country and their integration policy, research focuses either on the connection between sport and the descendants of immigrants, or on the integration of newly arrived migrants. Thus, in France, a traditional country of immigration, the literature essentially questions the sports practices of the descendants of immigrants from a sociological perspective (Gasparini, 2010; Weiss, 2012, or historical (Beaud, Noiriel, 1990; Gastaut 2008), immigration and migration reveal very contrasting realities and encompass very diversified audiences who do not all have the same migratory pathways and the same needs.

Sport has been studied extensively among immigrants and the descendants of immigrants. Thus, in France, football is the most studied sport in the journeys of migrants of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd generations: Italians, Spaniards, Portuguese, Algerians, Turks, Moroccans, Tunisians and Sub-Saharan Africans (Boli, Gastaut, Grognet, 2010). In France, since the beginning of the 20th century, each great wave of immigration has given its contingent of footballers from the French team. Although wearing the same blue jersey, Michel Platini, Luis Fernandez or Zinédine Zidane belong to different ages of football and immigration (Gasparini, 2010). Platini is the third generation of an Italian immigrant family (his grandfather settled in Lorraine in the 1920s). Born in Tarifa (Spain), Luis Fernandez, meanwhile, came from the wave of immigration that arrived in France in the 1960s. He obtained French naturalization in 1981 to be able to play for the French team. Born in Marseille, Zinédine Zidane belongs to the second generation of postcolonial Algerian immigration. Through the mention of these three champions, one can see the exceptional contribution of immigration to French football. Yet among them, only Fernandez was not born in France. Thus, Platini and Zidane are French people with an immigrant background or descendants of immigrants, but they cannot be considered immigrants.

"Immigrant" and "migrant" are categories constructed either for study purposes or by ordinary social actors, without legal value, unlike "foreigner". In the legal field, the term "foreigner" refers to any person who does not have the nationality of the state in which he lives. On the other hand, an immigrant can be French, Italian or German.

In 2020, in France, the immigrant population represented 6.7 million people. Among them, 2.5 million people have been naturalized French, and 4.2 million are immigrants of foreign nationality. The so-called foreign population includes these 4.2 million immigrants of foreign nationality, as well as the 0.7 million foreigners born in France<sup>8</sup>.

On the other hand, in Italy in 2020, also due to the covid-19 pandemic, the foreign population was 5,013,200 at the end year (8.5% of the entire resident population), thus recording the most consistent annual decline in the last 20 years (-26,400 and -0.5% compared to 2019). According to IDOS (2021), due to the blockages of international mobility - there is a noticeable decrease and the entry of foreigners into Italy (177,300 new one registry registrations from abroad: -33.0% and -87,300 compared the previous year), and their transfers across the border, for repatriation or migration to other countries (29,700 registry cancellations for

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<sup>8</sup> Source INSEE : Répartition des étrangers par groupe de nationalités, Données annuelles de 2006 à 2020, Chiffres-clés, 2021

abroad: -27,800 and -48.4% annually). This has increased the presence of irregular migrants; while asylum seekers and holders of a form of protection also decreased (decrease in one year of 56,500 units).

As for the immigrant, there is no uniform legal definition of the term "migrant", at the international level "Migrant" is a general term which describes an international displacement with a lasting vocation. "Refugee" is a legal term which describes a precise legal status, granted following a particular and dangerous personal context, only by a State (or by the UNHCR in certain cases) after individual request and file analysis. The word "migrant" is often used as a general term to cover both migrants and refugees. It thus refers to international mobility, without specifying the cause or qualifying in law the status of the person in the country of destination. This is not the case with refugees who are unable to return home safely and who, for this reason, must benefit from specific protections under international law. A refugee is a person who is granted protection after an asylum application, because of the risks of persecution that they incur in their country of origin, because of their membership of an ethnic or social group, of their religion, of their nationality or of their political opinions, and against which their country cannot protect them, as defined in the Geneva Convention of 1951. The preferred practice by the UNHCR is to call "refugees and migrants" the groups of people involved in mixed movements<sup>9</sup>.

## 5. The sociology of sport and migration

The aim of Sociology of migration is to describe, interpret and explain the migratory phenomenon (change from one place of residence to another), its causes and consequences, which are the redefinition of the cultural practices of migrants (including acculturation), networks of sociability (integration, social disintegration and marginalization).

The sociology of migration was first that of immigration with the pioneering work of the Chicago School at the beginning of the last century, then research in Europe on immigrant workers around 1970, particularly in France. According to the Algerian sociologist Abdelmalek Sayad (1979), immigration and emigration are two points of view of the same phenomenon. He thus introduces a new perspective by placing the "emigration / immigration" couple at the center of his reflections on Algerian migration, to make it a total social fact.

Under the effect of these constant redefinitions, work on migration has gradually introduced other categories of actors and lifestyle practices of migrants into the host society.

Looking at the categories of migrants, women have long been invisible. Although today they are recognized as autonomous actors of migration, few sports sociology studies analyze their integration into the host society through sport. Girls from ethnocultural minorities are generally absent from sports programs. Despite some pioneering work, female migration has long been a blind spot in the history of immigration and contemporary debates, "reinforcing the ancient dichotomy between men on the move and sedentary women" (Green, 2012). However, the feminization of migratory flows is old and has been statistically clearly asserting itself since the late 1990s in European societies.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/fr-fr/le-hcr-en-france.html>

In France, integration through sport is not new because throughout the twentieth century, many foreigners have integrated their host society through work but also through associations - especially sports (Beaud, Noiriel, 1990). But until then, most of the migrants came from southern Europe (Italy, Portugal, Spain), former empires and former colonies (especially Africa). They have integrated mainly into their host country through work (Europe was undergoing reconstruction) but also through school for their children and through leisure activities such as, for example, sporting practices. Today, the situation has changed, but when it comes to intercultural dialogue and integration, sport remains an essential tool for public authorities and migrant aid associations.

Unlike France, immigration to Italy is a relatively recent phenomenon. Italy has indeed been historically a country of emigration rather than immigration. From 1970 to the present day, the number of immigrants has grown from a few hundred to over 5 million, mostly women and Europeans. The importance and recent nature of immigration flows - especially with refugees - make of Italy a special case in the European context (ISMU 2016). Thus, unlike France, sociology and the history of immigration to Italy are recent disciplines. The sociology of sport in relation to the migration issue is only in its infancy and no comparison has been made between France and the Italian on the mechanisms for integrating immigrants or migrants through sport. French literature on this subject has produced a certain amount of knowledge that is today essential for carrying out work on the link between immigration and sports practice (Noiriel, Beaud, 1990; Gastaut 2008; Gasparini, 2008, 2010; Boli, Gastaut, Grognon, 2010). In Italy, scientific articles on this subject are much more recent (Siebetchu, 2015; Martelli, 2015; Conti, Porro, 2016; Russo, 2019). But so far sports sociologists have focused more on the careers of top athletes of Italian origin in their host countries, than on the "integration through sport" of foreigners in Italy.

In Italy, the prospect of having to put in place such reception policies is unprecedented. In the last two decades, Italy - land of massive emigration to industrialized countries - has been confronted with the arrival of considerable migratory flows. Like France since the beginning of the 20th century, Italy has been experiencing "diversity" and developing its own model and practices for integrating immigrant populations. While the sociological literature on immigration has been developing for about twenty years (Ambrosini, 2011; Decimo, Sciortino, 2006; Livi Bacci, 2014; Perocco, 2012; Sciortino, 2005), only a few recent research have analyzed by sports in last decade (Martelli, 2020; Porro, 2016; Russo, 2016, 2019).

## **6. Inside the contents**

Crossing the sociology of migration and the sociology of sport, this dossier aims to study, on the one hand, the processes that lead to the use of sport and physical activities in integration programs for newly arrived migrants and, on the other hand, understand the meaning of actions and the effects they produce for both migrants and the host society. In order to understand the genesis of public policies and associative systems in this area, it is also necessary to analyze their context of application connected to the history of immigration.

In view of the new migratory waves and the coronavirus pandemic which drastically reduces initiatives in terms of physical activity, is sport still an essential tool to promote intercultural dialogue and integration? According to what modalities, with what practices and for what effects? How do different European countries deal

with "diversity" and how can sport still be seen as a means of accessing a common civic space that goes beyond the communities of origin?

The contributions presented below show that the integration of migrants through sport can ultimately only be grasped in its manifestations or objective effects, that is to say by empirical investigation, historical or sociological. This is the main focus of this dossier. Through various sociological perspectives, the authors address the question through social practices and representations that validate or invalidate the postulate of the integration of migrants by or through sport.

The comparison between different European countries (France, Switzerland, Italy, Germany, etc.) also allows to better understand the respective effects of the political-institutional context (local and national), conjunctures and associative cultures (associations and promoters of project) on the use of sport to integrate migrants into the host society.

It also encourages researchers to put their results into perspective through the highlighted contrasts and to distance themselves more from their "a priori cultural".

The essays presented in this journal develop within this broad theoretical framework.

In the first article (written by J. Puech, F. Le Yondre, J. Freedman) the essay exposes the question of welcoming migrant populations starting from the controversial dimension of citizenship in terms of "political philosophies". On this basis, many sports programs have been implemented as a model for integrating migrants with a view to their participation in social life. The aims of these actions, however, often appeared unclear, raising doubts about their real effectiveness. In this sense, the article explores, at European level, the typical and conflicting political logics of the social inclusion of these populations, through sports programs and the stakeholders involved in the territories. Through the mapping of 258 European sports programs, the essay wants to analyze the different political orientations at the basis of welcoming migrants through sport. Using an inductive and interpretative methodology, the authors identify three "ideal types" (Weber, 1971) of political philosophies of the use of sport for migrant populations: 1) emancipation (emphasis on free development and well-being of individuals); 2) integration (aimed at promoting social belonging through language and work); 3) protection (based on a logic of physical and / or psychological care). The emergence of these ideal types therefore encourages reflection on the use of conflicting political logics of sport for the purpose of social integration, capable however of highlighting the importance of the qualitative study of sports programs, their objectives and the measures that can be put in place for migrant populations. The aim is in fact to better understand the political dimension of the use of sport, beyond the dominant representations of an apolitical and universal practice.

The following essay (written by E. Micheli and U. Burmann) analyzes the sports programs for young refugees implemented in Germany since 2016 in order to verify the impact and real fallout in terms of social integration. The starting point is the program called '*Orientation through Sport – Concrete help for young refugees on-site*' (OtS). OtS promotes the integration of young refugees with the support of the state and implemented by sports clubs. The study aims to produce a model (elaborated through qualitative information collected in the field through documents, interviews and participant observations) of provisional impact for social integration, which is based on the Realist Evaluation (RE) approach developed by Pawson and Tilley (1997).

In order to deepen the development of the OtS program, the data collected by the researchers during the scientific evaluation in 2016 was expanded through follow-up interviews in 2019 on seven selected programs. In addition to presenting the preliminary model and its underlying assumptions, this article aims to discuss the impact of sport-related social work for children and young people. The main purpose is in fact to explore the relationship between sport and integration on the basis of the question "what works, in what circumstances and for whom?", rather than the generic use of sport as a beneficial tool for the social integration of disadvantaged populations.

With a specific look at the Italian context, the contribution of Fedele and Elia, on the other hand, illustrates the specific potential of football for unaccompanied minors as a tool and space to strengthen the identity of the minor. Starting from the results of a qualitative research through the analysis of interviews with young adolescents welcomed in structures of the Integrated Reception System (SPRAR) in Southern Italy, sports practice has emerged as a further area to define the "public face" of integration. Sport in the daily life of unaccompanied minors is a privileged place for observing the forms of articulation of their subjectivities, a sort of 'safe place' (Spaaij and Schulenkorf, 2014; Spaaji, 2015) or a place to escape from daily pressure, elaborating imaginaries, recognizing oneself as individuals and reconstructing models and forms of belonging, in a geographical and demographic context with uncertain outcomes. The research in the field also reveals its specificities in terms of gender by making new models of masculinity emerge in the imagination of the interviewees that strengthen the process of self-recognition of the young people.

It is always starting from football that the article by Boyer and Bertho aims to highlight the experience of young female soccer players of migrant origins in Switzerland (French), a country in which the integration policies of sport are very few compared to other European contexts. The essay, through ethnographic research conducted in 2020 on players of three fourth league teams (through the integrated use of the following tools: direct observations, participant observations and semi-structured interviews; while a questionnaire was used to better define the socio-demographic profile of the players), illustrates the difficult situation of these athletes who are very little considered by sports institutions, but at the same time strongly committed to sports. The information collected, however, highlights sport as a specific area of social commitment, recognition, identity construction and strengthening of social and emotional ties within the teams, as well as a tool that facilitates integration in the host country. The practice of football allows in fact to get in touch with people, and to be recognized in an identity they have chosen, and not in an assigned identity: being a girl, being of origin..., and developing new social ties with people. at home or in Switzerland.

The research in particular shows how the players undertake to overcome the obstacles encountered in sporting practice, in order to develop their action in the field by activating new forms of social cooperation and /or conflict. The results of the research therefore highlight the need for a greater and more positive integration between sports policies and integration policies in the Swiss territory, useful for a greater active participation of migrants in the collective life of Swiss society.

The "Notes and Comments" section includes two contributions: the first (Pilati), deals with the media discourse analysis referring to native athletes as one of the possible strategies aimed at revealing the representations of foreigners in Italy. The case of the Rio Olympics (2016) is an opportunity to analyze the (mainstream) media narratives on "naturalized" athletes starting from the most representative Italian

newspapers of the current sport journalistic scenario: *Corriere della Sera* and *La Gazzetta dello Sport*. The analysis identifies three types of narratives present in the stories about "naturalized" Italian athletes who participated in the 2016 Olympics: the patriotic, the libertarian, and the heroic narratives. From this it emerges that the newspapers examined mainly present "the sporting enterprise" as a virtuous standard of cultural integration that nullifies economic differences and ethnic origins. In other words, the story of the Italian daily press still appears strongly influenced by post-colonialist conceptions of society, in which the stories of Olympic athletes of foreign origin are functional to the wider construction of an Italian national identity.

On the other hand, Della Sala's article discusses the European framework on the issue of inclusion and integration through sport of disabled people, focusing on the case study "Esport Inclou" developed by the Institute of Sport of Barcelona.

Following the guidelines provided by the Council of Europe, the Barcelona Esport Inclou plan since 2012 defines specific programs and actions that can help the integration and inclusion of people suffering from physical, intellectual, hearing, visual and/or physical disorders. or live in neighborhoods. The Barcelona Esport Inclou program underlines the importance of defining a new idea of transformation. The plan has tried to develop changes through the conception of the services offered without any kind of limitation and which can favor the reduction of barriers between the subjects. The program wants to go beyond the term inclusion, identifying coexistence as an element capable of strengthening a sense of identity and belonging to the community. Through a strategic participation between public and private actors, the program intends to inform and sensitize people and trainers on issues related to social inclusion and sport as an inclusive element.

Finally, in the last Section "Experiences and comparisons", Iannacone describes the theoretical paths of social integration in sports practices against the background of the various waves of "sporting" (Porro 2001) which in the EU context have seen the emergence of an intercultural approach to sport. In this sense, the SPIN (Sport Inclusion Network) project is particularly important. It deals with the inclusion of newly arrived migrant women, often refugee women and girls, promoted by the European Union and the Erasmus + program. The study is based on the participants' experience and opinions on focus groups, including representatives of sports clubs and initiatives, migrant organizations, NGOs and sports associations. The SPIN Women project was designed to enhance the participation of migrant and minority women and girls in physical sporting and recreational activities. The aim is to show the different perspectives of migrant women and ethnic minorities and, consequently, to develop strategies to increase their involvement in sport. Furthermore, the project was designed to raise awareness and support policy change within public authorities and sport governing bodies at European level.

Observing the relationships between sport and migration means understanding the importance and multidimensionality that sporting practices can convey within the contemporary socio-cultural context. The recognition of sport's attitude of being a vehicle for integrating diversity - confirming the attention to intercultural dialogue at European level - testifies to its importance within the debate on integration and multiculturalism.

It should be borne in mind that sport can generate interculture or, on the contrary, discrimination. In recent years, the growing presence of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Europe has led to reflection on the new possibilities of integration models. The analysis of the contribution of sporting practices can provide



innovative tools to the migration issue, as well as concrete answers to a different question of quality of life for natives and immigrants.

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