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Public Policy Recommendations

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“Disrupting polarisation: building communities of tolerance through football - DIALECT”
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Introduction

This Roadmap for public authorities' policies aims at presenting Guidelines and evidence based recommendations on how they can promote and facilitate the building of all-inclusive tolerant communities, through football and more specifically through football3. The Roadmap is produced in the framework of the DIALECT (Disrupting polarisation: building communities of tolerance through football) project which aims to use football values as a mean of empowering young people to the fight against polarization, racism and xenophobia to youngsters in four European countries, i.e. Greece, Hungary, Italy, Serbia.

Football, and in particular a different methodology of playing football named Football3, was used in this project, spreading the message of "Football for All: making extreme discourses irrelevant" and disseminating the principles of equality and active citizenship. The ultimate goal was to promote solidarity and community building by forming a powerful network of change and by bringing together adolescents, their parents, local sports professionals and pioneer football players. This way, the values of acceptance of others and solidarity were enhanced in the local communities through empowering adolescents and youth to practise on their conflict resolution skills, aiming at disrupting polarization and combating intolerance and hatred at community level.

The Report draws material from the research outcomes of the DIALECT Project (focus groups with football professionals, NGOs representatives, parents of youngsters playing or familiarised with football3 in four countries) and from the outcomes of the Public Policy Workshop that took place virtually on Monday the 21st of March 2022 with the participation of representatives from public authorities and relevant stakeholders from the four countries involved in the project, namely Greece, Hungary, Italy, Serbia.

The aim of the Roadmap and Guidelines

The aim of the Roadmap is to provide -through the guidelines- a number of recommendations on how public authorities can be more effective and contribute to the building of inclusive and tolerant communities via football³.

The proposed guidelines can act as a driving force for change with regard to promoting football³ and altering the situation by combating intolerance and xenophobia under the following prerequisites: A long -term commitment along with a clearly expressed political will and relevant mobilisation at the institutional level of local governments and public authorities in charge. A recent UNESCO initiative¹, namely a Roadmap against racism and discriminations seeks to nurture effective actions through the development of ground-breaking action- and results-oriented initiatives at state level due to the fact that racism and discriminatory trends and expressions are not improving. Thus, the importance of effective and responding policies for youngsters' education based on the principles of solidarity and social cohesion is a prerequisite from one hand and a strong will from the other. It also requires beyond policy decision-making, a change of culture including gender equality from early years of childhood and the acceptance of otherness. Football³ methodology can contribute to the aforementioned by promoting cultural collaboration and tolerance to address this multi-faceted issue. Depending on the administrative structure of each country, changes and improvements can be more or less efficient, more or less easily implemented. As stated also in the Impact Assessment report of the project, *“disrupting polarisation through football and more specifically through football³, lies -to a large extent - in the hands of local governments, NGOs, CSOs, football leaders, educators and charismatic sport personalities who may act as ‘agents of change’ at local community level and who are active and willing to ameliorate the social situation of the vulnerable social groups”*.

¹ TOWARDS BUILDING A ROADMAP AGAINST RACISM AND DISCRIMINATIONS: Highlights of the UNESCO Regional Expert Consultations against Racism and Discriminations (2022) UNESCO Publications

THE STATE OF THE ART

According to the findings of the DIALECT Impact Assessment Report and the qualitative findings from the interviews, public authorities and local governments can be the key players and act as agents of change. However, public authorities and local governments exhibit a number of weaknesses that need to be dealt with and further strengthened in order to better accomplish their inclusion goals, when it comes to promote all-inclusive and tolerant communities. Among the main difficulties that were identified during the implementation of our research project, the following were highlighted:

- Embedded state bureaucracy that affects and delays cooperation's initiatives that have been undertaken by local governments and/or towards state institutions. Depending on the administrative structure of each country - centralised or less centralised - bureaucracy remains the biggest problem.
- Weak and unsustainable networking of important stakeholders at local and national level, together with the fact that there is a lack of cooperation and of systematic collaboration between public authorities and other local stakeholders, hinders the promotion of innovative methodologies, such as football3, as a way to promote inclusive communities and creates serious obstacles in achieving the goal of building tolerant communities.
- Limited and unstable funding for actions and initiatives aimed at combating intolerance and xenophobia is considered to be a reality in most cases, especially for actions involving sports, as it is the case of football3. The limited funding may be attributed to the low priority given by the state and local governments, but also to the absence of a long-term strategy for the social cohesion of the community.



- Community mistrust may undermine any policy and action towards an inclusive society. In particular, minority populations who live in disadvantaged areas and face problems of discrimination, poverty and social exclusion usually show higher levels of mistrust and participate less in community-based activities.
- Lack of available free public sports facilities (mostly confronted in Italy and Greece) is considered to be an important obstacle for the youth development and for the aims of the project. In addition to that, some public sports facilities that are run by national or local governments are mismanaged, and as a result, these are hardly ever available for use by the local population. Lack of public space goes hand in hand with the growth of population in the big cities, especially in heavily populated and disadvantaged areas.

FINDINGS FROM THE PUBLIC POLICY WORKSHOP: Issues addressed for discussion

In this part of the Report we will discuss the main points and conclusions that came out from the online Public Policy Workshop titled “Guidelines for the policy decision - making process” which was held on Monday 21st of March 2022. The workshop was facilitated by EKKE researchers D. Kondyli and N. Spyropoulou. Among the participants were representatives from public authorities from the four participant countries, such as a representative from the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum, the vice president of the council of migrants of the Municipality of Naples, the head of the Mayor's Cabinet in Budapest, a practitioner who used to practise football³ with her teams, a teacher school and trainer, a children’s book writer, a sport journalist and social activist and a university professor from the University of Naples.

1. Having in mind the objectives of the Public Policy Recommendation Report, led by EKKE, as well as the objectives of conducting qualitative research by using the method of focus group discussion, we formed a list of five questions, which served as a guide for the discussion. The list of questions focused on the following topics:

a) To think about ways for football3 to be introduced to a policy agenda targeting the social integration of migrant/refugee populations and those most vulnerable and/or disadvantaged b) Actions to be taken in order football3 to be introduced to a policy agenda. Suggestions and propositions about ways each stakeholder may reflect upon and promote the project's broader implementation. c) Ideas and propositions to overcome current difficulties (i.e. state bureaucracy, weak networking, issues of funding, community mistrust) burden implementation. And if it is feasible to think about to what degree and what extent. d) Another issue to discuss concerned a reflection about the main factors facilitating football3 broad acceptance and implementation. e) Another set of questions seek to identify key risk and opportunity variables with respect to: the stakeholders active participation, the building enduring relationships, how the implementation of football3 activities at community level could be the powerful channel of spreading the DIALECT project's message "football for all" and how to conclude with policy creation.

Thus, the findings of the above mentioned five main thematic fields - in the form of questions- that have been discussed lead us to a certain number of factors as well as ideas to build upon.

With regard to the first question, on **how football3 may be introduced to the policy agenda** targeting the social integration of migrant/refugee populations and those most vulnerable and/or disadvantaged, it was stated that there is no common way to achieve that, because different countries present different structures of governance. In addition, there are numerous public authorities involved at different levels with unsimilar strategic priorities and targets. However, given the value of sharing football3 principles, all discussants acknowledged (based on their specific experience or on experiences share by others), that a bottom up approach could in the long term have an impact on centralised policy decision-making.

For example, in the case of Greece, which has a centralised structure of governance, the introduction of the football3 methodology could involve three different Ministries, namely

the Ministry of Sports, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Migration and Asylum. Each of these Ministries have different priorities resulting that, the introduction of football3 would be made possible following the priority level of each Ministry. Furthermore, football3 also involves the local authorities. The commitment of local authorities to facilitate and promote football3 was considered very important. Some participants expressed the opinion that local authorities could more easily adopt football3 in their regular activities and act as agents of change on local level compared to the central government.

A participant from Serbia, very experienced in teaching in school's environment proposed to introduce the football3 methodology to elementary schools by following a bottom up approach. In particular, the idea consisted of putting the teachers at the centre of this adoption, namely that teachers themselves could introduce football3 as an alternative way of playing football, especially in schools where students already play football. At least in the case of Serbia, teachers have the flexibility to change -up to a certain degree- the curriculum, thus, it is not expected that they face any particular difficulties in trying to introduce football3 in schools, in an experimental way. The sharing of the football3 methodology in schools and its acceptance from the children could not only have very positive effects on the pupils, but also it would be expected to create multiplier effects. The first immediate impact should be the change of parents attitude regarding the importance of tolerance towards the others, equal playing among girls and boys, natives and migrants and, in certain cases, as it has been mentioned, accepting the weaknesses of their own children in performing sports or other activities. In parallel, starting with small steps from the students, football3 principles could be adopted by their friends out of school, and finally reach in this way, the broader community. A participant has also mentioned the use of another approach. In Turkey, the introduction of football3 in education has been adopted based on a top down approach. In particular, the Turkish Minister of Education agreed to include football3 in formal education. Following this initiative, Football3 has been officially recognized by the Ministry of Education as an extracurricular activity, which can be used by the teachers in the school.

As to the second topic concerning actions to be taken and ways on **how each stakeholder may contribute to the project's broader implementation**, it was very encouraging to hear that some public authorities have already taken specific steps within their organisations and have also signed the EU Protocol Agreement in order to ensure that football3 will be included in their agenda and it will be promoted together with other actions and initiatives aiming at building inclusive and tolerant communities. For example, the representative of the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum confirmed that football3 will be introduced as an innovative methodology not only in activities addressed to unaccompanied migrant children, but also to actions aiming at integration. In addition, lately, a clear interest in political will has been expressed to collaborate with local municipalities and schools in order to promote football3 nationwide, in all areas supervised by local municipalities these 72 shelters for migrants are situated.

A proposal that came up during the discussion was to raise awareness of the DIALECT project and the Football3 methodology by strengthening the “brand name” of the project. Enhancing visibility of the project should include participation in important events, such as “The International Day of Sport for Development and Peace (IDSDP)”², which takes place annually on 6 April, presenting an opportunity to recognize the positive role sports and physical activity play in communities and in people’s lives across the globe. Other occasions could be the annual celebration day of fight against racism, xenophobia and social exclusion, or the networking with European or international organisations promoting human rights and social cohesion at all levels.

With regard to the issue of dealing with **current difficulties** (i.e. state bureaucracy, weak networking, issues of funding, community mistrust) **that burden the implementation of football3**, a problem that was mentioned by one participant was the lack of funding and the low priority given by the government to the Integration of migrants and asylum

² <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/2022/03/idsdp-2/>

seekers, due to their limited number in the country. However, it was highlighted that the aim of football3 to building tolerant communities and to combating racism and discrimination does not concern only migrants and asylum seekers. It also concerns combating various types of discrimination, accepting diversity and respecting each other. Football3 methodology can well be taught in every school, regardless of the number of migrant children they have.

About the main factors facilitating football3 broad acceptance and implementation, the power of education was often mentioned, with most participants agreeing that the biggest emphasis of all actions should be directed towards education. Educating the educators or training the trainers of children and young adolescents is considered to be very important for facilitating the use of football3 and for broadening its acceptance. Teachers are best to be educated, as they have a multiplier effect, getting around a great number of students, year by year and could promote the methodology of Football3 easily. They also maintain a durable relationship with children and may have an important influence to their perceptions about life, self-confidence, trust in society, acting as an agent, together with their parents. Thus, educators and parents as mentioned previously can be among the driving forces promoting football3 for children and adolescents. In addition, organisation of tournaments between different school classes, but also between different schools can also play a role because of their contact with networks of social actors (teachers, students/pupils and their parents) involved with football3 facilitating broad acceptance and further implementation.

Regarding the final issue to discuss in relation to **identification of key risk and opportunity variables, a number of factors came up especially with respect to the stakeholders' active and meaningful participation.**

According to the participants of the public policy workshop, sports clubs and sport coaches can be considered as a risk variable for the implementation of football3 because of the competition's spirit they bring in the traditional football play. On the contrary, teachers in schools are considered an opportunity for the active promotion of Football3. More

specifically, the experience gained so far, showed that although football3 worked really well to teachers, it did not influence the same way sport coaches. It seems that some difficulties have been depicted for Sport Coaches to integrate football3 in their training, because they are exclusively focused on competitive sports and their ultimate purpose is winning. The attitude of the Sport Coaches and the orientation of the sport clubs makes it difficult for them to integrate football3 in their regular sports activities due not only to their proper attitudes but in relation to their customer's 'will (meaning parents, children, clubs). However, an alternative way to easily contribute to the promotion of football3 would be through sports events and championships. This has been the case in Hungary, where football3 was linked with the European football championship which was hosted in Hungary and was promoted through this.

Another factor related to the Implementation of football3 activities at community level raised two main points that need to be further elaborated with regard to the implementation of football3 activities at community level. The first point was that football doesn't constitute the principal sports activity for many migrant communities, given that some of them are not familiar at all. Taking that into account, it was suggested that through football3 adjusted methodology, practical solutions and ways could be found in order for local and other sports authorities to be able to use the developed methodology and transfer it, also to other sports. The second point referred to the fact that many migrants and refugees experience problems with the official language of the host country. Consequently, playing Football3 they cannot really express themselves nor can they take part in reflecting back. From the other hand, Football3 can also contribute to the acceleration of integration's process and the improvement of local language's skills of migrant children in local communities.

Some other ideas regarding the **spreading of the DIALECT project's message "football for all" as a tool for promoting inclusive education, can be part of** different projects sharing similar objectives. For example, currently a programme is running titled "Schools for all" aiming at the integration of migrant students to schools. Some of the schools that



participated in this project included Football3 in their action plans, as a way to improve the inclusive ethos of the schools.

Popularised publications and advertising leaflets in print copies or in a digital form were also suggested as a useful tool for spreading the message “football for all”. In particular, the production of leaflets or the publication of a picture book for children was proposed as a way for football3 to increase its recognition and to better reach out to children. Indeed, the fact that football3 is targeted to children from different countries with different backgrounds, makes illustrations and visual aids for helping the promotion of football3 principles a meaningful and useful tool.

TOWARDS A ROADMAP of PROMOTING PUBLIC POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND GUIDELINES

This roadmap includes guidelines based on empirical research findings from representative of public authorities as well as secondary sources' information that can promote football3. These research findings have been summarised in the perspective of transferring them to public policy recommendations and guidelines to meet the project's objectives. This way, football3 methodology may contribute in increasing tolerance in the community and to promote diversity and equality through initiatives focusing on youth and sports.

The proposed guidelines mentioned below are indicative and are intended to assist public authorities in the development and introduction of the football3 methodology and for the promotion of football3 and other action plans and programmes.

*** Engagement is a key component to promote football3 to various communities**

-Public authorities should reaffirm their engagement in the goal of preventing and combating intolerance by signing the EU Protocol of Cooperation

In particular, by signing the EU Protocol of Cooperation, public authorities declare their commitment for further elaboration and implementation of *football3 methodology*, in order to prevent and actively combat racism, ethnic discrimination and social exclusion in sport and to support and utilise the inclusive potential of football at local, regional and transnational level.

*** Overcoming Bureaucracy at multiple levels by specific actions is a key-component:**

-Public authorities should find ways to overcome bureaucracy problems in order to deal with inclusive actions: Bureaucracy obstacles in public and government authorities should be dealt with satisfactorily so that the broad implementation of innovative actions, such as the football3 methodology, could be promoted through various initiatives at local level.

***Involvement and networking as key- components should take into consideration the following:**

1. Public authorities should be actively involved in promoting football3

The involvement of officials from public authorities would be a strong asset in promoting the projects' visibility, dissemination of results and broad implementation, especially in countries with a more centralized structure of governance. Active involvement of high-level officials could introduce football3 methodology as a good practice in other relevant and important stakeholders, such as schools and universities and increase its awareness.

2. Public authorities should facilitate access of Football 3 in Formal Education

The role of formal education is very crucial with regard to combating intolerance and xenophobia at local level. The access of the football3 methodology in formal education (i.e. schools) should be facilitated. The methodology of Football3 could evolve into a pedagogical practice and an innovative method of teaching which could be used by every sports teacher at schools, especially in disadvantaged areas.

3. Public authorities should allow the modification of the training curriculum in order experiential learning and non-formal education methods to be included within the frame of formal education

***Establishing links is a key component to meet football's promotion**

4. Public authorities at local level should be responsible for establishing links and work collaboratively with schools and other relevant stakeholders

***Monitor progress to follow progress**

5. Public authorities should monitor and measure progress

The monitoring and the measuring of progress at community level with regard not only to the introduction of Football3 methodology but also to the actual promotion of diversity, tolerance and cohesion in the local population is considered very important.

***Capacity building**

6. Public authorities should develop capacities of key local stakeholders (CSO and civil servants) to prevent and combat intolerance through football3

In particular, educating teachers in schools and in local organisations would create multiplier effects and would increase effectiveness to the aim of building tolerant communities.

***Confidence building**

7. Public authorities should work on building confidence and trust at community level

Actions from local public authorities towards combating mistrust **and** developing bonds with the community and networking with the local stakeholders is considered important and will also help the promotion of football3 in the wider local population. Given that **Football3** is considered a valuable tool to promote self-confidence, trust and safety, it can enable players at early ages to become responsible citizens so as to put values they learn into action and become engaged in their communities. In this perspective football3 can be a critical parameter in order to prevent youth radicalization and engage responsible citizens in the future.



***Necessity of Funding to maintain inclusive actions**

8. Public Authorities should secure adequate funding

Funding is considered very crucial for promoting, supporting and maintaining not only football3, but other activities as well that can be transferred to effective and responding policy measures that aim to create tolerant and inclusive communities. Funding can allow deeper knowledge and capacities by training of local authorities staff to design and monitor examples of combating racism and xenophobia through sports based on community building actions.