

Deliverable D5.3

“ EU Policy recommendations on combating youth radicalisation through community-building football combined with media and digital literacy skills development”

Project Title:

DIALECT 2 “Combating youth raDicalizAtion: Building communities oftoLEranCe combining fooTball with media and digital literacy”

Project number: 101050782

Due date of deliverable:	30/09/2024
Actual submission date:	30/09/2024
Responsible partner:	EKKE
Dissemination level:	Public

Version:	1.0
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“This publication was co-funded by the Erasmus+ Sports programme of the European Commission”

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1. Introduction

1.1 Project's objectives

During the implementation of Dialect 2 project, ActionAid Hellas along with the National Centre for Social Research - EKKE (Greece), ACTIONAID INTERNATIONAL ITALIA ONLUS , OLTALOM Sport Association (Hungary), Football Friends (Serbia), NORSENSUS MEDIAFORUM (Norway) and the Panhellenic Association of Professional Football Players (Greece) have implemented various training activities and awareness actions in order to enhancing adolescents' resilience to extremist views and attitudes related to sports, through media and digital literacy in the context of football3 activities.

To better achieve the project's goals and meet the requirements of the upcoming deliverable on EU Policy recommendations for combating youth radicalization through community-building football, combined with media and digital literacy skills development, a range of primary and secondary sources have been utilized and studied. This deliverable aligns with the actions of WP4, particularly the Needs Assessment report, the findings from workshops conducted by partners—members of Civil Society Organizations in each country—and the research conclusions from the Round Table held during the project's Final Conference on September 16, 2024, in Athens. Additionally, it draws on relevant literature, policy guidelines, and corpora (including documents, videos, and podcasts) from the EU, UN, UNESCO, and other international organizations addressing the project's main objectives.

The literature highlights that political polarization continues to fuel a social environment conducive to racism, discrimination, and intolerance across Europe. Research also shows that social exclusion is a key contributor to these sentiments, with populist groups playing a significant role in amplifying intolerance, particularly among the youth. These groups leverage both physical spaces and digital platforms to recruit supporters, creating a sense of belonging among far-right members who otherwise might feel isolated. Social media, especially far-right blogs, have expanded the connections between supporters, using fear and violence to spread extremist ideologies, often with a religious undertone.

At the same time, football has emerged as a platform for both political activism and efforts to promote diversity and equality. Educational tools have been developed to raise awareness of discrimination in football and to integrate anti-discriminatory practices into its organizational structures. Digitalization across Europe, which accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic, has further complicated the situation. Digital literacy is a growing part of any approach to skills development (Unesco 2021) though many countries have made progress, gaps in digital skills persist, and young people remain particularly vulnerable to online risks, including exposure to discriminatory content.

Radicalisation leading to violent extremism has become a pressing issue in Europe and beyond, as recognized by international organizations like the UN and the EU. Extremist

ideologies, whether based on religious, ethnic, or political grounds, promote the superiority of certain groups and threaten the push for a more tolerant, inclusive society. This presents a dual challenge: addressing violent extremism while managing increasingly multicultural societies. While security measures are necessary to protect against extremism, long-term prevention requires fostering inclusion and tolerance, which can lead to better governance and greater resilience against extremist ideologies.

Within this environment DIALECT2 project and the Consortium initially tried successfully to capitalize on a built inter-ethnic/inter-cultural gender-diverse pool of 500 adolescents at risk of poverty and exclusion, and 20 football3 mediators & trainers as part of project's first phase (2019-2021), aiming to combat youth radicalization combining football3 activities with media and digital literacy. In Dialect 2, the innovative aspect consists of investigating ways to increase awareness and critical thinking regarding media and digital literacy for youth during athletic activities and team play. According to Unesco, Digital literacy definitions usually focus on citizens of all ages and not on children specifically, thus there is a need to focus more on digital literacy for children, who have unique needs. In this area, there is a slow change from a risk and safety paradigm towards rights-based approaches that favour expression, play and development and in this perspective Dialect 2 entered to the core of the current debate on media and digital literacy of adolescents and youth.

Thus, one fundamental question for DIALECT 2 was that of putting in the core of its objectives how we can educate adolescents on how to recognise and be resilient to extremist narratives that promote messages of racism and xenophobia using their own means of communication and everyday practices. Therefore, using football and media and digital literacy training, DIALECT2 aimed to empower youngsters in combating intolerance beliefs and attitudes and form active citizens. DIALECT2 aimed to build communities of tolerance and combat youth radicalization as well as to educate youth on critically evaluating and understanding extremist narratives. The proliferation of Social Media has also created the need for educating youth on how to receive and use them properly. Thus, during the project training activities as well as dissemination activities focused on awareness, aimed to educate youngsters through football and targeted activities on being resilient to extremist narratives and combat racism and radicalization. Through training kit and targeted activities the project aimed to enhance the critical thinking and resilience of adolescents and youth athletes towards extremist beliefs and violent attitudes.

Additionally DIALECT aimed at creating poles of understanding at the local level, empowering adolescents and youth to practice on their conflict resolution skills and promoting social cohesion through the developed capacity of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), sports associations, municipal and public authorities and other local entities. DIALECT2 various activities seek for these groups of people to cooperate on the common ground of promoting the messages of solidarity, the need for understanding and the importance of combating intolerance and xenophobia.

1.2 Literature and policy findings related to other Dialect 2 outcomes

A review of both the most recent policy documents and literature reveals that digital literacy is a complex and somewhat scattered field, where different perspectives coexist. The field is evolving from an operational focus – that is, on technical digital skills – towards more holistic approaches that consider also the cultural and critical thinking aspects of digital literacy. In the area of children's digital literacy, policy, research and practices are converging from a risk and safety paradigm towards rights-based approaches to children's active digital media practices. In fact, research is starting to show that the benefits associated with children's online participation seem to overtake the risks connected to being online (Livingstone et al. 2019).

Whilst progress has been made in terms of international competences' frameworks regarding digital skills, our report on However, the use of international competence frameworks seems not to be adopted within national initiatives, where governments often adopt frameworks provided by commercial actors. Also, a lack of global consensus and standards makes it difficult for governments and other stakeholders to design and implement comparative and cost-effective initiatives, especially within developing countries. A recent study in the field of online safety (O'Neill and Dinh 2018) has demonstrated that policies to support young people's technical skills are well established in almost all European Union countries, while activities to foster critical thinking and evaluating reliability of online content exist in a limited number of EU countries. Some good practices indicatively are the Media Masters initiative in the Netherlands, a project that introduces young people to digital skills through a gamified approach: in 2017, around a third of the total Dutch school population aged 10 to 12 played MediaMasters. In Australia the Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner, developed a one-stop web portal aggregating information on all children's cybersafety national initiatives and programmes, with resources for children, parents and schools (Unesco 2021. Digital Literacy for Children: Exploring definitions and frameworks). It is worth reminding at this point that the concept of competence is understood as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Including a distinction between these three dimensions is particularly important for children, who might have the skills to complete a certain digital task but might lack knowledge about the context and critical approach to performing that task. Also, such a categorisation can help in adapting digital literacy frameworks into educational curriculums, which are normally based on knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The Council of Europe (CoE) uses the term digital citizenship which is referred to competent and positive engagement with digital technologies and data; to active and responsible participation in communities locally, nationwide and globally at all levels (political, economic, social, cultural and intercultural); to permanent lifelong learning process either formal and informal defending human dignity and rights (WP2. D2.3 Tsiganou J, Varouxi Ch. (2022) Enhance Action Plan). For the scope of the present project the "longer definition" provided by UNICEF ¹ was suitably adopted given that DIALECT2 targets developing capacities combating radicalisation and extremism on and off the pitch as well as through on and off line communication and contacts. The definition

¹ Fabio Nascimbeni and Steven Vosloo (2019), Digital Literacy for Children: Exploring definitions and frameworks (Scoping Paper No. 01), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), New York.

refers to media and digital literacy as the set of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that enable adolescents to use and understand technology, to search, manage and critically evaluate information, communicate, collaborate, create and share content, build knowledge and solve problems safely and ethically, in a way that is appropriate for their age and the social environment. It also refers to confidently and *autonomously engaging in play, learning, socializing, preparing for work, and participating in civic action within digital environments*..²

DIALECT2 included the energizing of media and digital literacy skills acting as multipliers of the aims targeted and project’s results on community building in a way where generations may create a ‘world’ which is just, inclusive, tolerant and healthy incorporating relevant values. This way DIALECT’s targets to promote key life skills and empower youth to become leaders as well as to provide both players and mediators with knowledge and life skills, are enhanced. It aimed also to increase participation in ‘mediascapes’ and digital worlds through the ability to search and use media content, critical thinking in order to make informed choices based on the principles of inclusiveness, critical thinking to navigate into mediascapes and digital worlds and democratic participation. In order to achieve its objectives DIALECT 2 acted as a Community of Practice composed of young adolescents involved in football sport, mediators and trainers, youth sports associations, representatives of public sectors in all four countries (Greece, Hungary, Italy and Serbia).



² See Deliverable D2.2 EKKE: *NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT* (2022). Natalia Spyropoulou in co-operation with Tsiganou J. & Tsouparopoulou E., in which indicators have been set up on the concepts ie media and digital literacy skills, Internet and media use, Frequency and devices of use, scope of use (information, communication leisure, learning), ICT Literacy and Information Literacy, Digital Safety and Resilience intercepted by competences on the domain of values and attitudes.

2. Key-issues raised from DIALECT 2 primary sources

2.1 Local workshops of the partners sports associations with Football Academies

The goal of the respective four workshops was to identify anti-radicalization practices and media literacy activities inspired by the **DIALECT2** model, to be integrated into football academies in order to strengthen the critical thinking of young players. The aim was to enhance young people's resilience against extremist and violent opinions through football and sports, involving them in the co-design of action plans adapted to the local context. The discussion was monitored into three phases: an introductory session, a discussion guided by specific questions, and a plenary conclusion.

In this section we underline the main issues raised by the four workshops that took place in the partners' premises in the four countries.

2.1.1 Local Workshop with Football Academies in Greece (Athens)

Action Aid Hellas (AAH) organized a workshop in the premises of the organization Community Centre in Athens with the participation of 11 attendees, including football academy representatives, athletes, sports associations, and CSOs. The key points discussed are related to the 1) **Access and Enjoyment of Sport for All** with three main issues that came up: a) Challenges in Accessing Facilities with participants pointing out the scarcity of available public pitches and stadiums in Athens. It seems that even when spaces are available, access for training, particularly for children, is often difficult due to inconvenient scheduling. b) Inclusion of Migrant Children to the activities often face barriers, such as unequal opportunities in sports participation and championships with mainly CSOs to undertake most of the inclusion efforts. However the degree of success of such initiatives and efforts vary depending on the region. c) A third key issue relies on the inadequate Safety, Security and Maintenance of the facility which can lead to damages and hinders equal usage opportunities.

All participants when referred to **Good Practices and Inclusive Methodologies**, they mentioned a) the methodology of inclusive sport like football³, baskin³, and unified teams (for disabled and non-disabled players), though the implementation is often fragmented and not standardised. b) the importance of Parental and Athlete Involvement because based on their experience guest visits by professional athletes had a positive influence on youth the same way parental involvement in promoting inclusion is also noted as crucial and c) the Challenges faced for integrating these methodologies in academic environments are

³Baskin is a team sport, played by disabled and able-bodied people together. The term 'baskin' is a combination of 'basketball' and 'inclusive'.

acknowledged by all participants, though visits from athletes and specialized courses in higher education are avenues for progress.

The role of **Sport and Media in Counter-Narratives: is seen as** a significant factor in promoting negative stereotypes and fostering racism, particularly in response to refugee crises. Participants suggested showcasing athletes like Olympic champion Emanuel Karalis as a) Positive Role Models for inclusivity. They emphasized on educating youth about critical thinking and responsible media consumption to combat media-driven radicalisation and promote inclusivity in sports, therefore increasing b) Media Literacy.

The Athens workshop highlighted the critical role of local initiatives and collaboration between sports bodies, NGOs, and media to foster a more inclusive and equitable environment in sports.

2.1.2 Local Workshop with Football Academies in Serbia (Belgrade)

The Workshop was organised in the premises of the sports organisation SDCZ . Participants note that all children *need sports and enjoy participating* in them however **Access and Effective Enjoyment of Sport for All** is characterized by a) Disparity in Sports Access. Participants noted that access to sports facilities and equipment is uneven, especially for children from socio-economically disadvantaged families and rural areas mentioning that in Belgrade, playgrounds are accessible, but rural areas face significant gaps. Participants emphasized the need for b) Inclusion Efforts with the involvement of local communities to run free or subsidized programs to ensure all children, including those from migrant backgrounds, can participate in sports. As proposed solutions participants suggested ideas such as mobile sports teams traveling to underdeveloped areas and campaigns raising awareness of children's right to sports were suggested. However, participants recognized challenges in sustaining such initiatives.

When discussing **Good Practices and Inclusive Methodologies in Sport**, participants agreed that methodologies like *football3* and *baskin*, which foster inclusivity by involving children of all abilities, can serve as Inclusive Sports Models. However, practical challenges such as lack of equipment, infrastructure, and long-term funding were noted. There was a strong emphasis on ongoing training for sports professionals to implement inclusive practices given that coaches often focus on competitive sports, making it harder to integrate inclusive sports models. Participants also supported the idea of organizing inclusive tournaments to raise awareness and promote equality, offering opportunities for children from different socio-economic backgrounds to compete together.

The **role of Media in Countering Stereotypes** can be crucial to promote inclusiveness in sports by showcasing positive stories of athletes from diverse backgrounds. However, participants underlined that the media often focuses on negative incidents, perpetuating stereotypes. Educational workshops and media campaigns were suggested to teach young people critical thinking about media content. Encouraging young athletes to create their own inclusive content through social media was seen as a potential solution to positively impact Youth Media Literacy as well as Campaigns and Initiatives. Ideas such as organising

competitions for inclusive media content, creating educational apps for media literacy, and national campaigns to raise awareness were discussed. Overall, the workshop emphasized the need for collaboration between local communities, schools, and sports organizations to create an inclusive sports system.

2.1.3 Local Workshop with Football Academies in Hungary (Budapest)

The Workshop was organised in the premises of Oltalom Sport Association. Participants acknowledged the need for **Access to Sport for All** while they noted disparities in access to sports facilities based on socio-economic, cultural, and legal conditions. In this specific country case study as well public sports spaces reported to be limited and often require fees, which exclude lower-income groups and migrants. They also reported that public pitches exist, but they are often overcrowded and lack basic amenities. Access for all doesn't often apply to all children as refugee children face difficulties in participating in professional sports due to legal documentation requirements. Thus, there is a need for more inclusive amateur sports organizations to bridge the gap between street sports and professional leagues. Additionally, gender barriers can also persist regarding access to sports for girls, especially in at-risk or refugee communities, due to both factors of cultural attitudes and the lack of female coaches.

As to the discussion on **Good Practices and Inclusive Methodologies**, participants agreed that mixed-gender and culturally diverse teams foster peer support and model positive behavior both on and off the pitch. NGOs using sport aim to create a strong community, where players feel safe to keep their tradition but also to try to adjust to their hosting community. Essential part of these processes are the parents, especially in the case of refugee and migrant backgrounds in order to normalise participation in sports. Participants pointed out the lack of infrastructure and training for coaches to effectively integrate disabled children into sports activities and they stated that more training /education for coaches is needed in this area because disability inclusion for sports is not ranked high in the agenda.

The role of athletes has been emphasized for the domain of **Sport and Media in Countering Stereotypes** and suggested that well known athletes should use their platforms to promote inclusion and combat stereotypes. However, creating impactful content for younger audiences is challenging due to the fast-paced nature of social media. Another essential factor is the Critical Media Literacy by teaching youth to critically engage with social media to promote non-discriminatory narratives in sports. Involving professional and Paralympic athletes as role models to foster discussions on inclusivity can get good results too.

All in all, the workshop highlighted the need for better collaboration between NGOs, sports clubs, and local authorities to create more inclusive and accessible sports programs, with a focus on marginalized groups like refugees, girls, and disabled children.

2.1.4 Local Workshop with Football Academies in Italy (Campania region)

The Workshop was organised in the premises of ActionAid Italy in the premises of CONI Campania. The discussion focused on three main topics: **Access to and enjoyment of the right to sports, Innovative practices and methodologies and the role of sports and media in deconstructing stereotypes.** The **access to sports and the effective enjoyment of the right to sports for all citizens** raised some crucial issues regarding economic, cultural, and infrastructural accessibility, as well as the disparities in access to sports for young people, particularly those with migrant backgrounds. The majority of participants highlighted difficulties in finding free and accessible spaces to practice sports, especially in complex urban environments along with economic barriers, such as the high cost of using private sports facilities (that are the majority, due to the shortcomings of the public sector in this field) were identified among the main obstacles. In addition, institutional investment sports initiatives and facilities are inadequate and a synergetic model of private-public sector was proposed. A key point raised during the discussion was that, unfortunately, it is very hard to get access to sports for free. The devaluation of sports in schools, due to a lack of resources and suitable spaces, is seen as a problem that drastically reduces opportunities for young people, and that involves all kinds of institutions. One way to overcome the shortage of sports facilities has been to use school gyms over the years, but at present the situation is worsened by the fact that only 20% of schools are usable and have adequate sports infrastructure. Economic barriers limit many young people with migrant backgrounds to participate in sports activities (lower incomes and, consequently, limited resources to cover the costs of registration, sports equipment, or transportation needed to access sports facilities).

The discussion on **best practices and inclusive methodologies in sports** showed that integrating inclusive methodologies like football3 into competitive settings requires a flexible approach. Taking into account the specificities of each sport and the needs of the participants, some key strategies for applying these methodologies included Coach Training, Self-regulation and Self-control (in competitive settings players can be more involved in defining game rules and resolving on-field conflicts), as well as parents engagement in the inclusion process. The importance of inclusion in sports varies greatly across different sports contexts so as in competitive environments, inclusion is often not considered a priority as in sports at the amateur level.

The **role media plays in shaping counter-narratives to stereotypes in sports**, particularly with regard to inclusion and combating youth radicalization and racism is essential because media has the potential to shape public perceptions by focusing on stories of equality, diversity, and respect in sports. Participants noted that traditional media often prioritizes sensational events or controversies surrounding racism rather than highlighting positive stories that promote inclusion. The media's focus on violence, xenophobia, and aggressive behaviors in sports can contribute to the normalization of these negative attitudes, particularly among young audiences. Participants pointed out that young people, without proper media literacy, may internalize harmful stereotypes. The media's influence can be a double-edged sword—while it can promote inclusion, it can also unintentionally reinforce

discriminatory behaviors if not handled responsibly. Tools like the **Dialect's Toolkit** are practical resources that can foster literacy and promote a non-discriminatory narrative in sports. The need for collaboration between media outlets and sports organizations to ensure campaigns against racism and discrimination are visible and impactful. To effectively combat stereotypes and racism in sports, the media must be used consciously and strategically. The workshop concluded that it is imperative to co-operate all together, communication professionals, sports organizations, families to engage young people and promote an inclusive sports culture.

2.2. Final Conference' s Policy Round table: Key informants views

The Policy Roundtable, titled "EU Policy Recommendations on Combating Youth Radicalization through Community-Building Football Combined with Media and Digital Literacy Skills Development," was part of the Final Conference and took place on September 16th in Athens. Its aim was to leverage the expertise of the discussants to formulate policy recommendations that would strengthen the resilience of European youth and promote more inclusive European societies through sports activities and enhanced digital media literacy. Five discussants from four different countries shared their insights and expertise, responding to questions posed in advance by the moderator, D. Kondyli from EKKE. The panel included experts from various fields, such as sociology, law, sports management, journalism, and ICT, each contributing valuable perspectives to the discussion.

Mr. Dimitrije Sokolovic, IT engineer and member of the Football Friends digital literacy education team

Ms Claudia Gallinaro, Trainer of the digital and media literacy activities (Italy)

Ms Daniela Capalbo, Sociologist, coordinator of Dialect 2 for AAH (Italy)

Ms Gabriella Petróczi, Sociologist and researcher, Oltalom Sport Association (Hungary)

Mr Vedat Sevincer, NorSensus, media expert (Norway) and

Ms Ariana Papagianni, sports journalist at Cosmote TV - ex professional volley player

The suggested topics, framed as questions, aimed to connect the outcomes of the four workshops held in August 2024 with the objectives of the Policy Roundtable. The goal was to translate these discussions into concrete policy recommendations and guidelines that align with and further the project's objectives.

1. Access and effective enjoyment of the right to sport for all (this theme introduces a debate on the different obstacles to access to sport, such as socio-economic, cultural, documentary and legal status conditions. Is it easy to do sport in local contexts? Can everyone play sports at an affordable price or for free? Are there public spaces for play? Do children with a migrant background have the same opportunities as their native peers to participate in sport?)
2. Sport and Media in the construction of counter-narratives to stereotypes (what is the role of the media in conveying inclusion in sport? How does it impacts on youth

radicalization and racism in football fields? What strategies to increase youth media literacy and at the same time a non-discriminatory narrative in sport?)

3. Good practices and inclusive methodologies in sport (this topic introduces football3 and relates it to other inclusive training methodologies that may be widespread in the context of reference, e.g. baskin* or integrated football; it also reflects on the possibilities of spreading these methodologies in academic environments)
4. Prospects for the future: Based on your experience so far, what are the perspectives for the role of sports /activities of your respective organisations to deal with or and/combat the rising of all forms of violence in childhood /adolescence given the broader social conjecture. Are you forced to change the way you work with target groups over the years? Are you optimistic or pessimist regarding the resilience of your organisation and your members (Over the years, your organizations will have to change their methods to remain effective: lowering the Age of Intervention for instance?)
5. The role of state policies and how they could facilitate or support your work?

On the **first topic** centered on access and effective enjoyment of the right to sport , there was a broad agreement on the universal right to access and enjoy sports for all children independently of their socio-economic background, origin and legal status of parents. The obstacles faced include economic, cultural, and infrastructural accessibility, as well as the disparities in access to sports for young people, particularly those with migrant backgrounds. In all countries, public spaces for sports are restrained compared to the demand of the youth population posing barriers to the free access to sports activities. Even though the number of free public pitches are growing in certain countries(ie Hungary), there is still a need to increase the spaces and increase their comfort level and safety, e.g. sufficient lighting, available restrooms, etc.

Concerning young people with refugee or migrant background the lack of legal documents is an additional obstacle that can not be solved easily due to the national legislation as reported by Italian participants. For all countries, bureaucratic conditions can exclude these children and adolescents from the complete enjoyment of the opportunities offered by local football academies and sports associations. For the majority of participants discrimination engenders not only economic aspects but also social and cultural. To address these inequalities, targeted policies are needed to ensure equal access to sports, regardless of a young person's background.

Policy recommendations:

- ✓ **Recognition of sports as a fundamental right**, is an important step towards ensuring equal access to physical activity, health, and social integration for all individuals, regardless of background or circumstances. This acknowledgment underscores that participation in sports is not merely a recreational or leisure activity, but a basic human right that contributes to an individual's overall well-being, development, and dignity. It

could also facilitate the implementation of efficient policies to ensure universal access with budget capacity.

- ✓ **Systematic cooperation** of public sector and private business sports associations to improve sports premises and valorise the available financial resources the best possible way. The Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model proposed by two participants could provide more resources through joint public and private investment, creating a synergy that is often lacking.
- ✓ School facilities and sports equipment are not always adequate or accessible. **Municipalities** should be more actively **involved** in the **participatory distribution** of sports spaces for the benefit of the youth at the school institutions, community centers and every other public space. Available and sufficient spaces destined to athletic activities in schools, is imperative for the students physical and mental well-being.
- ✓ CSOs Sports associations can be a bridge between public and private sectors because schools buildings face scarcity of space for sports and private sports business aim mainly at profitable investments.

On the **second topic** centered on Sport and Media in the construction of counter-narratives to stereotypes they stressed the need to improve media literacy to help young people interpret critically media content, be informed and protected against harmful on line attacks and promote educational programmes and tools like the Dialect's toolkit in order to promote a non-discriminatory narrative in sports.

The **phenomenon/ role of influencers** on social platforms was introduced having both positive and negative impacts as they are not just passive consumers but active participants in shaping media content, trends, and narratives. It has been stated that they can be powerful allies in spreading inclusive, positive messages and holding media accountable, but they can also perpetuate negative narratives, contribute to polarization by the creation of echo chambers, and drive sensationalist media coverage. In many cases, influencers can engage in harmful behaviors such as online harassment and bullying, particularly against athletes, journalists, or organizations that challenge popular opinions or address sensitive topics like racism and inclusion discouraging the media or individuals from addressing online or offline these issues. Influencers' position in the on-line world becomes extremely important and the media must balance catering to followers' interests with ethical responsibility.

The need stressed for promoting collaborations between media outlets and sports organizations to ensure campaigns against racism and discrimination will be visible and impactful. Participants recommended developing media campaigns showcasing good practices and inclusion stories in sports, involving athletes, coaches, and communities.

The **integration of inclusive methodologies** like football3 into competitive settings is not “a remedy for all purposes” but it has to take into consideration the needs of participants, the kind of sport per se, the goals of the organization. It is a methodology that impacts positively for the time being, more sports associations operating at an amateur status. Training of trainers should also be useful at any level of sports associations in order to spread the general equal and inclusive principles of football3 methodology. Some activities

can be progressively modified to include inclusive methodologies, especially those related to the development of social and cognitive skills. For example, team tactical exercises can be adjusted to include moments of self-regulation or reflection, as happens during football3 sessions, without negatively impacting the efficiency of the training even in competitive settings.

The journalist at the Round Table highlighted the media's long-standing gender imbalance, emphasizing that until recently, young girls lacked female role models in sports broadcasting. The presence of women broadcasters is crucial, as they can transmit important values and standards to young girls aspiring to become athletes. As the representation of women in sports media approaches parity with men, a more balanced and inclusive media narrative will emerge, empowering future generations and promoting gender equality in both media and sports.

Policy recommendations:

- ✓ To effectively combat stereotypes and racism in sports, the media must be used consciously and strategically. Media literacy, supported by tools like the Dialect's Toolkit, can help young people become creators and consumers of non-discriminatory content. There is a need for cooperation of all stakeholders involved to engage young people and promote an inclusive sports culture.
- ✓ **To integrate inclusive methodologies** in competitive settings is possible and can be highly beneficial for the growth of young athletes. However, lack of resources, inadequate training, and low awareness of the importance of inclusion in sports and the acquisition of skills in life , poses barriers to the achievement.
- ✓ To overcome these challenges, **a joint effort** is needed from institutions, coaches, families, and the athletes themselves. Coach training must be enhanced to include specific modules on inclusion, and sports facilities should be made accessible and inclusive for all participants. Probably, the point is not even so much to invent methodologies and experiment with practices, but to identify channels through which to introduce different approaches within sports practices that are too competition-based, to the benefit of children's life skills.
- ✓ Media **can be a powerful means** for transmitting messages of inclusion in sports, playing a positive role by sharing success stories that highlight how sports can act as a driving force for change. However, traditional media, such as newspapers and television, often focus on controversies or negative incidents related to racism and discrimination in sports thus media literate youth is crucial.
- ✓ Empower adolescents and youth with informed decision-making and conflict resolution skills, which are critical in combating irrational arguments and stereotypical thinking that can lead to xenophobia in online and offline communities.
- ✓ Empower women and girls to challenge gender stereotypes concerning sports and particularly football, so as to have women broadcasters acting as positive models of life for girls.

3. Guiding Policies principles

In terms of policies and initiatives, digital literacy is high on the agenda of major international organizations such as UNESCO, the European Commission and International Telecommunication Union, mainly targeting citizens in general and not children specifically. However, in recent years the European Union has developed several strategies and legal frameworks to enhance youth digital literacy and develop critical thinking aiming to a more coherent and resilient European society as a whole have been undertaken as follows:

The White Paper on the future of Europe (European Commission, 2017) which emphasizes that *“European values that we hold dear remain the same. We want a society in which peace, freedom, tolerance and solidarity are placed above all else. These values bind Europeans and are worth fighting for.”*

The common objectives for Member States in The Paris Declaration on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education (2015) and especially *“Ensuring that children and young people acquire social, civic and intercultural competences, by promoting democratic values and fundamental rights, social inclusion and non-discrimination, as well as active citizenship”;*

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) General Policy Recommendation N°12 on combating racism and racial discrimination in the field of sport - adopted on 19 December 2008, underlining that *“the fundamental values of sport which include fair play, friendly rivalry, mutual respect and tolerance should be at the heart of any sporting activity; emphasizing that the protection against racism and racial discrimination is a human right, which must be secured also in the field of sport; convinced that the general public should be involved in the fight against racism and intolerance in sport, in a spirit of international solidarity and friendship; aware that sport not only has a role in education and socialization, but that it can also help to explore and celebrate diversity”;*

ECRI General Policy Recommendation N° 15, on combating Hate Speech, adopted on 8 December 2015, *“recognising that the use of hate speech appears to be increasing; stressing the importance of education in undermining the misconceptions and misinformation that form the basis of hate speech and of the need for such education to be directed in particular to the young”;*

Recommendation Rec (2015) 1 of the Standing Committee on Safety, Security and Service at Football Matches and other Sports Events adopted by the Standing Committee on 18 June 2015, recommended member States that *“high priority is accorded to preventing and tackling racism and all other forms of discrimination in connection with football events”;* Further Resolution 2276 (2019) *“Stop hate speech and acts of hatred in sport”* of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) underlined that *“sport should not only be a matter of competition, but also an environment in which people of all origins and walks of life can find common ground and interact harmoniously in diversity”;*

Key initiatives also include the *EU Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020-2025*, which emphasizes the importance of education and digital tools to prevent online hate speech and discrimination. This plan promotes stronger enforcement of anti-discrimination laws and supports the creation of national action plans aimed at fostering equality.

Additionally, the *EU Code of Conduct on countering illegal hate speech online* engages social media platforms to ensure that youth and the broader public are protected from hate speech. 'We need to talk about racism. And we need to act. But we should not stop there. The motto of our European Union is: 'United in diversity'.⁴ The EU has also placed significant emphasis on the role of youth in tackling these issues through initiatives like the *Youth Partnership* between the EU and the Council of Europe. This partnership underscores the importance of digital literacy as a tool to promote intercultural dialogue, social inclusion, and the fight against xenophobia, specifically targeting minority groups such as Roma and migrant communities.⁵

As mentioned above, the European Union places significant importance on developing youth digital literacy and critical thinking skills as part of its broader goals to foster responsible digital citizenship, combat misinformation, and enhance civic engagement. Several key recommendations and initiatives focus on these areas too:

1. **EU Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027):** This action plan promotes digital literacy and critical thinking as essential skills for young people. It emphasizes equipping youth with the ability to critically assess information online, combat misinformation, and safely navigate digital environments. It encourages schools and education systems across member states to incorporate digital literacy into curricula to help students develop critical thinking and media literacy skills.⁶
2. **EU Youth Strategy (2019-2027):** This strategy highlights the importance of fostering digital literacy, particularly in relation to critical thinking, media literacy, and online safety. It encourages young people to engage in civic activities, fight disinformation, and enhance their ability to critically evaluate digital content. The strategy promotes initiatives such as structured dialogue, youth empowerment, and educational programs to increase critical digital literacy.⁷
3. **Media Literacy for All Programme:** This EU-funded initiative supports projects that aim to improve media literacy among young people, helping them to identify disinformation, develop critical thinking skills, and become more discerning digital users. This program often works through partnerships with schools and community organizations to create practical tools and workshops designed to enhance youth's ability to assess online content critically.

⁴ Speech of the President von der Leyen at the European Parliament, 17 June 2020.url:

https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/eu-anti-racism-action-plan-2020-2025_en

⁵ <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/diversity>

⁶ <https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/digital-education/action-plan>

⁷ https://youth.europa.eu/strategy_en

4. **Erasmus+ Programme:** The *Erasmus+* programme also contributes to enhancing digital skills among youth by supporting projects focused on digital literacy, critical thinking, and media literacy. It encourages collaboration between young people across Europe to develop these competencies and apply them to real-world challenges like online safety, combating xenophobia, and engaging in democratic processes.

The *White Paper on Youth Policy* from 2001 is another crucial document, establishing the mainstreaming of youth in anti-discrimination efforts. It led to subsequent frameworks like the *Youth in Action Programme* (2007–2013) and the *Europe 2020 Strategy*, which emphasize empowering young people to participate in education and digital spaces free from discrimination on the EU Portal⁸.

UNESCO and the European Union in particular have also collaborated on various initiatives to promote digital literacy and critical thinking, especially among children and young people. These joint efforts focus on ensuring that young people have the skills necessary to navigate the digital world safely, critically assess information, and engage constructively online.

- **Media and Information Literacy (MIL) Programme:** One of UNESCO’s flagship initiatives, the Media and Information Literacy (MIL) programme, has been underlined as an important initiative by the EU. MIL promotes the critical skills needed to evaluate and responsibly use media. The focus is on building children’s and youth’s capacity to critically assess the information they encounter, reduce susceptibility to misinformation, and enhance understanding of the digital environment. UNESCO and the EU often organize joint training sessions, workshops, and educational resources under this programme.⁹
- **Joint EU-UNESCO Projects on Digital Competence:** The *Digital Competence*

Framework developed by the EU and supported by UNESCO encourages the integration of digital literacy into school curricula. The framework outlines essential skills, including information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, content creation, and critical thinking in digital contexts. By working together, UNESCO and the EU provide educational materials, teacher training, and policy guidance aimed at fostering these competencies in children across various regions. In particular regarding the training needs of project’s participants as far as digital competences are concerned, the Digital Competence Framework for Citizens (DigComp) of the European Commission, has been applied. DigComp identifies 21 key components of digital competencies along the following five areas: ¹⁰ **Information and data literacy, Communication and collaboration, Digital content creation,**

⁸ <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/diversity>

⁹ As stated at the Unesco social media since 2021, more than 1,130 young people have been empowered with Media and Information Literacy skills thanks to workshops organized with national partners as part of @unesco project #SocialMedia4Peace funded by the EU#EU : https://www.instagram.com/unesco_eu/p/C1BBk2IHEF/?next=%2Fftmbksnr%2F&hl=hi

¹⁰ Vuorikari, R., Kluzer, S. and Punie, Y. (2022). *DigComp 2.2: The Digital Competence Framework for Citizens*. Publications Office of the European Union.

Safety of individuals and their devices/ data and Problem solving situations to remain informed in the digital world.¹¹

- **Global Citizenship Education (GCED):** UNESCO's *Global Citizenship Education*

initiative, supported by the EU, focuses on empowering children and young people to become critical thinkers and active digital citizens. This collaboration has led to projects aimed at integrating digital literacy with broader education on civic responsibility, diversity, and tolerance. The goal is to prepare young people not only to participate in the digital economy but also to engage constructively in combating online hate speech, xenophobia, and discrimination.

- **EU-UNESCO Joint Action on Disinformation:** Both organizations are also involved in tackling online disinformation. Their joint initiatives promote educational projects that teach young people how to identify misinformation, especially in digital spaces. The programs aim to instill critical thinking and fact-checking skills from an early age, so children can grow up as discerning media consumers.

These collaborative efforts reflect a shared commitment to equipping children and youth with the tools necessary for responsible digital engagement, fostering resilience against misinformation, and promoting equality and tolerance through critical media literacy .

These policies demonstrate a comprehensive approach, combining legislation, education, and youth-focused initiatives to fight racism and xenophobia, while fostering digital literacy as a critical skill in the modern fight against intolerance. Through this review of initiatives, strategies and legal frameworks, it is imperative to constantly mobilize various actors in the area of sports and youth and implement targeted and efficient measures that respond to the constantly changing societal needs of children and adolescents in our digital era.

4. Concluding Policy recommendations

In previous sessions, we presented key findings from various sources aimed **at enhancing adolescents' critical thinking regarding media consumption, as well as fostering their resilience against intolerant and extremist values.** The target audiences of this project—namely adolescents, football3 mediators, trainers from sports organizations, civil society organizations, local football academies, and youth associations—will benefit from targeted activities co-designed through a participatory approach. These activities will adapt the DIALECT2 action plan to meet the specific context and needs of football academies, with the goal of combating youth radicalization in sports and promoting the values of tolerance and non-discrimination within WP5 dissemination activities.

The present report (D5.3) offers policy recommendations derived from the training, workshops, and activities conducted with these target audiences. These recommendations

¹¹ For a more detailed analysis see in WP2. D2.3 Tsiganou J, Varouxi Ch. (2022) Enhance Action Plan).

aim to strengthen the role of media consumption practices in sports, particularly football, and to promote diversity, tolerance, and non-discrimination through youth-led digital content creation and participation in open football training, tournaments, and local celebration events.

Summarising Policy Recommendations:

- ❖ *Integrating Media Literacy into Educational Curricula:* Given the significant impact sports media have on adolescents, policies should prioritise integrating media and digital literacy into educational curricula. Young people must be trained to critically interpret media content. Media literacy should be recognized as a public right and a core component of school curricula to ensure students become informed and responsible media consumers.
- ❖ *Promoting Positive Media Narratives:* Rewarding sports media outlets for promoting positive messages can have a long-term impact on the quality of media content. This approach encourages responsible media practices that influence adolescents in a constructive way, reinforcing positive values in sports coverage.
- ❖ *Support for Trainers and Sports Mediators:* Public authorities should collaborate with sports associations and civil society organisations (CSOs) to provide adequate training for trainers and sports mediators. This will equip them with the necessary tools to help adolescents navigate safely in the digital landscape and make informed decisions regarding media content.
- ❖ *Recognition of Sports as a Universal Right:* Sports should be formally recognized as a universal right across EU countries, setting the stage for global recognition in the future. This would help to ensure equal access to sports opportunities for all, regardless of background or circumstances.
- ❖ *Influencers Impact on Sports Narratives:* Influencers can significantly shape sports narratives in both positive and negative ways. Adolescents should be well-informed about the potential consequences of following and engaging with influencers, to help them critically assess the content they consume.
- ❖ *Encouraging Synergies and Partnerships:* Policies should promote synergies and partnerships between public and private actors. Collaborative efforts between stakeholders can enhance the effectiveness of initiatives aimed at combating youth radicalization and promoting inclusion through sports.
- ❖ *Raising Awareness on Digital Literacy:* Systematic campaigns aimed at raising awareness about the importance of digital literacy among adolescents are essential. These campaigns should include training courses tailored to their age, interests, and cultural backgrounds, ensuring relevance and engagement.
- ❖ *Enhancing regional, national and transnational cooperation,* joint activities and football events promoting football as “an environment in which people of all origins and walks of life can find common ground and interact harmoniously in diversity”.

These policy recommendations aim to foster a more inclusive and responsible sports environment by incorporating media literacy into education, promoting positive and diverse media narratives, and encouraging collaboration among key stakeholders. By doing so, we can nurture a resilient youth culture that embraces tolerance, diversity, and non-discrimination in sports and beyond. The integration of innovative methodologies, such as Football3, can help implement non-competitive, anti-radicalization practices while building on existing inclusive knowledge and practices.

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