

Activity, Sport and Play for the Inclusion of Refugees in Europe (ASPIRE)

Press Release

ENGSO and key partners launch a new project that focuses on the social inclusion of refugees through physical activity, sport and play

“We aspire after open sports clubs that welcome refugees”

Brussels, 8 February 2017

In the light of the current refugee crisis in Europe, ENGSO strongly holds the conviction that sport can be a unique tool for the social inclusion and trauma relief of refugees. We are glad to have won the interest and support of experts and significant organisations to launch a new pan-European initiative on 8-9 February 2017 in Brussels: the “**Activity, Sport and Play for the Inclusion of Refugees in Europe – ASPIRE**” project.

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union and supported by the European Lotteries Association (EL), ASPIRE could serve as a pioneer in long-term perspective, using the added value of sport in offering a solution for inclusion during and after the settlement of refugees.

ASPIRE has the main aim to offer suitable participation opportunities for refugees in and through sport, physical activity and play. This aim can be best achieved by the development and implementation of a training module that can support people involved in sport to adapt their existing coaching activities to the specific context of the refugees.

The training module will enhance the skills and competences of facilitators in the area of psychosocial support and intercultural learning, and also compile innovative approaches to make sports organisations more open, accessible and inclusive.

The project will start with research, run by the International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education (ICSSPE), on the needs and challenges of refugees and sport organisations, as well as relevant best practice examples.

To base future project activities on underpinning evidence, the research will serve as a basis for the training module that targets people involved in sport (e.g. coaches, project leaders, volunteers), but potentially also PE teachers, as well as social and aid workers and refugees with a sporting background. The training module will be developed with the leadership of ENGSO in close collaboration of ICSSPE, Swedish Sports Confederation, Caritas Academy Austria, German Olympic Sports Confederation and ENGSO Youth.



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The training module will be implemented through the organisation of national training sessions in the countries of the project partners coming from Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, Germany, Greece, Serbia, Spain, and Sweden.

A pan-European conference in summer 2019 will mark the end of the project and disseminate the project results to a wider audience.

Commenting on the project, Project Manager, Heidi Pekkola noted “*We are excited to launch this significant project and work with partners that have vital experience in this interesting but complex matter. Most importantly, we are confident that this project will be innovative as it will be looking at the sensitive issue of war-related trauma relief through sport and play and all activities will be fully based on thorough research. I’m confident that this project will leave a significant social legacy thanks to the work and expertise of the partners and the support of the Erasmus+ Sport programme and the European Lotteries*”.



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