



COunter
Radicalization
PLAY sport

03 - 1.3. Sport Skills for Societal Challenges and Community Resilience

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FORWARD NOTE

By reflecting on some of the most pressing challenges Europe is facing today, we realize the important role of education and youth policies. As sport is a pillar of education, it has to play its specific role in tackling the exclusion and radicalization of young people.

This output represents a Guideline which helps sport organizations to understand their challenging responsibility of addressing radicalization. In this guideline we can find answers to some key questions and issues, such as: why skills acquired through sport reduce the risk of radicalization and social exclusion? How can we improve coaches' capacities to monitor youth at risk of radicalization and take right measures? How can we increase the sense of belonging and youngsters self-esteem through sport thus to prevent radicalization? How can sport help those youth that turn their backs on civic and democratic values, on families and friends, to find their way? Is it sport a tool for urban and social regeneration able to monitor youths drifting to the margins of society, edging closer to radicalization and even violent extremism?

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PROJECT REFERENCE

CORPLAY - Counter Radicalization Play Sport

Erasmus + Programme of the European Union

Lead Partner

KEAN – NGO, Greece

Partners

USMA – Sport Association, Italy

Rosto Solidário – NGO, Portugal

Municipality of Evrotas – European Town of Sport, Greece

Hacettepe University – University, Turkey

Opportunity and Protection Association (Child and Youth) – NGO, Bulgaria



Contents

Abstract	5
Introduction	5
Part I - Investigating (de)radicalization through Sport	7
1.1 Improving coaches’ skills to detect and monitor youth at risk of radicalization	9
1.2 The (often unnoticed) radicalization of the “Majority”	10
1.3 A brief focus on violent religious radicalization	14
1.4 Narratives of individual self-radicalization	15
1.4.1 From exclusion to violent radicalization.....	16
1.4.2 Accounts of de-radicalization.....	17
Part II - Methodology and guidelines to prevent and counter radicalization through sport	20
2.1 CORPLAY methodology	20
2.2 Counter-radicalization and de-radicalization strategies	21
2.3 How to detect radicalization.....	21
2.4 How to cope with radicalization and promote de-radicalization?	22
Conclusions	23
Bibliography	24





Abstract

Since the mid-2000s, counter-radicalization has become a fundamental pillar into counter-terrorism strategies of the EU (Martins and Ziegler 2017). In this Report we explore how, in literature and through stories and interviews collected by CORPLAY, counter-radicalization and de-radicalization strategies can be implemented specifically in grassroots sport organizations. Results show two main dimensions of the problem: on the one side the actors involved in the Project have detected forms of radicalization embedded in sport activities (xenophobia, sexism, homophobia etc.) that are generally ignored by counter-radicalization preventive strategies, for the most oriented on religious violent threats. On the other side, awareness seems to be poor about new specific threats related to terrorism and violent radicalization (including the religious one) and how to detect and counteract them. Finally, this Report designs a methodology for promoting de-radicalization and counter radicalization through sport, starting from encourage inclusive sport cultures and concluding by giving tools for detecting and managing at risk situations of individuals or groups radicalizations.

Introduction

This report presents the results of the first part of the Project “CORPLAY - COunter Radicalization, PLAY sport”, building on the Literary Review and the collections of Stories/Interviews by the partners¹.

The Project has involved five countries - Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Turkey - and has been co-financed by the European Union through the “Erasmus +” Programme in the years 2017-2019. The NGO KEAN (Athens - Greece) has coordinated the activities in collaboration with the following partner organizations:

- Hacettepe University (Turkey)
- Municipality of Evrotas (European Town of Sport – Greece)
- Opportunity and Protection Association (Child and Youth Bulgaria) (NGO Bulgaria)
- Rosto Solidario (NGO Portugal)
- University of Padua
- USMA (Sport Association Italy)

The aim of the Project is **to enhance the role of sport in preventing youth radicalization**, by developing a **grassroots approach** to tackle intolerance, xenophobia and discrimination leading to extremism, **while increasing youth participation in sport**.

¹ The report *O1 - Literature Review* and the report *O2 - Stories / CORPLAY framework* have been published on the website at this address: www.corplay.eu/studies/

In this context the project aims at **understanding** the role of sports in both radicalization and de-radicalization processes and at developing **learning** and **awareness** tools for grassroots coaches, referees, sport managers, physical activity teachers and various stakeholders, while developing a CORPLAY perspective for policy recommendations.

As argued by the **Council of European Union** on the Role of **sport** as a source of, and a driver for, active **social inclusion**, “sport holds an important place in the lives of many EU citizens and plays a strong societal role with a powerful potential for social inclusion in and through sport, meaning that participation in sport or in physical activity in many different ways contributes to inclusion into society” (Council of European Union 2010: 2).

Therefore, **CORPLAY** promotes a “better use of the potential of sport as a contribution to community building, social cohesion and inclusive growth” as well as a narrative platform to counter extremism and protect youth from being involved in radicalization processes.

The following Report (**O3**) is organized in two main sections:

1. Study “Investigating (de)radicalization through Sport”;
2. Methodology and Guidelines elaborated by CORPLAY.





Part I: Investigating (de)radicalization through Sport

Sport has traditionally been considered by sociologists also as a set of *loisir* activities that are able to provide an outlet for repressed aggressiveness, anger and tension (Elias and Dunning 1986).

This role of Sport into western society has been exploited to promote programs aiming at based teaching young people “skills and attitudes that have considerable value in adult life” (cfr. report O1). That’s also one of the reasons that explains why so many sport-oriented youth programs - implemented both at national and international level - are targeting deprived areas or ‘at risk’ individuals in order to contribute to ‘youth crime reduction’ and ‘social inclusion’ strategies (Kelly, 2011; Morris et al., 2003) (cfr. *Report O1*).

In this case, the project started from the question: **why and how skills acquired through sport can reduce the risk of radicalization and social exclusion?**

The analysis of the stories (*Report O2*) confirms what we know from literature: “Sport, like most activities, is not *a priori* good or bad, but has the potential of producing both positive and negative outcomes” (Patriksson, 1995; cfr. *Report O1*).

Various researches have shown how “sport had become a school of sexism, racism and militarism”, but also how “under the right circumstances, with astute leadership, sport can become a favourable ground for change (Kidd, 2010; cfr. *Report O1*).

In the Stories (*Report O2*) we have detected both sides of the coin. A young volleyball player from Turkey (21 years old), for example, has revealed how harassing behaviours were considered part of a routinized sport discipline. In particular, she has even reported abusing behaviour by a coach:

“Physical violence was experienced as follows: heavy physical punishments were given after poorly played matches or mistakes made. Besides, a hundred pages would be written that we wouldn't make that mistake again. In the grassroots level, the coach hit the player's abdomen or forehead. There was no hit for a penalty after the grassroots level, but there were heavy physical penalties”.

In general, we have collected several **pleas for a "cultural change that could help in boosting the role of sport in promoting individual and collective well-beings"**, as a condition to make Sport able to “promote the values of tolerance, equality and social inclusion” (Amateur football player, Male, 18 years old, Italy).

In an interview with two grassroots Sport organization managers (Italy) emerged the same ambivalence of sport cultures: **pressures and extreme competitiveness are considered as potential drivers of a climate of mutual intolerance** among peers, parents, coaches and sport managers, and exacerbate, instead of appease, social or cultural tensions.

Moreover, **racism and sexism can be normalized into male-dominated organizations**. As stressed by a grassroots football coach (41 years, Male, Portugal) trying to face a situation of everyday racism, “this kind of behaviour is somehow of normalized over time”. Paradoxically, as he put it: “making a decision “against” it can be seen by other as very radical”.

The normalization of racism and sexism has been detected both in literature and in the stories, not only for what concern comments and chants of the supporters, but also in the relations among peers, parents or team opponents.

A special focus must be dedicated to the cult of violence that characterize hooliganism, especially related to professional football organized fandom, often related to extreme-right (and less often extreme left), neo-nationalist and racist political radical groups. Hooligan subcultures have become well-established lifestyle and systems of values, as testified by the words of an Italian “ultrà”

“The clash is our drug. The desire to fight with the enemy ... the defence of the territory. The clash is not born from delinquency, but from passion, from the heart. And it must be loyal, it must not be unfaithful. If you're not ultra this thing you'll never understand it. In fact, it makes you sick. Instead, we try to pass it on, along with our values, shareable or not ... this is the life we have chosen” (Masiello, 2010)





1.1 Improving coaches' skills to detect and monitor youth at risk of radicalization

How to detect the signs of radicalization? Talking about 'radicalization' means often to make reference to religious violent radicalism and terrorism. As already mentioned, the working definition used within CORPLAY is much broader and include any form of violent - including racist, sexist, political and even criminal) radicalization by which young people can be affected.

The partners have shared since the beginning of CORPLAY a common framework to think about "radicalization", specifically defined "as the social and psychological process of increasing commitment to extremist political or religious ideology".

The broad and ambiguous object of investigation has favoured different interpretation of what can be considered as "radicalization" by those who have responded to the call for stories, revealing local-specific issues and phenomena related to de-radicalization and counter-radicalization². In this sense, the stories reflect the particular social and cultural issues that can be found at local level and in the different national contexts.

Given that, in all the Countries involved we find two different kinds of stories:

- a) the first relate radicalization to growing and worrying expressions of racism, sexism (check report O2) or other forms of discrimination acted by individuals/group and producing exclusion and marginalization of specific subjects considered as "Other";
- b) the second, less frequent, are first-person narratives in which processes of self-(de)radicalization are narrated by people who claim to have suffered marginalization, humiliations or harassment.

The two kinds of stories are clearly closely related, as perceived discrimination is frequently narrated as potential triggers of processes of **self-radicalization**.

² For the definitions of *de-radicalization* and *counter-radicalization* see:
<https://bipartisanpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/default/files/NSPG.pdf> (page 16)



1.2 The (often unnoticed) radicalization of the “Majority”

As intercepting cases of religious or other extremes forms of violent radicalization can be indeed very uncommon, at least in the contexts involved, most of the respondents and of the interviewed have focused on the problem of inclusion. In this sense, “radicalization” has been most often considered in terms of racism, ethnic discrimination, sexism, disability discrimination. In most of the stories, in fact, the “radicalized” are people or subject that are part of the dominant group in those contexts: males, members of the dominant ethnic group, hosting communities and so on.

In the table below are showed some narratives that give examples of the forms of radicalization detected by CORPLAY.

Type of Radicalization: based on...	Extracts from the stories
Ethnic origin or religion	<p><i>“During soccer trainings I always felt being an integral part of the group. At least initially, I am sure that my skills in the role I played have helped me in building relationships. But in post-matches and after trainings, religion or the different ideas I had compared to the rest of the group, made me often feel often excluded. Moreover, I received racist insults in the pitch during matches.”</i></p> <p>(Soccer Player, Male, 20 Years old, Italy)</p>
Social class	<p><i>“In short, from the very first moment, they were keep making insulting comments about my economic, social and family background, talking in front of me loudly and with emphasis about how warm family they have and how much they were loved by their parents and the gifts that they were buying to them and how they are spending their free time and weekends with their parents</i></p> <p>(Volleyball Player, Female, 19 years old, Greece)</p>
Gender	<p><i>“My friend quit her football career, which she loved and succeeded very much. But she did not stay silent about this incident, and she attracted the attention all of us. We’ve all seen once again how hard it is to be a woman. We chose not to be silent. We moved together, and we did it. I suggest that women who are exposed to similar situations should not remain silent.”</i></p> <p>(Volleyball Player, Female, 21 years old, Turkey)</p>



Body shape and outlook

“From the very beginning, J. was victim of insults because of her body shape and her ungraceful way of approaching the dance. That happened both during classes and in the locker room. She was attacked in particular by the group of the most talented girls, always ready to line up as a group in front of her and laugh at the difficulties she encountered in the discipline. In many occasions, they were discussing about her gender and sexual appearance in presence of J., talking as if she was not there. In particular they could not understand how she could be the way she was, having the body she had. Also, J’s mother was targeted, when, like all the other mothers, accompanied her daughter to classes. In fact, the mothers’ group never tried to include the “gypsy-looking” mother of J.”

(Dance student, Female, 23 years old, Italy)

Disability

“My name is Denis and I have Moldavian roots. I emigrated with my mother to Italy when I was 14 years old. After I arrived, to feel part of the community, I decided to participate in school sports. The radicalization that I felt immediately concerns two aspects of my life: my disability and racism for my origins.”

(Athlete, Male, 23 years old Italy)

As we said, in most of these cases, “radicalization” seems to be interpreted by people interviewed as an attitude present among dominant groups (ethnic majority, national majority, males, white people, able-bodied people, and heterosexual people) when they try to marginalize, exclude, treat as inferior or humiliate people considered as different.

In literature these behaviours are framed as visible signs of more deep and invisible types of “structural violence” or “cultural violence” (Galtung 1996)³. Moreover, these behaviours get often unnoticed or minimized by members of the majority as they part of shared values and attitudes. Coaches, sport managers, parents and athletes should be aware of the different meaning that mocking and insults based on gender, religion, ethnic, social or cultural background have for people belonging to the dominant groups and people belonging to minorities.

³ Galtung argues that behind the most direct and visible forms of violence we can trace a) “structural violence”, that consists in less visible forms of violence, based on existing conflict or distinction between individuals/social groups (e.g. any type of discrimination in terms of gender, racism, ethnicity, hooliganism, militarism etc.); and b) “cultural violence”, also considered rather invisible, as it is embedded in attitudes, feelings, values expressed through countless means (such as political ideology, religion, racism, symbolism, other forms of unethical behaviours such as violation of the rules, doping etc.) (cfr Report O1).



As stated by a coach:

“It was not easy to solve the situation because this kind of behaviour is kind of normalized over time. In addition to that, making a decision “against” it can be seen by other as very radical. Other challenge is to deal with family members when they do not understand the situation and eventually share the same violence triggers”.

(Soccer Coach, Male, 41 years old, Portugal)

Often, coaches or Physical Education teachers interviewed under CORPLAY Call for Stories were able to detect this form of routine discrimination only when it led to violent reactions. In a few cases, insults and mocking were recognized as trigger events in the process of “radicalization” of people belonging to social, cultural or ethnic minorities.

Moreover, as mocking and insulting are frequently narrated as strategies to make the opponent nervous - for example in football matches - players, coaches, parents and managers find quite difficult to trace a clear line of tolerability regarding harassment and discrimination. Some have reported how racist, sexist and homophobic comments can be re-framed, in competitive situations, as not-significant provocations, as showed by the following extract from the stories:

“The situation was managed by the coach who, according to the story told by the player, before the training analysed the dynamics of the episode, stressing the fact that the insult received by the player was to be considered only as a provocation intended to unnerve and distract him. He invited the boy not to give importance to such episodes and words”

(PE Teacher, Female, 56 years old, Italy)

Although the coach’s strategy to cope with this situation can be explained by the need to calm down the player and prevent violent reactions, it should also be emphasized how the discrimination experienced by the players belonging to cultural minorities can become invisible and considered as not relevant.

In fact, the radicalization of people belonging to a majority (national, ethnic, religious or in terms of gender and sexual orientation) seems to become evident only when leading to political extremism, as in the following example:

“My story concerns one of my teammates from the previous team in which I was playing for. We were at the same age and, in the beginning, we were spending a lot of time together not only during the training sessions but also after them. He always wanted to know and understand everything around him, about



society but also humanity and he was searching through web, reading and discussing about social and political issues. At some point, I also realized through our conversations that he was coming from a nationalist family. Over time, he started to express a lot of enthusiasm about fascist movements and he was saying things like “People are killing the ideal of a free and strong nation”, “Our nation is unique, precious and superior, that is why we should fight for it and protect it”, etc. Gradually, he started being verbally violent towards others and especially towards people with different national backgrounds and people who were strongly disagreeing with his extreme points of view.”

(Professional Football Player, Male, 28 years old, Greece).

The more social and cultural hierarchies are given for granted the more discrimination do not need openly “extremist” attitudes to be enacted. A good example is the exclusion of women by sport or by specific activities (such as soccer), based on the shared idea about what is fitting to each gender.

“As you know, football is perceived as a game for men but more women are starting to play as well. Every year there is an inter-school football tournament in our town. In the last two years we have also included girls' teams. Both boys' and girls' matches were running at the same time. My team qualified for the final. During our final match, boys from another team in the tournament started to insult rudely the players on the field. They were shouting, “You are very funny, you cannot do anything, football is not a female game, shame and disgrace for football, go taking pictures for Instagram and do not deal with men's things.” Their coach did not react. The tension on the field was great, after all it was the final. These insults further exasperated the girls”.

(Football Coach, Male, 36 years old, Bulgaria)

For what concern ethnic discrimination, the stories show an **over-representation of Roma people among the subjects discriminated** (cfr. *Report O2*). This confirms what various researches have documented at European level (European Commission, 2015) that is how Roma people experience the highest level of prejudice and discrimination among every ethnic minority.

Also in these cases prejudice is so strong and naturalized that discrimination behaviours become invisible at the eyes of the peers and of the coaches, as evident in the next example taken from a story about the discrimination experienced by a young dance student with a Roma background:

“J. has found a hostile environment starting from the very first class. She was looked at and criticized for her different appearance. Her way of dancing was not appreciated both by the students and by the teacher. No one, in this context, has ever tried to interact with her or to know her better, going beyond the way she



showed herself and danced. The sport environment in this case was the first excluding the girl. Pupils and teacher were united in excluding the outsider in every single lesson. The questionable and unprofessional behaviour of the teacher made easier, for the other girls, to feel comfortable with their behaviour also outside the classroom, in the dressing room”.

(Dancer, Female, 23 years old, Italy)

In some others cases discriminatory attitudes are not shared by the majority and are therefore more easily detected, also because discrimination happens in very open and violent ways.

“Handball is a team sport where there are many athletes of different age, different religions and different ethnic groups. A girl came to the team - Iva, who I later learned was brought up to hate Roma people, to escape contact with them, and believed that all Roma are bad. Four-five Roma girls trained in the same team. In the beginning, Iva was silent and avoided these girls, but then she began to express hostility towards them. If someone had to give her the ball or touch her, she was getting angry and called them "dirty gypsies," "do not touch me, I do not want to be in a team with you". The Roma girls did not cause these reactions, but she started to get worse with them and even hit and beat them.”

(Handball Coach, Female, 40 years old, Bulgaria)

The next example shows how the intervention of the coach allows affording the difficult topic of racism (“how to explain that to young children?” - says a mother), but also how to recover the “racist girl” to the group was a goal apparently out of reach. This is an important point to stress, because if the aim of the Project is also to promote (de)radicalization and not only to tackle discrimination.

“The teacher understood that he had to intervene to unite the elements of the team, so he decided to do a lesson to explain how sport unites all the peoples of the world and showed the various champions of each race. In the end, the lady's son was isolated and they did not come to Karate anymore”.

(Athlete Mother, Italy)

1.3 A brief focus on violent religious radicalization

We are aware that using the category of “radicalization” without specifications can be misleading. This is the reason why we dedicate a specific paragraph to violent religious radicalization. All the



stories, but one, do not mention this kind of radicalization. Here we report an extract of a story that has detected this kind of radicalization:

“I am a teacher in a school where there are children of Roma origin only. The students love football very much and prefer it in the lessons in physical education. They once asked whether they could play another game. I allowed them to play the game and only watched them. I was even glad that the initiative was theirs. I was surprised at what happened. They split into two groups. The boys in the first group were pretending to shoot against the others who were falling on the ground - "killed." Those who shot were shouting loudly "Allah Akbar". At that moment I was startled and remembered something I had noticed before, but I did not pay attention to it. I had seen the same guys wrap checked scarves-like turbans on their heads. At that time, I thought it was fashion. I stopped the game and called the children to sit around me. I asked them from where they knew this game and who told it to them. They said they play this game because they are Muslims, Islam is the only right religion, and Christians are unbelievers. They also added that it's an honour for everybody to defend his faith.”

(School teacher, female, 50 years old, Bulgaria)

Although uncommon, this story makes clear how children, parents, sport managers, coaches and teachers need up to date tools and capacities to face these new potential phenomena.

This story shows a worrying situation, although quite uncommon if we consider that the most dangerous violent religious radicalization pattern detected in the last decades in Europe are characterized by “mimicry, concealment, miniaturization, solitary activation” (Guolo, 2018, p.32).

1.4 Narratives of individual self-radicalization

So far, we have detected and explained examples of structural and cultural violence that can be broadly related to the “Majority’s radicalization” and that become visible in insults, mocking or in other forms of marginalization.

Now, we consider cases of individual radicalization, often narrated as reactions to marginalization and violent discrimination. In general, coaches and sport managers detect cases of extremely aggressive behaviours enacted by marginal young people.

Coaches and sport managers, interviewed under the Call for Stories, mention to have difficulties in implementing effective strategies to cope with “at risk” boys/girls, considered the limits of grassroots sport organizations.



We know how sport has been historically exploited in strategies of social inclusion and youth crime reduction. However, recent studies have showed also how these kinds of programmes find difficult “to ‘include’ the most challenging youth groups” (Kelly, 2011: 134).

These considerations make evident how important is to give coaches and managers the right skills in order to make sport a means to increase the sense of belonging and self-esteem of youths of to help youths “to find their ways”.

1.4.1 From exclusion to violent radicalization

Let’s see now how people have told stories about (self)radicalization. The script of these stories is rather coherent with what can be found in literature: in both cases radicalization is at least in part related to subject’s perception of being “rejected, divested of control”, “victims of injustice” and “disrespected” (Kruglanski et al., 2009; 2013).

Those feeling are considered in literature as potential drivers of radicalization, as some individual can, through political or religious radicalization, find a way to “restore their sense of self-worth and meaning and will be more likely to engage in extreme violent behaviour (Kruglanski et al., 2009, 2013) (cfr. *Report O1*). The next is an exemplary story narrated in first person, in which the sense of being excluded both by the team and by society drives towards some sort of desire of radicalization:

*“All my teammates were behaving formally towards me, especially when the coach was present and when he was absent, most often, they were not even talking to me. During and after break time, the trainings and the tournaments they were always hanging all together but never with me and they were obviously ignoring and avoiding me; I felt that I was completely in the wrong place in the world and different from other people, not accepted as I am. I started having questions about myself, about the other people, my teammates, the society. **I felt that I was not a member neither of this team, nor of this society.** So I was desperately starting seeking to meet people who will have the same thoughts, beliefs and questions.”*

(Football Player, Male, 32 years old, Greece)

Signs of exclusion can be detected not only during games and trainings, but also beyond it. An important factor is played by informal groups formed outside the pitch.

In the next example, discrimination didn’t happen at school, maybe because the set shared common rules was a mitigation factor, but did happen after school in informal situations:



“Consequently, we stopped playing football after school and we were only playing during gym class and school hours, where all tension was transferred and was obvious both to the rest of the school students and the teachers. I realized that the situation was very serious when we started planning to do bad things to the children that were treating us like that, like stealing or beating them. We were planning to ambush the children and recover justice.”

(Football Player, Male, 20 years old, Greece)

The common frame in these narratives is the will to “recover justice” that feeds a vague resentment toward those people seen as enemies as they are perceived as members of the dominant group. This is particular clear in the next quotation from the stories:

“At one point, I actually thought that it would be better if I also find some other young people, with similar experiences, that are willing to administer our own form of justice. So, I started searching in forums, where different people were expressing their opinions, beliefs and life experiences and I was chatting and aiming to meet face-to-face with whoever was matching this profile”.

(Volleyball Player, Female, 19 years old, Greece).

All narratives related to (self)radicalization can be framed in the **search of meaning and identity**, the recovery of self-esteem in front of perceived marginalization.

As noted in literature, these feelings are often also related to the sense of eradication related to the experience of “double absence” lived by “second generations” or young immigrants.

1.4.2 From radicalization to de-radicalization

In two stories collected the process of de-radicalization is narrated in first-person. The positive outcome is related to the intervention of a family member, coach or peer that has recognized a potentially dangerous situation and has faced it.

The first case concerns a girl who felt discriminated and isolated because of her social and family background and who wanted to re-establish “justice” with violent means.

“Lucky for me, my brother who was two years older than me and very mature, had noticed all the change in my behaviour and had his eyes on me. So, one day he sat down and discussed with me. I told him everything; I described every single incident with great detail, as well as the behaviour of my teammates



and the attitude of our teacher. I also expressed to him my beliefs and that from now on I had to deliver justice since our teacher was not reacting. My brother advised me and made me see that this was not the right way to handle and control things. At the same time, as he was too worried about me, he also informed our grandmother about the situation, because as our guardian she should also acknowledge the facts. That period, my brother was constantly around me, hanging out and spending lots of free time with me, in order to make sure that I have left all these behind and I was thinking straight. If it weren't him, things would have gone and ended pretty badly, since usually anger urges to harm others or ourselves."

(Volleyball Player, Female, 19 years old, Greece).

A similar "happy end", in terms of de-radicalization, can be found in a second personal account, provided by a young Roma boy who wanted to react in a violent way to the discrimination he has suffered:

The teachers started realizing that there is a problem and one of them approached me and we started discussing. The discussions became more often and I started realizing how serious the situation is. In the meantime, the teacher had also discussions with all the involved children. (...) I believe that we would not be able to cope with this situation if we did not have the support and guidance of our teacher, whose advice was significant and useful.

(Football Players, Male, 20 years old, Greece).

In this case, a young immigrant boy has looked for "justice" by hanging out with a group of people "presenting an aggressive behaviour towards the rest of the people and society".

"During this period, I just happened to meet the friends of one of the guys I used to work with and we started hanging out and spend our free time together. As time passed, we were having in-depth conversations where I realized that we were sharing the same thoughts, beliefs and feelings. I started feeling that I belong somewhere and that there were people who understand me. They were having and expressing extreme beliefs, thoughts and ideas and they presenting an aggressive behaviour towards the rest of the people and society. At some point I also realized that things were going a little weird, so I started discreetly to avoid hanging and going out with them. Back then I did not exactly realize what was going on and I was just thinking that eventually we were not matching, but now that you explained to me about radicalisation and we are doing this interview, I realize that I was entering the process of radicalisation and how much more they were. I have no experience or knowledge on the topic of radicalisation."

(Football Player, Male, 32 years old, Greece)

This last story shows how de-radicalization can be difficult to achieve once that new social relations are binding the subject involved.





Part II: Methodology and guidelines to prevent and counter radicalization through sport

The first part of this Report (Study) has been dedicated to the main problems encountered in the Countries involved in this Project, with a focus on the types of violent radicalization detected and reporting real-life example taken from the stories and the interviews collected.

In the second part, we outline the general CORPLAY strategy to counter radicalization through sport, producing inclusion and integration of young people into society. The methodology and the guidelines have been designed based on evidence built under this project and intersecting the results of output *O1 - Literary review* and output *O2 - Stories* of the CORPLAY project and taking in account existing recognized toolkits.

2.1 CORPLAY methodology

CORPLAY aims at promoting a bottom-up approach in two ways:

- a) Involving grassroots sport organizations;
- b) Giving importance to locally produced knowledge and experience about violent radicalization.

CORPLAY aims at **promoting an inclusive approach** that could possibly allow to de-radicalize youths, rather than exclude them from sport organizations.

CORPLAY aims at **promoting a European framework**, taking in account that in different Countries and social context the concept of “radicalization” assumes different meaning and is referred to various phenomena.

Finally, CORPLAY aims also at **promoting new and sustainable sport cultures** to be spread also among different sport organizations.



2.2 Counter-radicalization and de-radicalization strategies

Counter-radicalization and de-radicalization refer to different actions. The United Nations Working Group on Radicalisation and Extremism that lead to Terrorism, defines counter-radicalization as “a package of social, political, legal and educational and economic programmes specifically designed to deter disaffected (and possibly already radicalised) individuals from crossing the line and becoming terrorists” (Butt and Tuck, 2014: 3); while de-radicalization programmes are “generally directed against individuals who have become radical with the aim of re-integrating them into society or at least dissuading them from violence”. In other words, counter-radicalisation is more about prevention, while de-radicalisation aims at recovering individuals and helping them to refute extremist ideologies (Ibidem). In order to make sport organization places where to counter-radicalization and promote de-radicalization it is important to provide managers and coaches, but possibly also parents and kids involved in the activities, up to date tools for detecting and counteracting cases of violent radicalization. The experience of CORPLAY has shown also how, as already highlighted in other works on the same topic “that counter- and de-radicalisation policies and programmes cannot simply be transplanted from one country to another, even within the same region.” (cfr. Butt and Tuck, 2014). Any training or strategic action proposed must therefore be local-sensitive.

2.3 How to detect radicalization

Here, we provide some example of processes that can be considered as critical marks in detecting radicalization:

- a) Sport organizations informally accept their members in function of their political, religious or sexual orientation;
- b) Friendships and informal networks, into a team, are formed following rigid criteria based on nationality or religion, systematically although informally excluding minorities;
- c) Among peers and parents sport antagonism is expressed using racial, gender or political-related insults adopting and normalizing sexist, racist, xenophobic or radical religious vocabularies;
- d) Sport organizations are used as a “reservoir” for actions of proselytism by radical nationalist or religious organizations.
- e) People who have suffered marginalization (or think to be discriminated) abandon the team, join radical informal groups, also a-political or a-religious, or use sport to express extreme aggressiveness;



- f) Coaches and managers impose a highly authoritarian sport ethos asking for extreme forms of subjugation to the athletes.
- g) In changing rooms or during matches some people are systematically labelled and excluded because of their national, religious or social belonging.

2.4 How to cope with radicalization and promote de-radicalization?

Local municipalities and institutions are invited to build a social strategy involving grassroots sport organizations and building networks aiming at monitoring potential critical situations.

Training should be provided specifically to coaches and sport managers, in order to spread common vocabularies and frameworks, following the main international and EU guidelines.

Training should aim at:

- a) Spread up to date knowledge: radicalization does not exist in generic terms. There are various and changing forms of violent radicalization, with specific vocabularies, distinctive signs and forms of development;
- b) Coaches and sport managers should be trained about the main risks present at local, national and European level;
- c) Valorise the coaches' pedagogic role: they are able to detect, from their privileged standpoint, symptoms of uneasiness, situations of discrimination and isolation and violence that could be invisible to other adults, parents included;
- d) Promote a holistic approach to disseminate in sport organizations the European values of civic cohabitation and equality among differences, to fight the normalization of cultural violence in sport languages and practices;
- e) Make sport operators aware of the new forms and channels followed by violent radicalization, more and more invisible and acted through the web.



Conclusions

Considered in the broader sense adopted by CORPLAY, processes of “radicalization” are quite common among youths and teenagers. Taking extreme political or religious positions driven by intransigent ideals, adopting self-damaging or extremely deviant behaviours, assuming drugs, choosing to withdraw from society or acting violence against oneself or the others are some well-known examples (Maggiolini e Di Lorenzo 2018). Youths are very often the most common perpetrators as well as victims of violent behaviours, included practices aiming at marginalize or discriminate. Youth subcultures are often characterized by a search for radical extremism. Stories and interviews collected by CORPLAY give many good examples of these dynamics in sport settings. Sometimes, violence is institutionalized, as in organized fandom, sometimes is also part of everyday practices, embedded in insults, mocking etc. In this sense, the various “sport worlds” can be considered as mirrors of the societies in which they are embedded. Into the sport field we can detect the same phenomena that characterize the broader society: such as political, religious, gendered, homophobic or other forms of social and cultural violent radicalization.

On other side, the relevance of sport in western society, and the amount of people freely involved in sport activities, make reasonable to assume that grassroots organizations have a relevant social responsibility into society. Sport is able to make interact people that otherwise would hardly meet, because of different social, cultural, political or religious backgrounds. One of CORPLAY goals is to make sport grassroots organizations aware of their social role, relevance and responsibility. Sport in all its declinations is able to involve, engage and excite youths, athletes and fans. A second aim of CORPLAY is using the sport appeal among youths to include, unite and integrate people, promote a culture of mutual respect, or even to channel the most violent and prevaricating impulses within “the rules of the game”. Finally, the third and specific aim of the CORPLAY project is to make sport crucial in counter radicalization and promote de-radicalization, specifically new political and religious ones. The Methodology and Guidelines provided are therefore designed for promoting de-radicalization and counter radicalization through sport, working on the potential causes (such as discrimination, racism, etc.) and providing practical tools for detecting and managing at risk situations.



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