ID TALKS!

This ID Talks series will look into the concept of social sport - what it means, why it is important and how it promotes inclusion, social cohesion and skills development.



ID Talks:

SOCIAL SPORT
SPORT IN THE CITY
SPORT THROUGH CIRCUS
SPORT FOR INTEGRATION
SPORT FOR LGBTIQ+ INCLUSION

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EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS | Erasmus+

ABOUT SALTO

...'**S**upport and **A**dvanced **L**earning and **T**raining **O**pportunities within the Erasmus+: Youth in Action and European Solidarity Corps programmes'. The European Commission has created a network of seven SALTO-YOUTH Resource Centres to enhance the implementation of the EU Erasmus+: Youth in Action and European Solidarity Corps programmes, which provide young people with valuable non-formal learning experiences.

SALTO's aim is to support the implementation of the European Erasmus+: Youth in Action and European Solidarity Corps Programmes with regard to priorities such as Social Inclusion, Diversity, Participation, and Solidarity. SALTO also supports co-operation with regions such as EuroMed, South-East Europe, or Eastern Europe and The Caucasus and coordinates all training and co-operation activities, as well as information tools for National Agencies.

In these European priority areas, SALTO-YOUTH provides resources, information, and training for National Agencies and European youth workers. Most of these resources are offered and disseminated at www.SALTO-YOUTH.net. Find online the European Training Calendar, the Toolbox for Training and Youth Work, the database of youth field trainers active at the European level (Trainers Online for Youth or TOY), links to online resources, and much more.

SALTO-YOUTH actively co-operates with other actors in the European youth field, among them the National Agencies of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes, the Council of Europe, the European Youth Forum, European youth workers and trainers, and training organisers.

THE SALTO-YOUTH INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY RESOURCE CENTRE WWW.SALTO-YOUTH.NET/INCLUSION/

The SALTO-YOUTH Inclusion and Diversity Resource Centre (based in Belgium Flanders) works together with the European Commission to support the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities in the Erasmus+: Youth in Action and European Solidarity Corps programmes. Through that, it works to contribute to social cohesion in society at large. SALTO Inclusion and Diversity also supports the National Agencies and youth workers in their inclusion work by providing training, developing youth work methods, disseminating information via the newsletter, etc. By offering opportunities for training, exchange, and reflection on inclusion practice and diversity management, SALTO Inclusion & Diversity works towards the visibility, accessibility, and transparency of its inclusion & diversity work and resources, and towards making 'inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities' and 'positive diversity management' a widely supported priority.

For more information and resources, have a look at the Inclusion & Diversity pages at www.SALTO-YOUTH.net/Inclusion/

DISCLAIMER

This magazine contains pictures as a result of the Graphic Recording which is an integral part of all the ID Talks events. There are four types of styles throughout the whole magazine.

- **General Cover Picture**. It is used for promotional reasons throughout the social media channels and the dissemination materials and it depicts the logo of SALTO Inclusion & Diversity, the title, and the graphic elements of each version of the ID Talks events. It is displayed as a cover picture of each ID Talks version.
- **Portrait of Speaker**. It depicts each speaker and a few graphic recording elements such as written parts of their "speech" and/or any other graphics according to the style of each ID Talks version. It is displayed on top of the speaker's description page.
- **Main Graphic Recording Card**. It is used for promotional reasons throughout the social media channels and the dissemination materials and it depicts the logo of SALTO Inclusion & Diversity, the title, and the graphic elements of each version of the ID Talks events, including the specific name of the event, the portrait of the speaker, written quotes of their "speech" and/or any other graphics. It is displayed on top of the first page of each article.
- **Graphic Recording Elements**. Throughout each article, the graphic recording elements complement the text with essential parts of each speaker's "talk".

I & D Talks
“Social Sport”

What is it all about?

“ID Talks” is a series of 5 online workshops on 5 major topics to promote inclusion & diversity (ID) and quality youth work. It features youth workers, professionals and volunteers, from all over the world to share insights, research findings, food for thought, good practices or inspirational stories. They will guide participants through the pressing matters and challenges affecting Inclusion & Diversity and inspire them to make their programmes and organisations more inclusive, embrace human differences, look ahead and picture how the future of youth work and Inclusion & Diversity might be.

Each workshop begins with an input from a guest speaker. Afterwards, participants have the opportunity to engage in the discussion, ask questions and share about their own realities and experiences.

For whom?

- Youth workers, youth leaders, professionals and volunteers involved in ID in the EU youth programmes, as well as all those interested in youth work and inclusion & diversity topics.

Why should you join?

- Get food for thought and learn from inspirational ID stories.
- Learn about ID topics from the youth work sector and beyond.
- Get information, inspiration, methods to help the youth sector address ID.
- Put some more quality in your (international) youth work.
- Identify and learn how to tackle existing and future challenges within ID.

Event Dates:

- 9 September (13h CET) > **ID Talks Social Sport** - What is social sport? What are its most important elements and what can it achieve? How can social sport boost inclusion? How does it link to youth work, to developing identities and communities and to active participation? What are the youth and sport strands of the Erasmus+ programme and what is the YouSports National Agency cooperation in brief? In this opening talk, we will be setting the scene for the "social sport" season of ID Talks, creating a common understanding of important notions and frameworks. Guest speaker: **Oscar Coppieters**, City Pirates, Belgium.

- 23 September (13h CET) > **ID Talks Sport in the City** - How to reach out to young people and bring them on board? What methods could be used to engage youth in skills and project development? How does sport help young people unlock their potential? Why is it important to have meaningful collaboration with the business sector? And what opportunities can national policies on social sport provide? Join us to discover the stories of Sport dans la Ville about social sport in disadvantaged urban areas. Guest speakers: **Pauline Le Dizes & Mohamed-Aziz Arafa**, Sportdanslaville, France.

- 7 October (13h CET) > **ID Talks Sport through Circus** - What is social circus and how can it become a safe space for people with fewer opportunities, especially in conflict areas and devastated communities? What is the public perception of social circus and how can you go beyond circus clichés or negative stereotypes? What impact does it have on young people and the wider community? In this talk, the Palestinian Circus School will share about their social programme that uses social circus to engage marginalised groups, such as women and people with disabilities. Guest speaker: **Mohammad Rabah**, The Palestinian circus school, Palestine.

- 21 October (13h CET) > **ID Talks Sport for Integration** - Why is sport a good tool for integration across cultures, countries and continents? How can sport serve as a universal language for communication? What is the added value of using Erasmus+ and working on this topic internationally? What are the main challenges and key outcomes? In this talk, we will learn about the projects of V4Sport Foundation and how they use sport to engage the most vulnerable groups, such as young Ukrainian refugees, in the local community in Poland. Guest speaker: **Jakub Kalinowski**, V4Sport Foundation, Poland.

- 4 November (13h CET) > **ID Talks Sport for LGBTIQ+ Inclusion** - How can social sport help in creating safer spaces? How can sport be used to combat discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity (SOGI)? What are the benefits for LGBTIQA+ people, as well as the wider community? What are the possible challenges? This talk will highlight tools and activities by LEAP Sports Scotland where social sport is used for greater inclusion of queer people. Guest speaker: **Hugh Torrance**, LEAP Sports, Scotland

Sport for Integration

Why is sport a good tool for integration across cultures, countries, and continents? How can sport serve as a universal language for communication?

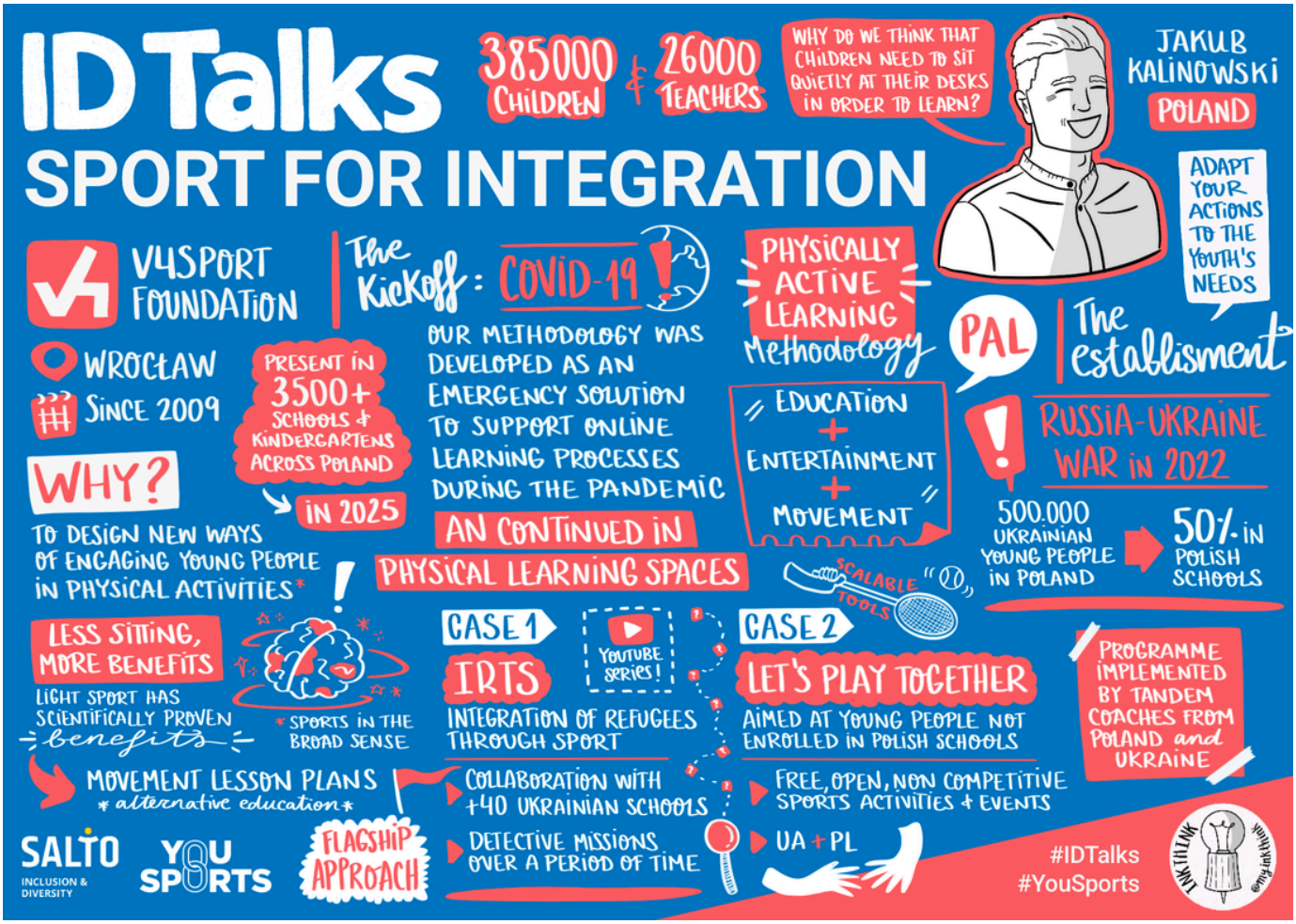


GUEST SPEAKER: JAKUB KALINOWSKI

Jakub Kalinowski is an expert in designing scalable, innovative programmes that use sport and physical activity to prevent sedentary behaviours and support the physical and mental well-being of children and young people. As President of the V4SPORT Foundation, he has led numerous internationally recognised initiatives combining physical activity, education, technology and storytelling. His work focuses on creating inclusive opportunities for children from different backgrounds, including refugee and migrant children, as well as children with different physical and cognitive abilities, using sport as a tool for connection, participation and belonging. He is the co-founder of Akademia Krokieta i Lamy, the first Polish initiative to win the European Commission's #BeActive Award in the innovation in education category. Among his recent projects is Let's Play Together, an initiative recognised by the World Union of Olympic Cities as one of the top three initiatives in the world for its innovative approach to promoting social integration through community sport, which he will discuss during his talk.

Article

Jakub Kalinowski



From Sitting Still to Playing Together

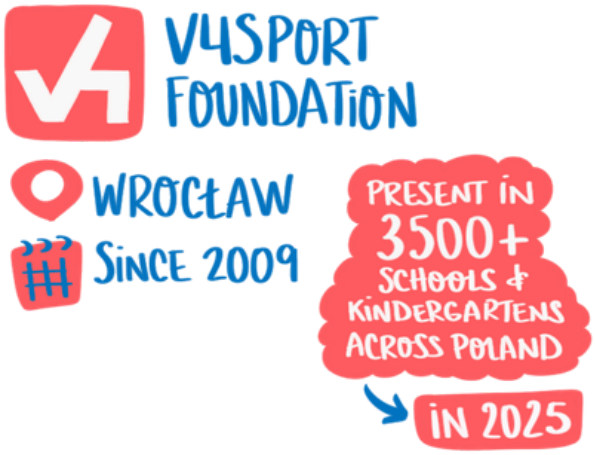
How a Polish foundation fighting children's inactivity discovered that sport could do much more than get children moving – it could also bring Ukrainian and Polish children together.

We never set out to work on integration.

When we co-founded the V4Sport Foundation in 2009, our goal was simple: to develop sports volunteering and get children moving more. We wanted them to be healthier, happier and more active. We had no idea that, years later, we would be using sport to bring together children from Poland and Ukraine.

It took years of work, a pandemic, a war, and my nine-year-old son on a football pitch to get us there.

We learned that bringing children into the same classroom or onto the same pitch does not automatically bring them together. Integration needs to be carefully designed. And movement can be a powerful way to make it happen.



From physical activity to connection

If you grew up in the 1980s or 1990s, chances are you spent much of your free time outdoors. Today, children spend a huge part of their day sitting: at school, at home, in the car, or with a phone in their hands.

In Poland, the consequences are increasingly visible. Childhood overweight, poor posture and other health problems are serious concerns. But for us, physical activity has never been only about health. Movement also helps children learn, concentrate, build relationships and feel better.

Interestingly, one of our biggest turning points came with COVID-19. Before the pandemic, most of our activities happened face-to-face. When schools closed, we had to rethink everything.

We started questioning a familiar assumption: does learning really mean sitting quietly at a desk?

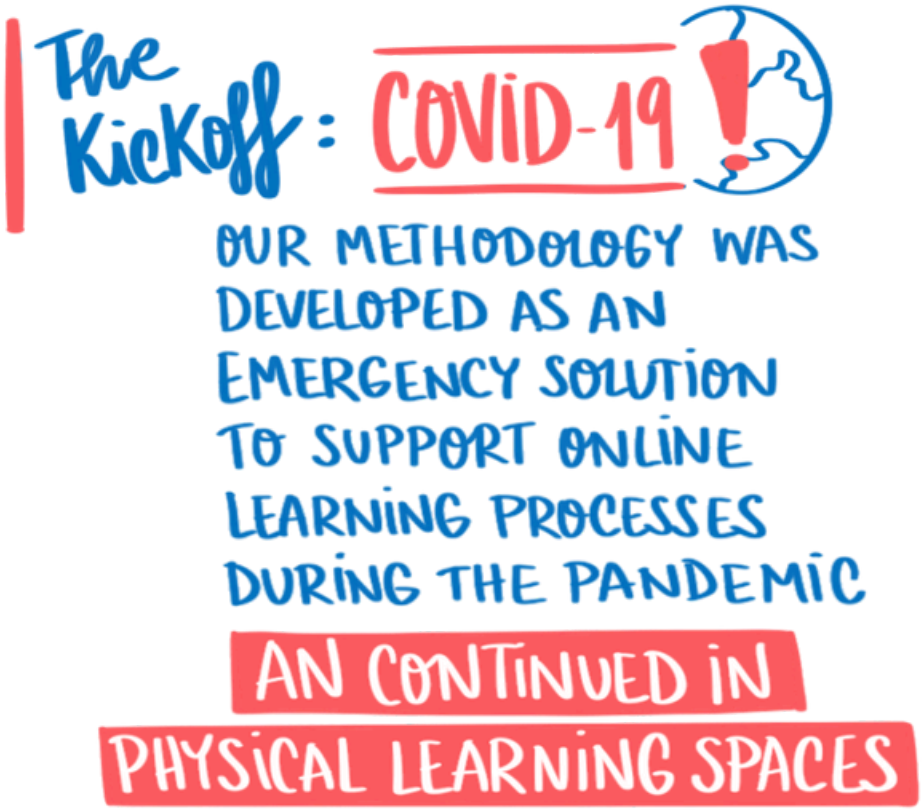


We began combining education, movement, and entertainment, an approach known as Physically Active Learning (PAL). During lockdown, we created videos that allowed children to learn while moving at home. When schools reopened, teachers asked us to continue.

Then something unexpected happened. In a pilot project in Wrocław, teachers told us that movement was helping children reconnect. It brought back smiles, reduced stress, and helped rebuild relationships.

We realised that movement could do more than improve physical health. It could bring people together.

All of this influenced the way we developed as an organisation. We began our digital transformation and started creating more digital tools to reach every corner of the country and make our programmes accessible to teachers in different locations. As a result of this transformation, in 2025 alone, more than 385,000 children, 26,000 teachers, and 3,500 schools and kindergartens took part in V4Sport programmes.



When the war came

On 24 February 2022, Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Millions of people fled to Poland, including hundreds of thousands of children. Many arrived in cities such as Wrocław, where teachers suddenly found themselves welcoming children who did not speak Polish and had experienced things no child should have to experience.

We knew that a few integration events would not be enough. Teachers needed practical tools they could use immediately.

Our first initiative came in autumn 2022, when we gave European School Sport Day in Poland the motto "Let's get to know each other!" We prepared movement activities, videos and worksheets introducing children to both Poland and Ukraine.

The response was encouraging, but we learned an important lesson: simply putting Polish and Ukrainian children together in the same activity wasn't enough. They could still remain in two separate worlds.

We needed to design activities that made cooperation necessary.

Together with several highly experienced international partners, we launched the EU-funded project Integration of Ukrainian Refugee Children Through Sport (IURTS).



In Poland, this led to the Integrative Detective Adventure, a programme for children in grades 1–3. Forty schools took part. Each class became a detective team, following monthly missions with Detective Meryl and her assistant Wattson. Through stories, physical activities and discoveries about Polish and Ukrainian cities, children collected pieces of a puzzle. They had to work together – and stay physically active – to solve the mystery.

We provided teachers with ready-to-use materials, including activity cards, worksheets and monthly videos. The children became so engaged that teachers told us they kept asking when the next episode would arrive. One video has passed 120,000 views.

One teacher in Warsaw described the impact beautifully:

"What pleases me the most is that Polish children could learn something interesting about Ukraine. So far, they only associated Ukraine with war."

For us, that was an important achievement. Integration is not just about helping newly arrived children feel welcome. It is also about helping children in the host community become curious about their new classmates and their culture.

A football game that became something bigger

Not every Ukrainian child attended a Polish school. Many continued learning online through the Ukrainian education system, which meant even fewer opportunities to meet Polish children.

The inspiration for our next project came from a very ordinary afternoon.

We were playing football on a local pitch in Wrocław. There weren't quite enough of us for a game, and a few Ukrainian boys were playing nearby.

My nine-year-old son asked me how to say "zagrajmy razem" in English.
"Let's play together," I told him.

He walked over, said those three words, and within seconds we had a game.
No shared language. No introductions. No complicated instructions. Just children wanting to play football.



That moment stayed with me. On many other playgrounds, Polish and Ukrainian children were using the same spaces but playing separately. Two groups, two worlds. What if we could change that?

This became the inspiration for Let's Play Together (LPT), an EU and the U.S. Department of State co-funded project bringing children together through free, open sports activities in public spaces.

Its central idea was simple: every session would be led by two coaches, one Polish and one Ukrainian. Children could join without registration, membership or pressure to compete. And Ukrainian children would always have someone who could speak their language.

We recruited 22 Tandem Coaches across 11 Wrocław neighbourhoods and trained them in sport for integration, psychological first aid and trauma-informed coaching.

Over approximately eight months, they delivered 1,001 sessions, generating 14,486 participant visits – 4,631 by Ukrainian children and 9,855 by Polish children.

In 2025, the World Union of Olympic Cities selected Let's Play Together as one of the top three projects at the SmartCities & Sport Summit in Seoul.

But the numbers tell only part of the story. The real achievement was seeing children who might never have spoken to each other becoming teammates and, sometimes, friends.



What we learned along the way

We documented our experience in a free Let's Play Together Playbook, available in English, Polish, and Ukrainian. It is not a manual to follow word for word, but a collection of practical lessons that other communities can adapt.

A few things stand out:

- **Don't just bring children together.** Give them a reason to cooperate. Shared space is not enough. Design activities where children need one another to succeed.
- **Use mixed coaching pairs.** Having one coach from the host community and one from the newly arrived community builds trust and demonstrates cooperation in practice.
- **Make participation easy.** Free, open activities in familiar public spaces reach children who might never join a formal programme.
- **Give teachers and youth workers ready-to-use tools.** Simple materials and clear instructions make it easier to turn good ideas into everyday practice.
- **Put fun first.** Children don't need another lecture about integration. Give them a story, a challenge or a game, and let relationships develop naturally.

Of course, every community is different. What worked well in Wrocław may need to be adapted elsewhere. The sport itself is less important than the way it is used.

A bigger mission than we imagined

When we started V4Sport in 2009, we wanted children to move more. That remains our mission. But we have learned that movement can do much more than improve physical health. It can help children learn, rebuild confidence, manage stress and form friendships.

COVID showed us how movement could reconnect children after isolation. The war in Ukraine showed us how important that connection could be for children from different backgrounds.

And a nine-year-old on a football pitch reminded me of something adults sometimes forget: bringing people together doesn't always require complicated explanations. Sometimes, it just takes someone willing to walk over and say, "Let's play together."
Our job is to create more opportunities for that to happen.
Because children don't have to speak the same language to play together. But we, as adults, have to make sure they have the chance.



References:

- Let's Play Together project and Playbooks - https://letsplaytogether.v4sport.eu/en
- The first international knowledge hub and networking platform for the integration of refugees through sport by the International Sport and Culture Association - https://irts.isca.org

EDITORIAL INFORMATION

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On behalf of the SALTO Inclusion & Diversity!