

# Capoeira Connects Europe



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# Introduction

The Capoeira Connects Europe (CCE) project aims to encourage young people to engage in an active lifestyle through capoeira. Our goal is to reduce the social exclusion of disadvantaged youth while promoting empathy and the value of diversity through sports.

The main motivation to start the project was the chance for complex problem-solving. On the one hand, we often see how young people with underprivileged backgrounds are suffering from several issues. Young people with behaviour disorders or those coming from disadvantaged families are often insecure and self-doubting. Therefore, and for many other reasons such as systematic discrimination and segregation, they are at risk of social marginalization and face increased social barriers. On the other hand, families with low economic backgrounds cannot send children to sports classes, therefore many underprivileged youngsters stay inactive and have fewer opportunities to interact with peers coming from diverse social backgrounds. In this project, we wanted to concentrate on the positive impact of sports that bring different members of society closer together and create an atmosphere of belonging. To achieve this aim, we are using a specific sport – the afro-Brazilian martial art called capoeira.

The project aims to involve underprivileged youth in capoeira activities, bring them closer to other members of the community, and provide a chance to boost their confidence and positive self-esteem. The project also aims to teach youth workers about capoeira, its history, and the inclusive aspect of this sport. The promotion of capoeira as an inclusive activity is the focus of the project.

The main activities of the project are the following:

- Preparing and organizing training courses in Latvia and Estonia where youth workers are provided with technical and practical knowledge on organizing capoeira activities.
- Organizing inclusive local capoeira classes in each country involved bringing a diverse group of people together with a special focus on those coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, minorities, and discriminated social groups.
- Organizing free public capoeira events in different countries.
- Creating a good practice handbook that provides practical recommendations for youth workers on how to use capoeira as a tool of social inclusion of vulnerable groups.
- Disseminating our activities and the good practice handbook.

Capoeira Connects Europe is funded by Erasmus+ programme and is being implemented in a collaboration of five partner organisations: Association Active Youth (Lithuania), Capokids Capoeira (Latvia), Subjective Values Foundation (Hungary), Žejtun Local Council (Malta), and NGO Spordi- ja Kultuuriselt Capoeira Vadeia (Estonia).

The aims of the good practice handbook are twofold. Firstly, we would like to promote sports and especially capoeira as a tool of social inclusion. Many great organisations work in the social field with the aim to empower disadvantaged social groups and foster their social inclusion, however, very few of them use recreational sports as a tool to bring people together and improve their psycho-social skills while providing a chance for participants to build a diverse and supporting network. Sports can be a unique mediator, participants of a recreational activity not only have the chance to increase their physical, psychological, and social skills, but they also have a chance to connect and to build new relationships regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, abilities or even spoken languages. Capoeira is as complex and diverse as our societies: by using music, dance, and martial arts and bringing a cultural aspect as well with its Brazilian origin, a very wide range of people can find the way to express themselves through capoeira.

Secondly, we would like to motivate sports associations, especially organisations who already work with capoeira to use the tool they have in their hands, to involve socially disadvantaged people, and to support their social inclusion process by inviting them into their communities.

In conclusion, we created this handbook to motivate various organisations to use sports and especially capoeira to support the social inclusion process of underprivileged people. Furthermore, the toolkit provides background information on the project results and the local characteristics of the participating countries related to this topic, moreover good practices, and useful recommendations are presented to inspire and guide the reader to organise such inclusive sports events.

# Project Activities

## 1<sup>st</sup> Training Course

Between 15 – 19th July 2021 a training course took place in Riga that was organized by Capokids Capoeira Latvia organisation. Sixteen participants from Malta, Hungary, Lithuania, and Latvia gathered to train capoeira and share their experiences of working with kids and youngsters.

Our first exchange aimed to give everyone a chance to share experiences and to be active, therefore the whole program was developed beforehand, taking the background of the participants into account. We were lucky to gain new capoeira skills and knowledge provided by the Latvian and Hungarian partner organisations, to experience energizer- and teambuilding games lead by the Lithuanian and Maltese countries, and to participate in practical sessions, improving our intercultural sensitivity and learning about social inclusion from the Hungarian partners.

*'During the COVID-period, I forgot how it is to be together with people. It is so nice to be here.'*

During capoeira sessions, participants learnt basic capoeira steps, got to know the roots and traditions of capoeira, and even prepared a spectacular show using newly learnt capoeira movements. Jelena, the Latvian trainer lead a capoeira + neurogame lesson, which combined coordination with maths tasks and rhythm. Participants admitted that it was challenging, and they felt how their brain was fully loaded. Hungarian capoeiristas (practitioners of capoeira) also taught dancing Maculele, which is a traditional Brazilian dance that uses sticks in honour of a brave boy. Participants enjoyed the vibe and energy of this dance.

*'I never thought capoeira is so cool.'*

Jelena also mixed capoeira with a roleplay activity. Advanced capoeiristas played the roles of trainers, while other participants got different roles and connected to their childhood. Some played roles of committed learners, some acted disturbingly, some played kids with special needs, some of them needed a lot of attention and some needed just a little help.

After each activity, we had a round of reflection to discuss our experiences, feelings and thoughts. We discussed how it is to be a kid with special needs and how it feels when the trainer does not understand you. We discussed techniques trainers can use to create a safe atmosphere based on cooperation.

*'My role was to try hard every exercise, but it was challenging since I was constantly disturbed by >>destructors<<, and I was upset of the trainer who did not even recognize my efforts. I think if I were praised at least once, it would have been easier to stay focused.'*

*'I was playing a role of a kid who needs help, and I loved the fact that the trainer constantly helped me. I felt very safe.'*

In the framework of the intercultural sensitivity session, the Hungarian team shared their experiences of organizing kids camps to foster the social inclusion of Roma youngsters. They shared practical insights on how to reduce prejudices using sport, how to overcome cultural differences, and how to tackle conflicts of kids with challenging behaviours. Furthermore, they presented how capoeira classes were implemented during their camp.

Participants also played a roleplay and got to experience and reflect on how stereotypes can affect the behaviour and the attitude of a person. Each participant got a sticker on their forehead, and the other participants treated their peers as it was written on their labels during the game. There were five roles: 'creative', 'intelligent', 'dumb', 'funny' and 'disturbing'.

*'I was labelled intelligent, and there was so much pressure on me. I felt like everyone was expecting a great result from me.'*

The event went smoothly: the programme, the accommodation, the food, and the travelling were well organized and highly rated by participants. The participants felt grateful for the possibility to go to Riga, they gained lots of knowledge not only on capoeira, but also on working with kids with diverse needs, working with people from different cultural backgrounds, and on how to tackle stereotypes. All in all, how to become great teachers or leaders.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Training Course

The second training course for youth workers from Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania and Malta took place in Tallinn, Estonia between the 13th and 15th August 2021. The training aimed to provide all the partners with technical and practical knowledge about organising capoeira activities for local youth. Sixteen people participated in the training course, there were four representatives per project partner. The participants experienced a combined mix of capoeira, sports, and youth work activities. For that purpose, the interactive program of the training was designed to accommodate people with little to no youth work and capoeira experience. The training took place at the training centre called Arte do Brasil, where the host partner conducted their regular capoeira classes.

The training program included the following activities:

On 13th August 2021 – capoeira class was held by Claudio Lima Santos and all participants could take part in the final public capoeira local event in a town called Maardu.

On 14th August 2021 – maculele dance class was held by Claudio Lima Santos and a workshop was conducted on the topic of social inclusion.

On 15th August 2021 – capoeira class was held by participants from Latvia and Hungary.

The practical training sessions of capoeira paid particular attention to the elements of capoeira that can be used in groups with limited experience in sports and martial arts.

At the end of the first training day, the participants joined the Estonian final event of the project, a capoeira event organised for the local youth in the town of Maardu. Local youth from ethnic minorities and capoeiristas from capoeira schools participated in a roda which is a traditional way of capoeira gathering.

In the roda, all participants form a circle with musical instruments. They sing capoeira songs and clap their hands following the music, while people take turns playing capoeira inside the circle they create. The participants could witness in practice how quickly the youth gained the skills to play capoeira, using the easy movements they learned during the open local capoeira classes.

The participants took part in the interactive workshop during the training course to get to know the aspects contributing to social exclusion. The workshop started with an interactive roleplay game called 'What's my label?'. It was similar to the game we played during the first training course, but this time the participants were labelled not with an adjective but with a word that refers to their backgrounds (e.g., migrant, a person with special needs, orphan, etc.). The participants had to interact with each other according to their labels and everyone had to find out their roles.

After the game, the participants shared their experience of interaction with the others in the assigned roles during a discussion session. This session allowed them to identify barriers to social inclusion of the different vulnerable groups and brainstorm over methods to overcome those barriers. Additionally, participants were encouraged to reflect on how sports and how capoeira in particular can be used to facilitate social and inclusion.

The training was organised and hosted by the Estonian project partner, Spordi-ja Kultuuriselt Capoeira Vadeia, an organisation that has been teaching capoeira classes and holding various capoeira promoting events in Estonia since 2015.

Participation in the event was partially affected by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, all the project coordinators agreed that all participants should be fully vaccinated, and the indoor activities were open only for the 16 participants.

## **Local capoeira classes: our experiences**

Each of the partners held five open local classes and a final capoeira event in each country. These classes aimed to introduce capoeira to different diverse groups who may also be new to the sport, to get acquainted with the practices of capoeira and acknowledge capoeira as a potential sport to enhance the social inclusion of children and young people. The target of each local class was approximately 20 individuals per session. The final event maximized the outreach of the open classes to a larger number of participants. These local events encouraged further participation of individuals coming from minority groups and disadvantaged backgrounds.

### ***Local activities in Estonia***

In July and August 2021, The Spordi-ja Kultuuriselt Capoeira Vadeia organisation organised five open capoeira classes for the local youth. The classes took place in the town of Maardu which is located 15 km away from Tallinn. Most of the inhabitants of Maardu belong to Russian-speaking ethnic minorities that are more exposed to social exclusion. The local government of Maardu is constantly working towards expanding various opportunities for the local population and was very supportive in the project implementation. They supported the NGO in the promotion of the open capoeira classes for youth, and they provided space for carrying out the capoeira classes.

Altogether 101 young people joined the local classes and the final project event.



### ***Local activities in Hungary***

In July 2021 five capoeira classes were organised in a Hungarian summer camp where Roma and non-Roma children were playing together in the activities. Most of the children were charmed by this sport as neither of them have tried it before. And as it contained elements of music, dance and 'fighting', all children could get engaged in the activities, many of them were inspired and wanted to continue to practice capoeira in the future. There was a very heart-warming moment when a child coming from disadvantaged background learned how to drum, and he was very excited to share it with us. It was his first time trying out playing on the drums, he just discovered his talent, and he enjoyed it so much. Due to these successfully implemented activities, both the capoeira trainers got inspired to work with Roma and non-Roma children, and the organisers of the camp got motivated to include capoeira activities into their future programmes as well. Thanks to this project, a close collaboration has started between the three participating organisations: Subjective Values Foundation, ABADÁ-Capoeira Budapest, and Kacsakő Association, therefore future events will follow this collaboration.

### ***Local activities in Latvia***

After the strict covid requirements Latvia was facing, Capokids Capoeira Academy got back to work, and capoeira classes were organized for kids and youth.

In September, five local classes were held, where in total 80 children participated.

The final event of Latvia was planned to be organized on 9th October. More than 50 participants singed up, and we planned to divide all participants into 4 groups on 4 stations, 15 minutes each:

- Maculele station (15 minutes to learn basic maculele steps)
- Capoeira station (15 minutes to learn capoeira sequences)
- Music station (15 minutes to practice music and rhythms)
- Show station (15 minutes to prepare a show, using the freshly gained knowledge)

Unfortunately, the team had to encounter several obstacles caused by the epidemic before the event could be implemented. At the beginning of October, a few kids who were attending the trainings of Capokids Capoeira Academy turned out to be infected with COVID, so the majority of the capoeiristas and trainers had to stay in quarantine for 10 days, thus the event had to be postponed. Then, before the final event could have been organized, on 15th October a full lock-down in Latvia was announced with a ban on any training.

### ***Local activities in Lithuania***

Local Capoeira classes in Lithuania brought people from different backgrounds together, this environment leads to more interesting and inclusive learning: participants supported each other and collaborated. lessons were learnt about how such physical activity as Capoeira, with a strong historic background, brings curiosity and sparks interest, getting more attention and involvement from the groups involved. While it was a challenge to find the participants and reach out to marginalized groups, once they gathered, everyone left inspired and willing to come back for the other sessions.

## Dissemination

To share our goal, approach and results with a wide audience, the CCE project uses several platforms of dissemination with the contribution of all partners. We aim to reach out to the local communities, civil society organisations, sports clubs, sports coaches and PE teachers in the partner countries to draw attention to the importance and relevance of the project's goals and to promote the usage of capoeira as a tool of social inclusion.

Furthermore, we disseminate our work as a team on the project's webpage. This English language webpage aims to provide useful information on the correlation between health and sports and to introduce capoeira itself with its possibility to contribute to social inclusion. We put significant effort into creating the website and sharing relevant articles so it will remain interesting and helpful after the finish of the project as well.

Every partner runs an individual dissemination campaign in their language as well, using their social media platforms where they share related articles and news with the local communities. The partners also disseminate at their webpages, in local papers and news portals, and at online and offline events. Our activities and the toolkit are also published through the partnering organisations' local network systems.

These dissemination activities reach out to hundreds of people who might intend to implement their activities toward a more inclusive and tolerant community and this way the main goal of our dissemination activities is to promote the sustainability of the project's impact.

## Website

The [website](#) was developed throughout the project period and it portrays the project. The content assists the reader in a simple yet creative manner. The front page dominantly portrays the logo of the project which was designed collectively by the project partners through a preliminary online session. The logo symbolizes the roda, the renowned circular formation formed during a capoeira session. The circle in the logo such as the practice of capoeira, symbolizes unity, respect, and social inclusion. The front page also introduces the aims of the project, basic information about what capoeira is, the activities implemented and a brief outline of the five partners. A tab 'LEARN' is intended to encourage the reader to know more about capoeira and sports in general, through different papers, statistics, articles, and sport policies from the different partner countries. The last tab 'GET INVOLVED' provides the reader with links to learn how one can participate in capoeira in the five countries, namely Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Malta.



## Evaluation

The evaluation was an important and continuous process throughout the project because it helped in critically understanding the way the project activities were being implemented. During the 1st and 2nd training course in Latvia and Estonia, an evaluation together with a reflection exercise was carried out with the participants of the respective workshops based on the experience during the 5-day-stay. A midway evaluation was also processed in September between the responsible contacts of each partner countries. This was implemented through an online questionnaire, addressing communication between partners, the delegation of roles as per workplan, and administrative procedures by the leading partner. This data helped in setting the targets straight based on the project proposal and amend accordingly where required.

A final evaluation was then completed during the final meeting held in Malta. This was guided through an informal activity and assessed the whole completed project, together with the hurdles encountered and outcomes from the different events held.

# Local Characteristics

## Estonia

### ***Tendencies of physical activity***

The number of people involved in sports and their distribution in the population is growing continuously. Luckily there are more and more team or individual sports, or sports classes available for a wide audience, so everyone can find the physical activity they enjoy, whether it is jogging in the forest, exercise in a sports club, a ballgame or lifting weights in the gym.

The Estonian Parliament has passed a policy entitled 'The general principles of Estonian sports policy' valid until 2030. This policy was devised through extensive consultation with the sports community, and it focuses specifically on ensuring that the majority – if not all – of the population is regularly and safely exercising, with the aspiration to ensure that at least two-thirds of the population is regularly engaged in sports activities. Emphasis is placed on physical activity throughout the life-course, from physical education in preschools through to physical activity later in life, supported by a strengthened sports infrastructure (Comission, 2015).

Over the last 12 months, 60,5% of the population aged 15 and over have reported being physically active and overall, the number of amateur athletes of all ages (n=177,436) has increased by 5% in 2020, compared to 2021. The majority of the amateur athletes in 2020 (n=94,388) were 19 years old or younger. Male amateur athletes were predominant in all age groups (n=104,164). On the county level, Harju county had the highest number of physically active people (n=101,409), however, over 76% of them (n=77,615) were located in Tallinn (Statistikaamet, 2020).

A report from 2017/2018 (Oja et al., 2019), shows that only 16% of adolescents (aged 11–15 years) reached the recommended levels of physical activity. More boys than girls are active, with 17% of boys reaching the WHO recommended levels for physical activity for health, compared to 14% of girls.

### ***Social diversity***

Out of 1,330,068 residents of Estonia in 2021, 31,21% were identifying themselves as minorities, with Russians (n=322,700), Ukrainians (n=27,252) and Belorussians (n=11,485) comprising the most numerous minority ethnic groups (Statistikaamet, 2021).

The percentage of persons belonging to an ethnicity other than the 'majority' Estonian, varies greatly across the country with a stark division between east and west: from a low of 8.61% in Western Estonia to a high of 80.24% non-Estonian in North-eastern Estonia (Willis, 2019). This demonstrates that the population of ethnic minorities is not spread equally across the country.

Similarly to Latvia, Estonia adopted a strict policy towards minorities, integration and citizenship requirements, which led to issues of non-citizenship/statelessness (Poleshchuk & Tsilevich, 2004) and has significantly hindered social inclusion. Among the factors contributing to social exclusion, income

inequality between different ethnical groups is the easiest to analyse and demonstrate. Overall representatives of ethnic minorities demonstrate a higher at-risk-of-poverty rate (25,3%), compared to Estonians (18,9%) (Statistikaamet, 2019). Low income might contribute to social exclusion, as a person will not only struggle to afford daily essentials but will also not be able to take care of his/her well-being (receive adequate nutrition, recommended levels of physical activity etc.).

Apart from legal and financial barriers, language is another significant barrier to the successful social inclusion of the minorities in Estonia. A study conducted in 2018 has identified that almost half of the non-Estonian native speakers lack active Estonian language skills, which is also linked to poorer prospects in the labour market (Kallas et al., 2019). Schools in Estonia are also using other languages than Estonian, with Russian being the second most popular. In 2020 out of 155,104 students enrolled in general education, 22,707 (15%) were enrolled in institutions with the non-Estonian language of institutions. (Statistikaamet, 2020)

### **Organisation**

NGO Spordi- ja Kultuuriselt Capoeira Vadeia is a non-profit organisation based in Estonia. It was founded in 2015. Its key activities are teaching and developing capoeira as sports and as a tool of cultural inclusion. Currently, in the organisation's activities, there are about 118 members (students) and 2 board members.

The organisation conducts regular capoeira classes for different ages in Tallinn, as well as a wide range of capoeira events, workshops, camps, presentations and the annual International Capoeira Competition Tallinn Cup. The competition Tallinn Cup is organised in cooperation with the Tallinn Sports and Youth Department and takes place in a weekend of October aiming to:

- develop and promote capoeira in Estonia;
- promote physical activity and sports among children and youth, promotion of a healthy lifestyle among the general population;
- strengthen team spirit of the members of the organisation, increasing their involvement and motivation;
- bring together capoeiristas from Estonia and other countries;
- initiate and facilitate intercultural dialogue between the participants, regardless of their nationality, racial and religious affiliation.

During the six years of our work in Estonia, several fruitful partnerships were made with Tallinn Sports and Youth Department, the Youth centre of Maardu city and the Youth centre of Lasnamäe district. The organisation also became members of the Estonian Capoeira Federation and World Capoeira Federation.

Collaboration with the Youth centre of Maardu has also been a great help in the implementation of the Capoeira Connect Europe project, by helping to involve ethnic minority youth in the free capoeira classes in summer 2021.

### ***Tendencies of physical activity***

In Hungary, more than half of the population never exercise or play sports, and almost 60% of those who do sports, do it at home. Regarding the age between 15–24 years, the percentage of youngsters practising sports meets the EU average, however, above the age of 24, the percentage of physically active men and women are both far beyond the EU average. An interesting fact in the Hungarian results is that while below the age of 54 physical inactivity is slightly higher among women, over the age of 55 women are slightly more active than men. The main reasons of the respondents compared to EU average were the following: 'lack of time', 'too expensive', 'too competitive'. (European Commission, 2018)

In the context of fostering social inclusion, sports appear in two different ways (Földesiné, Gál, Dóczi, 2010): firstly, equity and equality in the matter of participation in both professional and recreational sport, and secondly, in ongoing discussions using sports as a tool of social inclusion by facilitating vertical mobility through success and becoming a role model to fellow peers. Besides professional sport, participating in recreational sport is not only beneficial in the aspect of health and self-improvement (Moore, S. et al., 2012; Long, 2002; Heinemann, 1974 in: Gombocz, 2016; Földesiné, 2010), but it also provides a unique inclusive community where marginalised people can become integrated members of the society (Földesiné, Gál, Dóczi, 2010; Long, 2002, Dóczi et al., 2012; Kelly, 2011).

In order to achieve the above-mentioned benefits of sports, it would be inevitable to provide sport opportunities for all. During the socialist era, inequality regarding access to sport was already high, and the gap got even wider after the transformation of the system. While the professional sport of disabled people has started to develop since the 90s, the same cannot be told about the recreational sport of the same group. Factors such as ethnic background, age, gender, socio-economic status, and disability are still affecting the access to recreational sport opportunities. Hungarian sport policies are rarely focus on social inclusion because attention is stolen by professional sports which is much more popular topic in the international and national media. (Földesiné, 2010)

### ***Social diversity***

The biggest ethnic minority suffering from racism and social exclusion in Hungary are the Roma (a bit more than 3 %). Anti-Gypsy attitudes appear at a very early age. According to representative research carried out in 2006, 44.3 % of the students claimed they would be bothered if their 'bench-mate' would be Roma (Ligeti, 2006), and according to a recent study made in 2017, seven out of ten teenagers were fully prejudiced against Roma people (Váradi, 2017). In the Hungarian educational system, selectivity and segregation are common problems. It is one of the main reasons why Romani students' drop-out rate from high-schools is close to 50% (Hajdú et al., 2014).

According to the last micro-census (2016), the second biggest ethnic group living in Hungary are the German (1,83 %), followed by Romanian, Slovak and Croatian immigrants (KSH, 2018). However, the majority of the migrants who settled in Hungary are Hungarian ethnic minorities who were born outside of the borders in one of the neighbouring countries. Due to their ethnic origins, common language, culture and history, it is generally easier for them to get integrated into the Hungarian

society than for other migrants, it is also easier for them to get employed, furthermore, they generally face less discrimination than migrants who do not have Hungarian ethnic background.

Regarding Third Country Nationals (TCNs), Chinese immigrants consist of the biggest national group followed by Ukrainian and Russian immigrants (Immigration and Asylum Office, 2017).

Looking at the statistics, compared to other European countries, Hungary is very homogenous, which is also one of the reasons for the high rates of xenophobia and racism.

### **Organisation**

Szubjektív Értékek Alapítvány (Subjective Values Foundation) was founded in 2002 with the aims to support an ongoing dialogue between cultures, to create a sustainable society, and to promote the European ideals in Hungary. The organisation implements projects connected to cultural diversity, arts, sports, antiracism, anti-radicalisation, poverty, and environmental protection. The main scope of the organisation is to empower socially underprivileged groups in Hungary and to conduct research, implement trainings and run campaigns with the contribution to a more peaceful society.

One of the main aims of the foundation is to provide a platform for young individuals, to identify and transfer those values and ideas to other young people, which play an important role in their life. The organisation was able to implement projects connected to cultural diversity, art, antiracism, poverty or environmental protection. The foundation also involves volunteers into the coordination of different projects; they are usually young people between the age of 20 and 30 and they participate in organizing programmes for the youth generation.

Organising cultural events on the UN Day Against Racism are among the foundation's main activities since 2002. These events approach the theme of discrimination and human rights; they usually target the young audience. Besides, professional round table discussions, music events, trainings, video presentations, exhibitions and games attract the attention of people to the social problems of discrimination and racism. The Foundation is an accepted and active member of some of the European-level anti racist networks such as United for Intercultural Action, Football Against Racism in Europe, and European Network Against Racism.

### ***Tendencies of physical activity***

Sports habits are established at a young age, therefore it is crucial to involve kids and youth in physically active free-time activities. However, due to the increased popularity of the internet, mobile phones and tablets, kids' free time tend to shift to a more passive form every year. For example, in research, which took place in Latvia in 2014, 64% of youngsters aged 13–25 years admitted spending passively their free time (TNS, 2014). Porozovs et. al (2012) also mentioned that only 28% of scholars admitted regularly attending sporting activities, and 19% denied any sports activity in their routine. The situation gets even worse during student life, as 40% of students are not involved in any sports, while 42% do it from time to time (Porozovs, et. al, 2012). During university life, students tend to study a lot and spend the remaining time working.

This statistic is shocking since the World Health Organisation (2020) recommends at least 60 minutes per day of moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity, but as we can see, the majority of youngsters stay passive and do not get even minimum physical activity level.

There are many good practices developed in Latvia to foster kids and youth involvement in sports activities. For example, in 2017 a special booklet was published with the title of 'Small issues have a huge impact' containing 1000 ideas on how to actively spend time with a kid. The booklet was developed and dissolved widely among parents. Another great example is the #sportoriga movement, which provides free outdoor sporting classes for youth and adults, furthermore, Ghetto Games organized training and events for youth in street basketball, breakdance and other active disciplines.

### ***Social diversity***

Latvians are the indigenous people, and they consist 62% of the population of Latvia. According to 2017 statistics, the largest minority group in Latvia are Russians, who are 25.4% of the population. Some other minorities are Belorussians (3.3 %), Ukrainians (2.2%), Polish (2.1%) and 5% of the population consists of other ethnicities (Lithuanians, Jews, Roma, Germans, Estonians, Tatars, and others).<sup>1</sup>

The main issue, which Russians face in Latvia (1/4 of the total population) is the inability to access education in their mother tongue. On 2nd April 2018, Latvian President Raimonds Vējonis signed amendments to the education law that would effectively put an end to all Russian-language schooling in the country by 2021. The law is aimed specifically against Russian schools rather than national minority ones, as it does not affect those schools which are teaching in one of the EU languages. It is allowed to teach in any EU language and German, English private schools are successfully operating. However, even private funded Russian-language schools are banned, but they continue to fight for their rights in the Council of Europe.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/population-demographic-situation-languages-and-religions-40\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/population-demographic-situation-languages-and-religions-40_en)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.euronews.com/2018/07/20/children-go-native-as-latvian-schools-say-ne-to-russian>



Another issue is a so-called passport of 'alien', which was granted to Russian-speaking residents of Latvia. These people are not allowed to vote, even though they were born and spent their entire life in Latvia. Even though this legislation does not correlate to the European law, currently there are no statal plans to change this legislation.

Speaking of inclusivity, Latvia is far beyond other countries, especially when speaking of educational inclusivity. Kids with learning difficulties and diverse needs are still often sent to segregated special schools. Schools are not ready to provide individual learning schemes, tutors, teaching assistants, therefore social inclusivity has not developed yet in the for Latvian school system.

### **Organisation**

Organisation Capokids Capoeira Latvia was established in 2011 to provide kids capoeira education and to become a place where children can improve their physical health. As a result, the venue became a second home for many kids and youngsters, especially those who suffer from bullying, or have problems with parents or the ones with learning difficulties. The organisation furthermore attracts a lot of children from the Russian speaking minority. The philosophy of the organisation is that physical health comes by the hand with psychological and emotional wellbeing.

Capoeira itself is very sensitive socially– it teaches tolerance, bravery and inclusivity. Through capoeira movements, dances, acrobatics, music, and rhythm, trainers show kids and youngsters that activity is great, people are different, and life is full of positive vibes. Moreover, Capokids organize leaders' camps and non-formal learning camps, where kids learn to communicate, create and lead. Each group is built as a small community, where there is a place for everyone. The training is structured on a separate basis for every group, taking the needs and the different developmental ways into account. Through group dynamics, individual development is achieved not only in capoeira movements but also in inclusivity and humaneness. As a result, kids and youngsters stay with the organisation for ages.



## Lithuania

### ***Tendencies of physical activity***

In Lithuania, the lack of physical activity is still below the recommended level. According to the results of a study, 36 % of men and 42 % of women have jobs that require little physical effort. With the decrease of physical work, physical activity during leisure time becomes even more important (Oficialios statistikos portalas, 2020). Nonetheless, only 10 % of the participants of the study indicated that they do physical activities every day. The participation in physical activities among young people is a little bit higher than in the general population. Despite these findings, physical activity for at least 4 hours a week is typical of only 17.6% of students in their leisure time. Also, technology has an impact on physical activity. It influences life habits and pace, and most people turn activeness into passive activities spending more and more time watching the screens.

The other main reason for the low number of inclusive sports activities and high rates of inactivity among youngsters is the lack of competence of youth workers. Youth workers should know methods that are essential for the inclusion of different social groups with the usage of sports activities. In addition, another barrier to inclusion is the low involvement of institutions in the planning and implementation of health programs. Also, administrators of municipalities face limited funding when planning health activities in local communities (Jociūtė, 2015). These reasons are related, youth workers do not have opportunities to improve their skills and competencies without funding, it is also important to note the poor economic situation of the young people that limits their participation. A healthy lifestyle seems to be reserved for the wealthier ones. Overall, many young people face financial barriers to join sports activities (Rėklaitienė, Selickaitė and Požėrienė, 2018). It means that they have less active leisure opportunities, poor accessibility to equipment and learning.

### ***Social diversity***

A small number of ethnic communities characterizes Lithuania. Lithuanians make up about 84,2 % of the entire population. Other ethnic groups are Poles, Russians, Belarusians, Ukrainians, Jews, Tatars, Latvians, Germans, Roma people, Karaites, and others (Gražulis, V., Mockienė, L., Sudnickas, T., Dačiulytė, R., 2021). In general, the situation of minority groups living in Lithuania is quite good. It is confirmed by the 2016 survey conducted among various minority groups. 72 % of respondents agreed with this statement (Baltijos tyrimai, 2016). However, the rest of the respondents indicated that representatives of minorities in Lithuania face discrimination based on their nationality. Most of them were people over 50, those who speak Lithuanian less, Roma people, Russians, and Poles who live in southeast Lithuania (Klimanskis, 2017). One of the main barriers to the inclusion of minority groups is the information vacuum. Lithuanian television channels are less used among minority groups. As well as it, inappropriate representation of ethnic minorities in the media forms negative public perception towards these communities. Due to these negative constructs of local ethnic groups, significantly Roma integration is hampered by the difficulties. Consequently, this ethnic group faces negative prejudices in many areas of life (education, labor market, social status, health care, etc.) (Sutkutė, 2020).

The infrastructure in Lithuania's southeast region, where a vast part of Russian and Poles minority groups live, is also an obstacle of successful integration. Public transportation is expanded only between Vilnius city and district centres. Consequently, remote districts are not easily accessible. Also, the results of the labour market indicate that one of the problems relevant to minority groups'

successful integration into society is the insufficient knowledge of the Lithuanian language (Okunevičiūtė-Neverauskienė, 2010). Non-formal education activities are usually established and financed without specifying the need to organize them in different languages. That means that there is no statistical data on what language non-formal education is organized. This situation sometimes leads to the exclusion of foreign speakers.

### **Organisation**

Active Youth Association is a non-profit organization based in Kaunas that unites young leaders from Lithuania willing to work to facilitate intercultural dialogue and enhance the competencies of the European youth. The organization cooperates with other organizations of a similar profile from all over Europe (more than 70 partnerships) to organize events and training using sports and other non-formal educational tools as a powerful instrument to encourage youth to take an active part in society. By doing this, Active Youth helps young people to improve their skills and social awareness, share their experiences and ideas, integrate them within the multinational environment of the EU, facilitate cooperation, create new joint initiatives and promote a healthy lifestyle. In particular, the main target group is the youth between the ages of 18 and 30 with a focus on those who have fewer opportunities.

In terms of sports, Active Youth focuses on promoting voluntary activities in sports, integration of minorities, helping underprivileged youth, and providing equal opportunities through physical activity and grassroots sports. The organization has recently taken an active organizational part in many Erasmus+ Sports projects such as "Train with Brain", "SPORTIFICATION", and "Empowerment Through Sports". In another recent project called "Urban sports culture", the Active Youth Association is working together with Danish and Swedish partners and an organization – "Kaunas 2022 contemporary capital of Europe", on organizing a sports festival. This festival is set to be one of the most significant free sports events in Kaunas.

In 2019, a national project, "Capoeira Connects Community", was implemented to make the lives of refugees and migrants currently staying in Lithuania better through capoeira.

In addition, many different sports events, seminars and open practices for children and youth have been organized within Lithuania. Some of the examples include coordinating 3x3 basketball championships, 6x6 football championships, public sports management & marketing seminars for sports management students, and so on.

***Tendencies of physical activity***

Sports contribute to children's holistic development by giving them the tools needed to lead an active healthy lifestyle (Woods et al., 2010). Moreover, sports enable the children to develop morally, intellectually, and socially within an educational context where pupils are valued and cared for. Unfortunately, although students spend over thirty hours at school per week, a very small amount of time is dedicated to physical activity in Maltese schools. As a matter of fact, data collected in 2008 by the School Health Services (as cited in Ministry for Education and Employment, 2015), showed that 62% of the State primary schools in Malta allocated between 61-120 minutes of physical education per week while half of the church primary schools allotted less than one hour. In Malta, this allotted time decreased after the first four to six years of compulsory education.

In 2017 Malta was one of the six countries that showed an improvement in the participation of citizens in exercises or sports compared to the previous study done in 2014. Data shows that even though students ranked as the highest occupation scale, they still resulted with a disappointing percentage of 49% of respondents that never or seldom participate in sport. This differs drastically when compared to a 27% on similar characteristics on EU level. There is also a major difference between Maltese girls and boys between the age of 15-24, where 61% of the girl respondents stated that they never or seldom participate in sport, compared to a 34% for boy respondents. This shows clearly that there is a gender imbalance in sport in Malta, with boys being more physically active than girls (Eurobarometer, 2017).

Ironically, those who engage in physical activity or sport mainly do so on the way between home and school, and the least said they engage in sport activities at school. This continues to prove that schooling in Malta puts drastic pressure on children and young people in the formal education system rather than time and space to practice sports or do physical activity during school hours. Many of those who do engage in sport do it spontaneously and not as a member of a sports club. Yet, there are many sports clubs that do offer many opportunities. The most common sport in Malta is football especially among boys. In fact, almost every locality of the Maltese Islands has its football clubs for people from the age of 4 until seniors. Additionally, each club has its premises equipped with artificial turf pitches. Girls can join boys in football sessions until the age of 14 years, thereafter those girl players that want to continue their journey must opt for a women's football club which is very rare in Malta, counting to a meagre 10 clubs compared to the over 60 clubs for man. Various sports disciplines are available locally for one to participate in such as athletics, weightlifting, martial arts, water polo, rugby, etc.

***Social diversity***

Malta is not a country of many minority groups; the most dominant minority group are migrant refugees and asylum seekers. The country makes its effort to improve understanding, equality, and racial discrimination. This is not always easy because of the social, ethnic, and cultural differences but positive developments are visible and effective. Burchardt et al., (2002 p. 30) state that an 'individual is socially excluded if he or she does not participate in key activities of the society in which he or she lives.'

Participation in sports and physical activities should be considered as one of the basic necessities, especially in Malta due to its high obesity rates. There are various reasons which lead an individual to be socially excluded from sports activities. The determining factors are academic priorities, family

responsibilities, culture, self-deprecation, and lack of interest. On the other hand, factors such as lack of free space, costs, inaccessibility, cultural constraints, dependence on parental support, geographical challenges and racism also make participation in sport difficult, thus resulting in individuals being excluded. Financial limitations are the main social excluding factor that discriminates individuals from participating in organised sport. Even though one can opt to do physical activity in outdoor public spaces, this necessitates ideally guidance from a mentor or instructor, and that will also incur charges. Participation in some sport does not come cheap, and additionally, on the other end, coaching, equipment, and infrastructure use add up to restraints in providing sports sessions free of charge.

Bailey (2005, p. 76) explains that it is claimed that participation in sporting activities has the potential to ‘contribute to the process of inclusion’. It is a means to unite diverse people and thus, boosting an inclusive community because it can bypass values of teambuilding, fairness, perseverance, respect, discipline, trust, and equality. It also provides socio-psychological benefits to the individual in terms of self-confidence, community identity being part of a bigger group, integration, and physical and mental health wellbeing.

### **Organisation**

In the local context, the Žejtun Local Council’s policies aim to promote and engage the residents in the diversity of sports and physical activity as much as possible. Various initiatives are held addressing different ages and gender and ensuring that no individual is excluded from participating. One of the initiatives is a walking tour where physical activity is promoted through walking around the locality and combining it with history and culture through a tour guide’s explanation. Another initiative is the free provision of aerobics, zumba, yoga, and other fitness activities organised at one of the public garden spaces in the locality. These sessions were welcomed by the residents not only for the activity being promoted but also aided in the mental health and social wellbeing of each participant. Again, the sessions were adapted accordingly by intensity and coaches were appointed to ensure safe methods depending on the individuals. High-intensity sessions were attended by younger people, while milder fitness sessions were more attended by elder persons over 50 years.

The local municipality also seeks out the local sports organisations and holds regular meetings to discuss the participation of the community, their opinions on how to move the people and in what ways they can collaborate to ensure that no individual is socially excluded. Both administrative and financial support is provided to the organisations when needed. An example of this support is the provision of free space for setting up infrastructure such as an outdoor pitch, or hall space to practice different sport disciplines. Through dialogue, the local council ensures that the costs to train and engage in sports is minimal. The municipality also assists special social cases where the children or young persons are constrained to not participate because of financial problems. A fund is available with which such situations can be supported to contribute to social inclusion.

# Good Practices Using Capoeira

## Estonia: Open capoeira classes by the Arte do Brasil Estonia capoeira school

### **About the programme**

Capoeira school Arte do Brasil Estonia (NGO Spordi- ja Kultuuriselt Capoeira Vadeia) has organised open capoeira classes in town of Maardu in July and August 2021. The activity was initiated within the Erasmus+ project called Capoeira Connects Europe.

In Maardu, where the project took place, around 80% of the population represents national minorities. This puts the local minority youth in a particularly vulnerable situation, where they face more obstacles and fewer opportunities to participate in different social and sports activities. The range of available sports activities is also limited for them. Furthermore, in Estonia, all of the key social activities and initiatives were organised in the Estonian language, which is the state language. This could create barriers to participation for the representatives of ethnic minorities in different aspects of society's life.

### **Objectives**

The project aimed to motivate and encourage young people to engage in a more active lifestyle through free capoeira classes.

The capoeira school works in Tallinn, in the capital of Estonia, where opportunities for young people are more plentiful compared to other parts of the country, especially in towns with a higher distribution of minority representatives in the population. This has served as a motivation to organise these open classes outside of the capital.

The project particularly targeted the young people that were spending their summer vacation in the town of Maardu and whose families didn't have the resources to organise summer activities for them. The diversity of capoeira practices allowed to attract a wide range of young people through a unique combination of martial art practices, music, and dance.

### **Activities**

The activities included five open capoeira classes with around twenty participants in each class, and an open final event for young people, their families, and all interested persons. All of the young people who took part in the classes had never trained the capoeira before, so it was important to have at least three-four other capoeira students assisting the capoeira teacher. This is important in demonstrating both the movements of capoeira and specific capoeira music accompanying the classes. Additionally, the organisation of the classes involved both school trainers, who collaborated closely with the Maardu youth centre and town government.

### **Main achievements**

This was the first time when capoeira classes were organised in the town of Maardu. The Capoeira school has previously collaborated with the local municipality and organised capoeira presentations

during other local sports events, but no regular capoeira classes has been held. This collaboration was essential to implement the open capoeira classes for the local youth, both in terms of providing the indoor and outdoor space for the classes, and helping in promoting the activities toward the local population.

The support of the town government has demonstrated their trust in the activities and helped engage the local youth in the activities. On top of that, regular students were invited as well – who are also representatives of Russian-speaking minority – to help the school's main capoeira teacher Claudio Santos in conducting the open classes. This helped the local youth to relate to capoeira as something that their peers practice. Capoeira teachers from other capoeira schools of Tallin were invited to join the final open event, greeting Maardu youth to a traditional capoeira celebration roda. The final event was featured in a video report on a local TV in a Russian-speaking segment and a few locals joined the event together with the youth that took part in the open capoeira classes.

Overall, the feedback on the project was very positive. It was visible via the repeated participation of the youth, and many of their parents have contacted the school later, asking when it would be possible to join capoeira classes in Maardu on a regular basis. The town government and Maardu Youth centre have expressed great interest in similar collaborations in the future.

### ***Biggest challenges***

The project faced several challenges during its implementation, mostly caused by the pandemic. This meant that the planning process of the activities was complicated, and it had to be ensured that all of the organisers were following the prescribed safety protocols. The capoeira trainer was fully vaccinated and whenever it was possible, the classes took place outside.

Logistics were another challenge that had to be accounted for. Since the activities took place outside of Tallinn, where the capoeira school normally operates, around 2–3 hours of commute had to be taken by the coach and capoeira student helping in the project. This arrangement was only possible in the summer when both regular and sports schools are closed for vacations.

Organising a place for the activities and recruitment of the local youth into the project was another challenge. The limited number of opportunities and a certain degree of isolation of smaller town communities can make the youth unmotivated to join new unfamiliar activities. In this case, collaboration with the Maardu town government, youth centre and local boxing club "Olümp Maardu Kalev" has proven to be crucial. They not only provided a suitable location for the capoeira classes but also used their resources to advertise the classes to local youth. Youth workers from Maardu youth centre and members of the boxing club helped in setting up capoeira classes on location and the club has shared their training space when the weather was not suitable for outdoor classes.

The support from the local government also helped in overcoming financial challenges, especially regarding indoor venues.

Overall, in order to involve the local youth, extensive communication and collaboration with the local government and community proved to be very important. Such collaboration requires mutual dedication, time, and resources to succeed.

### **Financial resources**

NGO Spordi- ja Kultuuriselt Capoeira Vadeia runs regular capoeira classes for children, youth and adults in Tallinn, Estonia at capoeira school Arte do Brasil Estonia. The school employs two capoeira teachers who are certified coaches registered by the Estonian Olympics Committee. For any additional activities, capoeira students that train at the school help a lot as volunteers. The primary funding source of the school is the membership fees paid monthly by the capoeira students.

The school also organises a big annual event VadeiEst/Tallinn Cup, bringing together capoeira students from different countries. The event takes place annually and is the largest capoeira and Brazilian culture festival in the Baltics composing of 3 days of capoeira classes, performances, TallinnCup competition, and Formatura (belt changing ceremony). This festival is partially funded by the participants' donations and partially by support from the Tallinn City Government.

The open and free capoeira classes for the local youth of Maardu received support from the Maardu Town government and boxing club 'Olümp Maardu Kalev' and the Tallinn at Arte do Brasil Estonia school which provided some volunteers.

### **Recommendations**

Capoeira has immense potential to be used as a tool for social inclusion, but being an Afro-Brazilian martial art, it is not widely known in Europe. Therefore, it is important to consider a necessary introduction of capoeira to any activity, both through a description and demonstration. For this activity, the school also added elements of peer education and invited youth from minority backgrounds to join the open capoeira classes together with the capoeira coach. This facilitated communication with the young people during the capoeira classes and helped them feel more confident, as they saw people of different skill levels practising capoeira together.

Involvement of the local community (here the town government and local youth centre) is also important in the implementation of activities in less integrated communities. Social exclusion can result in limited access for the people who are not part of the majority.

It is also important to note that capoeira activity alone cannot be enough to act as a tool of social inclusion. An inclusive activity requires resources and support from many actors (social workers, actors working with social inclusion/exclusion, local stakeholders, etc.) to transform sports activity into a successful inclusive initiative.



## **Hungary: ABADÁ–Capoeira in Budapest**

### ***About the programme***

The school, ABADÁ–Capoeira was founded in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1988. Later, it spread all across the world, nowadays there are coaches of this school in several cities in various countries, where everyone learns the same, and the way events are organised is unified as well. The ‘branch’ in Budapest has been working since 2007, the legal entity – an association – was established in 2018 with the leadership of Péter Marosi. At the moment, two people are working on networking, organising the events and trainings and delivering them, but several members of the association contribute to the work as volunteers. When gaining a new rank, the amount of invested volunteer work matters as much as the skills and knowledge of a perfect capoeira movement, therefore volunteerism with the aim of community development is very much encouraged at the association.

### ***Objectives***

The main objective is to improve a holistic approach to health: to improve physical, psychological, and emotional health, and to develop a sort of flexibility that benefits all aspects of life such as mentality. Another goal of this association is to provide opportunities for a wide range of people – for even those who originally do not have the best athletic skills – to gain success and to be part of a supporting and diverse community. Hard work is much more appreciated and rewarded than talent at the organisation.

Participants of the activities learn that development is a goal which they can achieve with hard work, and values such as mental strength, motivation for self-development, positive self-esteem and preparation for challenges of life also come from the Brazilian culture that this sport mediates. People generally become more adaptable to changes and to different life circumstances. By getting to know a different culture, members learn more about their own culture as well, plus their perspective becomes more opened and they gain a better understanding of their social circumstances. Participants sing in Brazilian, and they use certain words in Brazilian during practice.

As diverse are the people attending capoeira activities, the sport has various elements as well. It contains movements, instrumental music, singing, dance, creation of musical instruments, creation of songs, and martial arts as well, therefore this sport provides opportunities for development for not only the strongest members but for various groups of people having different abilities and skills.

### ***Activities***

Currently, trainings are held three times a week for adults, and two times a week for children. Sometimes the groups are mixed to provide opportunities for intergenerational community building and skill development.

When the weather is good, the group practices outside, they play music, and they do the roda. The group meets outside of trainings as well, for example they develop their skills in trampolines, and they organise non-formal trainings as well. Motivated students are practising on instruments alone as well, and they organise and participate in an art festival to promote the concept of arts and martial arts and with the aim to recruit new members to the group.

### **Main achievements**

All participants get empowered by capoeira regardless of whether they continue practising it or not. Due to the empowerment of the capoeira, and due to the improved skills and more opened mindsets, those who are lonely are easier to find mates, those who suffer from low self-esteem gain confidence, and so on. The power of community and the skills capoeira practice develops improves those skills which the participants lacked earlier, this sport provides development opportunities for people with various skills, even those can improve who were left alone and let down by the educational system. The community is small, so there is trust and high level of cooperation.

*'Capoeira builds up a spine which will provide support not only for the body but in all aspects of life to achieve successes.'*

### **Biggest challenges**

There are financial barriers that prevents the wide promotion of the capoeira. The ABADÁ association feels the need to get to know how to apply for grants to receive more funding.

There are major financial costs of events, and while there are many volunteers, relying exclusively on volunteers is not sustainable, because they are not available all the time. Despite the flexible feature of capoeira, events need to meet certain criteria of quality, such as the materials and clothing used, so to provide this quality, sufficient financial resources are needed.

Another challenge is that while for an experienced trainer, adapting diversity in trainings is not difficult, however, due to the fluctuation of people it is sometimes challenging to adapt the activities to the participants' various levels of capoeira knowledge.

### **Financial resources**

ABADÁ association receives monthly fees from the participants of the classes, but they would need to build up a stable financial background that is independent of the number of the participants.

### **Recommendations**

When training children, it is important to make a distinction between the way a child behaves and acts in certain situations, and between the personality of the child. Sometimes a challenging behaviour reflects a traumatic experience, so it important to be aware of the possibilities in the background and not to handle the act impulsively on the surface.

On the other hand, it is also crucial to hold a balance and to keep disciplines to provide a fun activity for those who do not disturb the class and to prevent and handle the issue of bullying. The main lessons for the children are that they should protect and not attack each other, rather they should treat each other with respect, and for this many conversations are needed, in some cases even at the expense of physical practice.

The classes are visited by children with various ethnic backgrounds, which also helps to promote acceptance and inclusivity. The emphasis is on community development, so independent programmes, such as hikes are often organised with the help of the parents.

Regarding the competition, the general mentality is that everyone competes with themselves, which means that most of the time they do not compete against each other, but children are encouraged to surpass their own scores.

## **Latvia: Capokids Capoeira Organisation**

### **About the programme**

Capokids Capoeira Organization uses capoeira as a tool to provide a friendly atmosphere for kids and youth who might suffer from bullying, who face conflicts at home and in school, and experience social rejection.

### **Objectives**

The capoeira classes are open to any kids and youth, therefore many kids with ADHD, autism spectrum disorder or with other learning difficulties as well as for those who just look and think differently. The main aim of our organisation is to show kids and youth that there is a place where their difference is accepted and valued.

At the organisation, capoeira is learnt in a cooperative setting, with many groups work and pair work. The participants create shows together, they learn about the possibilities of their bodies used together. The focus is on kids helping those who need help, rather than on rejecting and competing. As a result, each group becomes a community, where each member is valued.

### **Activities**

Classes are organised three times a week for each group. Additionally, workshops are held, where children are mixed from different groups to learn from each other. Camps, hikes and festivals are organised to celebrate together. Each group is limited to 20–25 kids, the organisation usually works with a maximum of 150 kids. There are two trainers per group, the methodology and training schedule is pre-written. There are one or two organizational managers, who take care of the communication with clients and parents, and who oversee the organisation of the events.

### **Main achievements**

The main achievement of Capokids Capoeira organization is that kids and youth attend classes for a long time: on average each participant stays with the organisation for 3 years, many of them attend classes for 5–7 years. Many kids and youngsters think that Capokids is their second home.

The development of the children also needs to get noted. Since kids do a lot of cooperative work, capoeira helps those with diverse learning needs to progress at the same speed as kids who learn quickly. By teaching, explaining and helping each other, the gap reduces between learners' knowledge, thus the group dynamic's progress is fast.

### **Biggest challenges**

The main problem is that the coach must possess good management skills, creativity, and should have a solid psychological background and knowledge of kids' development stages and problems. In addition to this, a Capoeira's background needs to be considered as well. It is very difficult to find such teachers, and it takes a long time to train the coaches. This challenge can be overcome by constant reviewing of trainings and by giving suggestions on how to tackle each situation, by providing solid and practical education to teachers working in a field of social inclusion through sports, especially through capoeira. Many capoeira masters and schools started organizing educational sessions, where they share pedagogical knowledge, not only capoeira movements.

Many advanced trainers use social media as platforms to exchange knowledge and foster pedagogical development with other capoeira coaches.

### **Financial resources**

Currently, the majority of capoeira classes are organized based on a monthly fee, which covers gym rental and the salary of the trainers. There are possibilities to take part in local and international projects to cover fees. For example, Capokids have already received four grants to provide a place for adolescents with learning difficulties to foster social inclusion and to prevent school drop-out.

### **Recommendations**

We present recommendations from a master thesis, which were written by Jelena Gaikevica, owner of Capokids Capoeira Latvia club (Gaikevica, 2020):

- Organizing the class
  - Focusing only on the achievements of high achieving students brings a disproportion of results. Results of this research showed that in an individual setting some kids learn better, but many kids stay outside. In the long-term setting this gap, most probably, enlarges, as a result, lower-achieving kids stop practising. The author suggests organizing classes so that all kids cooperatively and equally develop.
  - Mixing individual settings (repetition) with cooperative learning should bring the best results. In the individual setting, some high-achieving kids and kids with communication problems can fast get element/movement sequence. Afterwards, working in teams/pairs, high-achieving kids will disseminate material among others. As a result, the group is growing equally and the gap among learners reduces. High-achieving kids are not bored with doing the same movements, but rather feel the power to motivate others.
  - In order to learn cooperatively, kids need to constantly be educated to speak, to encourage, and to provide help. Kids need someone to show them settings of group work (one shows – all repeats, one shows – all corrects mistakes, all are working face-to-face, etc). The author suggests using daily phrases: “speak to each other”, “help each other”, “show and explain”. Kids will not teach each other if they do not know how to do it practically. Group work is a skill that needs to be taught similarly to capoeira movements.
  - Putting kids once in a cooperative setting will not bring results, it is rather a long-term journey, but it is worth trying. Set long-term goals, constantly use cooperative settings and help kids to help others. When they understand these settings – the result will flourish.
  - The author suggests applying Dyson & Casey (2016) five elements of cooperative learning to the best outcome during physical education training: positive interdependence (relying on each other), face-to-face communication (dialogue and communication), individual accountability (each is valued for their task, interpersonal skills (listening to each other), group processing (student-centred discussion).
- Working with high achieving kids
  - Leaders learn as well in any setting if they are trained to lead, explain and help. Still, working in groups, they additionally learn to cooperate, motivate others,

communicate, and lead, explain, cooperate, and feel tolerant to different learning processes.

- High-achieving kids should rather work with medium-achieved kids, not low-achieving kids. It is because the gap between them is rather high. The author recommends putting high-achieving kids with medium-level kids and afterwards putting medium level kids to work with low-achieving kids. In this case, high-achievers bring medium-achievers to their level, while medium achievers bring low-achieving ones to their level. As a result, groups fastly disseminate knowledge and the gap among them reduces.
- Working with kids with communication problems
  - The author suggests being careful with music instruments and loud sounds there is a kid with autistic spectrum disorder on the training. Kids with ASD are very sensitive to sounds and it can make their practising unbearable.
  - Some kids with communication problems must be allowed to work alone if they wish. Staying alone helps them to fully focus on the task and movements, not trying to communicate
  - Integration of kids with communication problems should be organized very gently into a cooperative structure since they must have experienced negative experiences of group work. Teach other kids to tolerate, wait for these kids to share their views. If any negative situation appears – talk about it, give explanation and provide feedback.
- Working with kids with visual impairments
  - Allow these kids to find the best spot in the gym to see you explaining the task. Their sight differs from the ordinary and they might not grasp the movements as the trainer explained.
  - Working in an individual setting is hard for kids with visual disabilities since they feel nervous.
  - Tolerate and accept if their movements will rarely be correct at the first attempts. They really do not see minor details, which hide in the movement.
  - Kids with visual disabilities show good results working in a team if the team is ready to help and works efficiently towards motivating and empowering.
- Working with kids with attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder
  - Kids with ADHD should be always given a chance to work with someone more focused in order to correct mistakes that they skipped due to inattentiveness. Similar to kids with visual disabilities, they skip minor details, they get the big picture of the movement but they do not pay attention to smaller details. Working in pairs with someone very focused and attentive helps them eliminate mistakes
  - Kids with ADHD should be allowed to lead and teach to learn more. They need to explore their leading potential, feel valued and powerful.
  - Kids with ADHD feel tired of routine work, sitting, and listening. Allowing them to move, run and not bother others helps them reduce their stress levels, and in some seconds they come back to attentive work.

## **Lithuania: FICAG Vilnius and Capoeira Vilnius**

### **About the programme**

FICAG Vilnius is a Vilnius- based branch of international Brazilian Capoeira school, the first capoeira school in Lithuania. FICAG (Fundação Internacional Capoeira Artes das Gerais) is a Capoeira Regional school, founded by Mestre Museu (Jamil Raimundo). An internationally recognised master, who has 40 years of experience in Capoeira, Mestre (Capoeira Master) since 1995, established his school in 1992. The branch manager is a licensed sports trainer instructor Bruxinha (Despina Šuminaitė). She has 15 years of experience in Capoeira and about 20 years overall experience in Martial Arts and combat sports, and she has represented FICAG since June 2007. This school usually runs lessons four times a week. The other Capoeira school that joined this project is "Capoeira Vilnius" which was the first Capoeira school in Lithuania, that started its activities in 2006. From an amateur group called "Grupo Capoeira a Lituânia", they became one of the leaders of the art form in Lithuania, implementing new and innovative methods, teaching people of different ages and social backgrounds. These Capoeira schools, together with Active Youth, organised open for all and free and local Capoeira classes to foster social inclusion and spread the benefits of Capoeira among the society.

### **Objectives**

Capoeira is all about equality and integration. It was born during the times of slavery as a form of physical and cultural resistance against oppression. Marginalised groups created this sport to create a connection between vulnerable groups. Even roda itself is a symbol of equality. Thus, Capoeira is a very powerful tool of social integration. In Brazil, Capoeira has been used for decades to help underprivileged kids.

FICAG school is responsible for numerous projects in Brazil that allows disadvantaged kids to see capoeira groups as an excellent example of family. For many of them, capoeira means a lot. Capoeira has proven to be a very efficient practice that facilitates the integration of diverse social groups, it supports the overall development of physically disabled and mentally challenged people. Also, the effect is shown when it comes to treating various diseases such as cerebral paralysis. For these people who cannot get up, kick, or move around, Capoeira still offers a broad range of elements, such as music. It is a powerful tool that is used when dealing with balance or coordination problems as well as various psychological issues. One of the goals of these schools is to build a friendly and inclusive environment in classes. The aim is to make it a bit easier for people with disabilities, behavioural difficulties or from underprivileged, different backgrounds to deal with all the challenges and help them feel like they belong.

### **Activities**

FICAG has organised a lot of projects in Brazil to help underprivileged kids. One of the projects that this school organised was called "Happy Hour". This project is based in Warsaw and is meant for people born with an extra copy of their 21st chromosome (Down syndrome). In Lithuania, the FICAG Vilnius branch worked a lot with people coming from different countries, cultural and social backgrounds. During the "Capoeira Connects Europe" project, FICAG Vilnius and Vilnius Capoeira schools and Active Youth implemented four classes that attracted 15 participants per class, and one final event in which more than 30 people participated.

### **Main achievements**

During the project 'Capoeira Connects Europe', implemented classes tried to show participants the power of capoeira as a tool for inclusion. The trainer instructor of FICAG Vilnius, Bruxinha, said that capoeira classes were way more than just physical workouts. Of course, the whole body gets exercised and benefited in many ways, such as endurance, balance, flexibility, agility, reaction time, strength, coordination, body expression, etc. Capoeira instructor said that anyone who commits to taking these classes at least for a few months will extend the range of their physical capabilities and improve their overall physical fitness and health, feel a couple of muscles they never knew were there before. The participants of the classes described their experiences as impactful. They could learn basic capoeira techniques and methods of inclusion that are presented and used in capoeira lessons. Besides that, participants in lessons could gain many new enriching experiences – they learnt one or two songs in Portuguese and got acquainted with a previously unknown type of music. Additionally, they saw, heard and even played unique musical instruments, learnt a little about Brazilian culture, even picked up a couple of Portuguese words and phrases.

One of the most incredible achievements of the capoeira classes is that it can change one's identity from 'disabled', 'challenged' or 'underprivileged', to 'athlete', 'practitioner of martial arts' and 'capoeirista'. There's nothing more rewarding than to see that change happen for people who need it the most.

"It is vital when we look at each other and ourselves that we see the good, the purpose, the dream, the potential, the possibilities, as opposed to – the disability, the challenge, the obstacles, the differences."

### **Biggest challenges**

One of the main challenges is the dissemination of the activities. The message about initiatives related to capoeira does not always reach those for whom capoeira could be significantly beneficial. Moreover, many people are shy to come to classes as novices, especially grown-ups. Some people have never heard that such a martial art as capoeira exists. Thus, it creates a burden to try this activity. The right communication plan can be used to avoid these challenges. The message about capoeira events could be shared with organisations that work with underprivileged groups. Secondly, for youngsters from disadvantaged backgrounds who live far away from the venue where capoeira classes take place, it is difficult to attend the sessions consistently. Such projects related to capoeira in future could be held in specific regions and devoted to those communities. Also, when external donors do not fund capoeira classes or projects, or those projects are finished, it creates difficulties for economically disadvantaged people to attend classes and continue the progress. Such projects must have continuity.

During the 'Capoeira Connects Europe' project's local courses in Lithuania, some unforeseen situations occurred as well. Such situations included increased traffic flow that was a burden for participants to reach the venue.

### **Financial resources**

FICAG Vilnius and Vilnius Capoeira schools organize regular training sessions that are paid for by participants. The classes are based on a monthly fee, which covers gym rent and trainers' salaries. Still, these two capoeira schools participate in various projects that external donors fund, such as this project.

***Recommendations***

Working in teams and pairs during the capoeira lessons is one of the most effective methods to accelerate inclusion. People with different results could disseminate what they learned among others. It is also important not to forget that people have different skills and learning styles, so the instructor should consider this. Also, the capoeira classes should be organised to ensure face-to-face communication or dialogue between learners and instructors. As well as that, instructors should value every student's task during the lessons. It is essential to create a safe environment for students to feel comfortable and free to share their views and speak about their problems. In addition, to reach a larger audience and spread the message about capoeira, a specific and detailed communication plan is needed.



## Malta: Capoeira Nago Malta

### **About the programme**

The organisation Capoeira Nago Malta is run by Contra Mestre Alf (Joao Paulo Ramalho) from Brazil. Capoeira is not a common sport in the Maltese islands, and it can be said that it is the only school that can provide such sessions. Many open classes and outside promotion is practised on the local level in main cities and villages, and on the national TV stations.

### **Objectives**

One of the main goals of the school is creating more awareness of capoeira, and its possibilities to reach out to children and young people, as well as to adults. In Malta, sports is not very habitual, especially in schools where priority is attributed to academic studies, and physical activity and sports are not considered as a must in every individual's life. To challenge this, the organisation seeks many opportunities to reach out to the people, instead of waiting for the people to get to know more about the sport. This is done through various local activities and promoted extensively on all available media channels including social media.

### **Activities**

The activities are held outside in public spaces, in community halls, or in the main city squares. Children and young people are encouraged to participate and try out this new sport. Many local municipalities invite the organisation to provide taster sessions and they are always willing to do them because, besides the promotion of the sport, they can also allow children and youth that are restricted to know of capoeira to practice it free of charge. Many people think it is a fighting sport when told that capoeira is a martial art, but the activities show otherwise. Staff needed for such activities depend on the place where the session is to be held, together with the age, number and needs of the participants. When it is known that children with particular needs will participate in the session as well, more people get recruited to assist so that more individual attention is provided.

### **Main achievements**

Capoeira provides many achievements, it can be a way of lifestyle for every child, young person and adult. Any gender can practice capoeira, having any sexual orientation. It can help in teambuilding and fostering positive changes in group-dynamics, it provides the space to do a physical activity together with friends since it is a very vibrant sport. The Contra Mestre says that

*'Capoeira makes me feel energetic, happy and relaxed at the same time. The sound of the music, the drums and the rituals associated with capoeira give the individual a sense of fulfilment during the session.'*

The ginga is an easy move that is practically learnt during taster sessions. This is also accompanied by the formation of the roda, where everyone is part of a bigger group, and each one is included in the sport. The organisation uses it also with children that have particular learning difficulties because they can dance, clap and sing together with their group mates. It is very positive seeing a child with ADHD, dyslexia etc able to integrate within a group and feel the sense of inclusion, confidence and consistency when practising capoeira.

Being a private organisation and not an NGO, it is normal that participation fees are asked for the sessions but in particular cases when it is understood that the participant faces financial issues, the organisation seeks to provide sessions free of charge. These are satisfactory outcomes that provide so much to all of those who work and practice at the school. Capoeira Nago Malta also seeks to provide capoeira sessions with the National Sports body in Malta to encourage more children to do capoeira. They also participate in telethons that are fundraising events for particular social and national activities. These inputs in the national scenario give the much-needed exposure to promote capoeira because as stated is practically a new type of sport for the Maltese Islands.

### ***Biggest challenges***

One of the biggest challenges is explaining to the people the positive aspects of capoeira. Malta is a country where everyone is fanatic about football while other types of sports do not receive as many credits.

Another challenge is the notion that capoeira is all about fighting. When displayed though, many understand that there is so much more in capoeira. It provides stimulation benefits to the mind and the body, it is a physical activity that generates also a social connection with a group of individuals. In some cases, the trainers sometimes encounter the issue that since music and dance rituals are involved, some may think that it is a female sport rather than an all-gender one. And all these challenges encountered are what encourage them more to promote capoeira nationwide.

### ***Financial resources***

Funds are always an issue. Besides participation fees, Capoeira Nago Malta seeks to obtain funds given by the local municipality. Luckily, capoeira does not require much equipment, unlike some other sports. Expenses of transportation, musical equipment and if required, the mats for the safety and security of the participants are compensated. The organisation also seeks support funds from the central government that are distributed directly for sports organisations and for sports events. This is another positive motivation to further organise taster sessions and to support the social inclusion of those interested to join capoeira.

### ***Recommendations***

The tips of the trainers focus on spreading the notion of the sport, spreading the vibes and the benefits one can obtain from playing capoeira. Many parents might think that capoeira is not the best option as a choice of sport, but it is a very beneficial sport that provides focus, internal strength together with fitness and physical activity. Schools are also good venues, where a socially inclusive environment is provided for capoeira. It is always important to relate the session according to the ages, and with the teachers, since they are the ones who can pinpoint any learning difficulties that are present in the group. This will help in addressing well the needs before the sessions. Never quit!

## Good Practices Using Different Sports

### Hungary: Kacsakő Association: Kacsakő Experience Camp

#### **About the programme**

The Kacsakő Experience Camp project started in 2018 as a solidarity project of an informal group of young people and was inspired by a thesis work of one of the group members. In 2021, Kacsakő Association was established in Budapest, Hungary. By organising recreational sport and adventure activities in Hungary, the main goal of the initiative is to build an inclusive community of 9–14 years old children who otherwise would never meet at regular circumstances due to the different and distant social bubbles they live in. The extended target groups are parents and siblings of the children and the young volunteers who join the programmes to participate in the adventures to gain lifelong professional and socio-cultural experiences.

#### **Objectives**

Kacsakő's programmes aim to create a safe and inclusive space for youth with different backgrounds to come together and learn from and about each other. The main goal is to bring Roma and non-Roma, orphans, minority and majority, and economically disadvantaged and privileged youth together in order to reduce the social distance between them and to lower the level of prejudices they might have towards each other. The programme creates an atmosphere for the kids to learn how to navigate conflicts that arise from socio-cultural and economic tensions, while also learning about each other's perspectives. The organisers believe that these programs help to prepare members of the next generation to become more open-minded and socially sensitive adults who will be able to overcome and mediate conflicts. For this purpose, summer sports camps and further recreational programmes are organised by using sports and arts as a tool to foster positive changes in group dynamics and the development of the participating children's psycho-social skills.

According to the intergroup contact theory, contact with a person who belongs to a prejudiced group reduces bias against them (Allport, 1954). Facilitating positive group dynamics helps to create qualitative connections between peers which strengthens positive intergroup contact. By involving children coming from both Roma and both non-Roma ethnic backgrounds in common sports activities the aims are twofold (Takács, 2018): Firstly, fostering positive changes in group-dynamics contributes to the development of deeper intercultural relations between the participating children (Allport, 1954), which can promote the intergroup theory and have an effect on lowering prejudices, and by creating a supportive network between peers we also contribute to the prevention of school dropout of underprivileged youth (Hajdú et al., 2014). Secondly, the sports activities improve psycho-social skills such as empathy and positive self-esteem. An improved level of empathy among the participants can lead to a reduced level of prejudice, and an increased level of positive self-esteem empowers all children to fight against stereotype threats and to stay motivated in order to achieve

success. By improving further social skills children also learn tools to navigate successfully in society, such as non-violent and intercultural communication, leadership skills and further skills which support successful social interactions.

### **Activities**

By 2021, there were already three socially inclusive summer camps organised, and several one-day long activities both for children and both for the volunteers involved. The first summer camp was implemented with the participation of 40 children and 10 adult volunteers. The main lesson learned at the camp was that much more volunteers are needed considering many of the participating children requires extra attention as some have ADHD, some are on the spectrum of autism, and some just have challenging behaviour due to the difficult circumstances they grew up in. The last two summer camps were organised for 25-28 children with the participation of 12-15 volunteers. The main tools for the activities in the project are non-formal, outdoor, and experience-based learning methods, various sessions are organised, as follows:

- Fair play team sport games (capture the flag, ultimate frisbee, 'Kacsakő' rugby, quidditch);
- "Skill development" sessions e.g with creative writing, music, drama;
- Reflexions and evaluation with small groups;
- Artistic sessions;
- Workshops: (break-dance, carpentering, gender issues, anti-radicalisation, improv, etc.);
- Adventure programmes such as climbing and hiking;
- Special activities: bonfire, talent contest, "bravery trial", sports championships, shooting a music video, scavenger hunt, etc.

### **Main achievements**

Besides measuring positive results in the change of group dynamics, the main achievements of this programme are the valuable experiences and friendships that children and volunteers gain by participating in the programs. For example, some children who at the beginning of the camp are more rebellious, generally due to frustration caused by inequality in the society, by the end of the camp do not want to leave because they feel loved, accepted, and valued. Others become more aware and sensitive of social issues and by getting to know Roma children, the majority of children learn a wider perspective of values.

The programmes have a huge impact on the volunteers' lives as well. For instance, one of the volunteers, who joined the programme for the first camp, and stayed with the group ever since then before the camp has never worked with children. Due to the experiences she gained at Kacsakő she got inspired and started to study Special Education at a university and now she works in a school with underprivileged children.

### **Biggest challenges**

In addition, when children coming from different backgrounds meet, a lot of conflicts occur which needs to be mediated in order to release the minor conflicts and to improve the intercultural- and conflict resolution skills of the participants.

Special attention must be paid to the inequalities and systematic discrimination rooted in our society which in some cases contributes to behavioural issues, therefore in their pedagogical methodology, the organisers stand up for equity – meaning that when children coming from a depressed group and

low socioeconomic background act out, the exceptionally challenging circumstances are considered and the experiences those children had during their life which often can cause frustration and can lead to non-efficient conflict managing tools.

A lot of patience and attention is needed to be able to mediate all of the conflicts that occur specially to handle bullying, therefore the organisation brings half as many adult camp counsellors as many children participating in the camp. It is difficult to reach out to the target group – especially to underprivileged youngsters, but cooperation with other NGOs helps a lot in this regard.

### **Financial resources**

A crucial element of the programmes is that they are provided for free of charge for both privileged and both underprivileged children which causes an atmosphere where equality in participation is highlighted. The main financial resources are coming from funds such as the Solidarity Project programme of the European Solidarity Corps. Besides, the association seeks support by contacting companies and by running fundraising campaigns. Some parents of the participating children sometimes also contribute to the implementation of the camp with small amount of voluntary donations or with equipment and tools.

### **Recommendations**

The methods that are used during the sports activities are based on democratic educational mentality and on cooperative team games. At instructed sports activities those sports are played mostly which originally has the element of fair play (e.g. ultimate frisbee) and which are new to the children (e.g. quidditch) where no one is very professional among the participants. Since they are all beginners in the game, they all make mistakes and they all achieve successes in comparison to football for instance, where some children are more experienced than others.

When creating the teams, the groups are always mixed, and children are put into situations where they need to cooperate and help each other to achieve common goals. Similarly to the Football3 methodology<sup>3</sup>, when playing a tournament (quidditch, “soft rugby”, capture the flag or ultimate frisbee) there are no referees, the adults are also participating and setting an example of fair play to the children. Regarding the rules, decisions are made together with the participating teams, and by involving the children themselves and putting them into a decision-making position they also are more eager to play according to the rules. Playing without an ‘autocratic’ referee, children are encouraged to play according to the rules and stand up for their team when they experience injustice. A reflection session is held in the end of every game where teams are giving scores to each other based on a discussion on how much fair play was respected during the game.

Another important element of the methodology is using motivating systems such as collecting points, giving earned compliments for even little achievements such as a successful catch, and repeating games they liked and not forcing complicated games which the participating children do not engage with.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.streetfootballworld.org/football3/>

## **Latvia: Latvian Floorball Association and Taurena Effects: Sports Vieno project**

### **About the programme**

Latvian Floorball Association in 2019 started the partnership with a non-profit organization, Taurena Effects and developed a project called 'Sports Vieno (Sports Unites)' to help kids and youth from orphanages get involved in floorball.

### **Objectives**

The objective for the project Sport Unites is the activation of orphan children, who usually have limited abilities to visit sports trainings. The goal of the project is to, first of all, raise awareness about floorball and attract kids to this sport. Additionally, to provide the opportunity to train on a regular basis and by the means of common hobby to support them to be better integrated into society, helping them to find new friends and maybe even foster families.

Their target group are kids from 12 Latvian orphanages.

### **Activities**

Floorball trainings are organized for kids living in state care institutions. Cooperation generally starts with a guest visit, during which trainers introduce floorball to the children. Each participant receives sticks, balls, goals and other equipment that will be useful for children to fully enjoy floorball games in the future.

If there is a high interest, regular trainings are organized. For example, once a week, a floorball trainer goes to SOS Villages Valmiera and conduct training for kids there. If it is impossible to organize trainings on the regular basis, kids are offered to join regular floorball sessions nearby, which usually are organized in many Latvian schools. Sponsors cover all costs.

### **Main achievements**

By 2021, 12 orphanages have already been visited and the cooperation continues.

### **Biggest challenges**

Currently, the main challenge is the pandemic, since all trainings for kids are banned.

### **Financial resources**

The project gets funded from sponsors. The main sponsors are the shopping chain ELVI and the petroleum chain Virsi A., which cover the major costs of the project. Individual donations are also received to cover fees associated with kids' regular participation in the training sessions.

## **Lithuania: Active Youth Association: Inclusion of Healthy Generations**

### ***About the programme***

Active Youth Association is a for-purpose organization working with youth and communities in need in Lithuania and across borders. This organization has extensive experience in non-formal education, as well as a range of other topics. One of the projects implemented by the Active Youth Health department is 'Inclusion for healthy generations', which aims to bring people of different ages, genders, and physical abilities together so they can acquire knowledge about healthy living in a fun and interactive way. Thus, the project's overall objective is to foster social inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities like migrants, youth with minority ethnic backgrounds, and people with poor financial situations through their engagement in sports. One of the initiatives of this project was free and open Lindy Hop classes for everyone in order to spend time actively and introduce participants to this dance style. Active Youth and their partners implemented the project from January 2020 till October of 2021.

### ***Objectives***

Lack of capacity for active participation is a problem that excludes people from their communities and even interests. Due to their financial situation, the poorest and disadvantaged ones usually do not have opportunities to participate in various activities. It means that some activities are reserved for people who have enough money. For this reason, free and open Lindy Hop classes were formed. This initiative eliminated the economic barrier encouraging low-income families to give a trial to this occupation. In this way, low-income people could also benefit from these dance classes. Another issue in our society is weak cohesion between generations. The Lindy Hop classes mentioned above implement measures that can restore the possibility for easy interactions and collaborations of all ages. It showed participants that everyone could dance together, despite our differences.

### ***Activities***

Two Lindy Hop classes were implemented during the pandemic time. Because of the restrictions, the classes were held online, so anyone who wanted to participate could join. Each class attracted 30 people of different ages, backgrounds, and physical abilities. Project organizers, coordinators, dance teachers, and facilitators were needed to organize the whole process successfully. Additionally, technical equipment (e.g., computers, cameras, zoom platform, etc.) was essential for online classes.

### ***Main achievements***

One of the highlights of this initiative is the successful inclusion of different people. Every individual could use the opportunity to benefit from this learning experience. All generations could learn and dance together. Physical activity became even more critical during a pandemic due to lifestyle changes and increased sedentary activities. This event encouraged people to move physically and beat couch potato syndrome. Even though the event was held online, it attracted a significant number of participants. Teaching methods were adopted successfully. Also, it showed that everyone could dance despite different physical capabilities. Sometimes people feel that they are not interested in sports. However, these Lindy Hop classes showed that participation in physical activities could be entertaining. Participants were introduced to Lindy Hop as a dance style, learned new moves, and had the opportunity to meet new people. It is worth mentioning that dance classes were free, so it also reached people who always wanted to try it but had a less economic opportunity that stopped them from participating.

**Biggest challenges**

One of the challenges of implementing these activities was the promotion on social media. There was uncertainty about how many people from different backgrounds would attend classes. Also, it was challenging to reach disadvantaged people as they live in other social media realities, so it would not always be possible to disseminate the information about events. The event also aimed to bring all generations together. Though the use of technology is steadily increasing, senior citizens use the internet and social media less than the average person in Lithuania. It creates a barrier for the elderly to get to know information about ongoing social initiatives. One of the strategies to overcome these challenges is to disseminate details of the event through different media. It means to use broadcast or print media, which are quite popular among older people, and contact organizations that work with these target groups.

**Financial resources**

Online Lindy Hop classes were part of the project 'Inclusion for healthy generations', an initiative co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union. Funds are allocated to various activities throughout the whole project. So, participants weren't charged for the lessons and could join without any fee.

**Recommendations**

At the beginning of the project's development, it is essential to define the project's goals and expected outcomes. Then, understand the concept of social inclusion, which needs to be mainstreamed into various areas at national, regional and local levels. Secondly, it is vital to assess the current situation of social inclusion and select appropriate methods using sports. Strategies need to be devised for enhancing visibility, promoting community participation, mainly concentrating on excluded groups and how they can be reached. It is important to find partners, coaches, or facilitators who have similar interests and ideas and communicate your vision and desired outcome of social inclusion. A social inclusion project using sports aims to make it not only a one-time event but that which has continuity and long-term outcomes.



## **Malta: Zejtun Local Council: Slow Streets initiative**

### ***About the programme***

Zejtun Local Council aims to provide various options for the residents' healthy wellbeing through different sports activities for all bubbles of the community, independently of age, gender, sexual orientation, race or religion. The public body's policies aim to reach out to each and every individual that is part of the community, and thus improved community building, belonging and active participation assist in a long-term outcome of community wellbeing. Sport initiatives are held regularly in the public spaces and are provided free of charge.

### ***Objectives***

The main issues the local council addresses are obesity, lack of information, lack of infrastructure and financial limitations to practice different types of sport. Unfortunately, participation in sport comes with a price in Malta and this causes a financial burden in certain families to ensure that their children or young people participate. The most common sport locally is football, and probably it is also the cheapest training to participate in, with infrastructure available almost in each locality in the Maltese Islands. These aspects encourage parents somehow to choose football rather than any other sport discipline that are available locally.

The Local Council from time to time evaluates through qualitative and quantitative methods to hear the community's opinion about their sport and physical activity participation, and these issues have always ranked high: (i) financial limitations, (ii) the balance between study/work and sport, and (iii) and commitment. In the sight of this, the local council targets different groups depending on the initiatives being organised throughout the year. Some are held annually, while some are held according to the needs that arise in the community.

### ***Activities***

The implemented activities are based mainly on the feedback from the residents, which are then acted upon by a Sub-Committee for Youth and Sports within the Local Council. This branch consists of 10 persons and is chaired by the Councillor responsible for the sector.

A regular event that is held annually is the Slow Streets during September, which the Council tries to combine with the Car Free Day held all over Europe. In Malta, it is a known fact that due to its small area and distance to go from one place to another on the same island, people prefer to use the car rather than walk or ride a bicycle. During this Slow Streets event, the aim is to give the main public space back to the people, where cars are not allowed to park or pass from this area, and pedestrianisation is promoted. Residents are invited to participate and come to the space either by foot or using a bicycle. Various sport organisations are invited to provide free tasters of their respective disciplines so the residents can explore new methods of how to do physical activity and learn more about the particular sport exhibited while trying it out. Free bicycle sessions are also provided to both children and adults, and free bicycle usage to anyone willing to go for a ride around the locality. It is a very well attended event by the community, and this also provides a good basis to link and follow up with other events.

### **Main achievements**

The main achievement of the Slow Streets initiative is the active and visible participation of the residents regardless of any differences or limitations one might have. Before the event, extensive promotion is done through various channels, utilizing social media, printed advertisement, push notifications on the council's mobile app and most importantly, through outreach. The latter is done by youth and community workers that engage in the NGOs of the community and, in detached youth work within the different public spaces in the locality.

Promotion is also done in the two schools that cater from 3 years to 16 years through printed material to take home with them. Through these different methods, the local council makes sure that the reach is done all over the community. The sports organisations that take part in the full-day event provide the equipment necessary so that the persons present experience the feel of the sport. For example, a basketball sports club brings over movable basketball rings together with balls so that those interested to know more about the sport can try it out and learn basic skills with the support of professional trainers. Other tools that are set up include a panna pitch, a squash court, and large-sized chess and draughts board, amongst many others.

### **Biggest challenges**

The biggest challenges in implementing the activity are mainly the logistics and the costs. As a local council, one needs to process all in a specific manner for clarity and financial purposes because one is dealing with public funds. This proves to be very bureaucratic and takes time and energy to go through such channels. Luckily, the administration together with the Mayor and Councillors provide the maximum support towards the Slow Streets event and other activities, because they understand the importance of sport and physical activity of each individual, and that is relayed back into the community's wellbeing too then.

Unfortunately, procedures are there to stay so it is not easy to overcome such barriers. Yet, the motivation and response of the participation of the residents over the edge the setbacks and the challenges, and that is what keeps the energy and will going to keep on organising such large scale events.

### **Financial resources**

The activity is funded through various methods, namely:

- through voluntary participation of some of the participating sports organisations,
- through sponsorships,
- through a specific budget focusing on sport acquired through the local council's funds and
- through Central Governmental or European funds if and where possible.

The main goal is that the people participating do not pay, so this event has to be all somehow funded to be sustainable. For example, in 2020, the locality acquired funds from the Central Government through a winning application for the European Mobility Week which resulted in a €2000 grant, that supported to the extension of the activity and its promotion.

***Recommendations***

Planning is the crux of the success of such events, together with a good team to work with. The team needs to be capable of listening to what the people need and adapt these with methods to ensure social inclusion. This is not always easy but with the will, one can achieve the ideal outcome. Another important tip is to follow-up and evaluate the activity.

One should always aim to learn from the setbacks and challenges that were encountered, and such methods will only help in improving the next activity. The best feedback that one can acquire is from the participants themselves because they can provide the right data on how to enhance the process.

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