



# **EQUAL PLAY**

## **SELF-AWARENESS TOOL COMMON EUROPEAN REPORT**

Promoting acceptance between migrants /  
refugees and nationals through sport

**Erasmus+ Sport (Centralised Action)  
Project No: 101243185**



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EQUAL PLAY

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# INTRODUCTION

**THIS PHASE REPRESENTS THE FIRST STEP OF THE PROJECT, AIMING TO REACH KEY ACTORS INVOLVED IN SPORT AND INCLUSION, INCLUDING BOTH PARTICIPANTS AND STAKEHOLDERS.**

## About this Report

The main objective was to promote reflection and self-assessment of attitudes, perceptions, and practices related to the integration of migrants and refugees through sport.

The development of the SELF-AWARENESS TOOL began with the creation of a competence map, which helped define the key areas to be explored, as well as the specific objectives and target groups of the questionnaires. Based on this process, several proposals were discussed and refined.

As a result, five different questionnaires were designed, each tailored to a specific target group:

- **Migrants/refugees**
- **Host-national participants**
- **Coaches**
- **Clubs and NGOs**
- **Stakeholders**

The questionnaires combine closed questions (for quantitative analysis) with open-ended questions, encouraging deeper reflection and more nuanced insights.

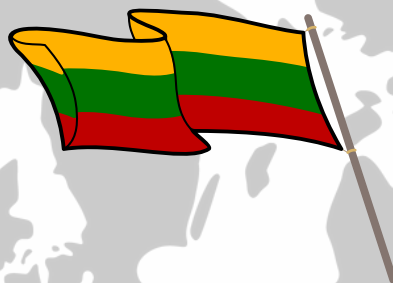




# PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS



**IRELAND**



**LITHUANIA**

Initially, the project aimed to collect a minimum of 50 responses. However, in order to ensure greater reliability and robustness of the results, the questionnaires were distributed more widely, resulting in a significantly higher number of responses across all groups in the 5 participant countries



**SPAIN**



**ITALY**



**TURKEY**





# INTERNATIONAL SURVEY RESULTS



- A** Migrants/Refugees
- B** Host-National Participants
- C** Coaches
- D** Clubs and NGO's Representatives
- E** Stakeholders

Participating Organisations	A	B	C	D	E	TOTAL
IRELAND	33	77	16	14	13	153
SPAIN	14	13	10	10	12	59
ITALY	5	10	7	7	6	35
LITHUANIA	10	10	10	10	10	50
TURKEY	19	29	34	24	11	117





# MIGRANTS & REFUGEES

A total of 81 responses were collected from migrant and refugee participants across the five participating countries.

Overall, the findings reveal a consistently positive perception of sport environments, with participants generally reporting that they feel welcomed, safe, and respected during sport activities. Across countries, sport is widely perceived as a powerful

tool for social integration, contributing significantly to a sense of belonging and community connection. Most participants indicate that they feel comfortable interacting with local participants, although variations exist depending on context, with some respondents reporting lower confidence linked to communication difficulties or previous experiences.

Despite the positive overall perception, several common structural and social barriers emerge consistently across all countries:



- 1 Language barriers (most frequently mentioned)**
- 2 Cost of activities**
- 3 Transport and accessibility**
- 4 Time/schedule constraints**
- 5 Fear of discrimination**
- 6 Administrative or documentation barriers (in some contexts)**





# MIGRANTS & REFUGEES

Language appears as the key cross-cutting challenge, affecting communication with coaches, understanding instructions, and overall confidence in participation.

Qualitative responses highlight several important themes:

- **The importance of social connections and friendships built through sport**
- **The need for clear, accessible, and multilingual information about activities**
- **The value of inclusive, mixed environments where everyone is treated equally**
- **The role of supportive coaches and peers in fostering inclusion**



Although reported experiences of discrimination are generally limited, some participants mention isolated situations of exclusion or discomfort, indicating the need for continued attention to inclusive practices.

Overall, the findings confirm that sport represents a welcoming and supportive environment for migrants and refugees, while also highlighting the importance of addressing communication barriers and structural obstacles to ensure equal access and participation.





# NATIONAL PARTICIPANTS

A total of 139 responses were collected from host-national participants. The results show very strong support for inclusion and diversity in sport environments across all countries.

139



Participants consistently report:

- Feeling comfortable engaging in sport with migrants and refugees
- Strong agreement that mixed sport activities benefit the whole community
- A shared belief that sport can reduce prejudice and promote mutual respect
- Positive perceptions of sport environments as safe and inclusive spaces

Cultural differences are generally perceived as being respected, although some variability suggests that this depends on specific contexts and environments.

The main barriers to inclusion identified include:

1 Language barriers

2 Stereotypes and attitudes

3 Lack of structured inclusion policies or institutional support





# NATIONAL PARTICIPANTS

While attitudes are overwhelmingly positive, some respondents report occasional misunderstandings or isolated cases of discrimination, often linked to communication issues rather than intentional exclusion.

Qualitative responses highlight several important themes:

- **The key role of coaches in shaping inclusive environments**
- **The importance of education, awareness, and active inclusion practices**
- **The need for equal treatment and consistency in behaviour**
- **The importance of creating more opportunities for interaction and socialisation**



Overall, the findings indicate that host-national participants are strongly supportive of inclusive sport environments, but also recognise that inclusion requires active effort, awareness, and structured support, not only positive attitudes.



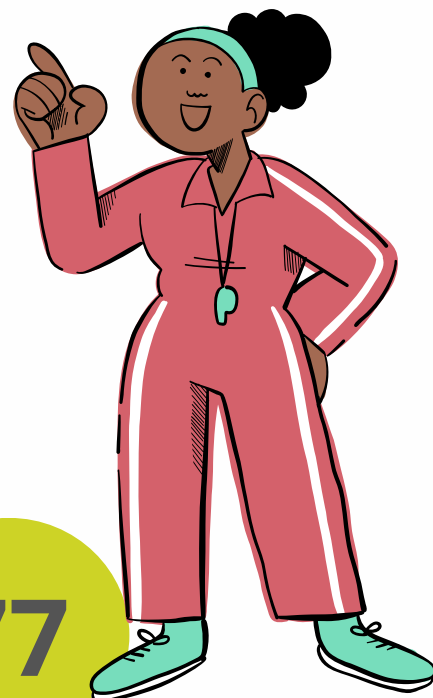


# COACHES

A total of 77 responses were collected from coaches and facilitators.

The results show a high level of commitment and motivation towards inclusion, with most coaches reporting confidence in their ability to:

- Include migrants and refugees in sport activities
- Deliver mixed-group sessions
- Create safe and respectful environments
- Promote positive behaviour and inclusion



77

However, across all countries, a consistent pattern emerges: while attitudes and motivation are strong, there are gaps in practical skills and tools.

Key areas where coaches report lower confidence include:

- 1 Managing language barriers
- 2 Addressing cultural misunderstandings
- 3 Handling sensitive or complex Inclusion situations
- 4 Safeguarding and referral procedures (in some contexts)





# COACHES

The main barriers identified by coaches reflect both participant-related and structural challenges:

1. **Language barriers (most common)**
2. **Cost and financial constraints**
3. **Transport and logistical issues**
4. **Fear of discrimination**
5. **Administrative barriers**



Qualitative responses highlight several important themes:

- **The need for practical tools and structured guidance**
- **The importance of ongoing training in intercultural competence**
- **The role of empathy, communication, and adaptability**
- **The value of inclusive events and social interaction beyond training sessions**



Overall, the findings suggest that coaches are a key driver of inclusion in sport, but their impact could be significantly strengthened through targeted training, resources, and institutional support.





# CLUBS & NGO REPRESENTATIVES

A total of 65 responses were collected from clubs and NGO representatives. The findings indicate a general commitment to inclusion, although the level of organisational development varies across countries.



65

Most organisations report:

- Promoting inclusive participation
- Recognising sport as a tool for integration
- Prioritising safe and respectful environments
- Engaging in collaboration with other organisations

However, several organisational gaps are consistently identified:

- 1 Limited or inconsistent staff training on inclusion and diversity
- 2 Weak or uneven implementation of policies
- 3 Limited monitoring and evaluation systems
- 4 Dependence on short-term or insufficient funding



# CLUBS & NGO REPRESENTATIVES

The main challenges identified include:

The main challenges identified include:

1. **Lack of financial resources**
2. **Need for additional training and capacity building**
3. **Coordination difficulties with external stakeholders**
4. **Limited organisational capacity**

**\*A key finding across countries is the distinction between Declarative commitment to inclusion, and Structured, systematic implementation\***

Qualitative responses emphasise:

- **The need for sustainable funding mechanisms**
- **Access to best practices and practical tools**
- **Stronger collaboration with public institutions and social services**
- **The importance of moving from passive inclusion (open access) to active inclusion strategies**

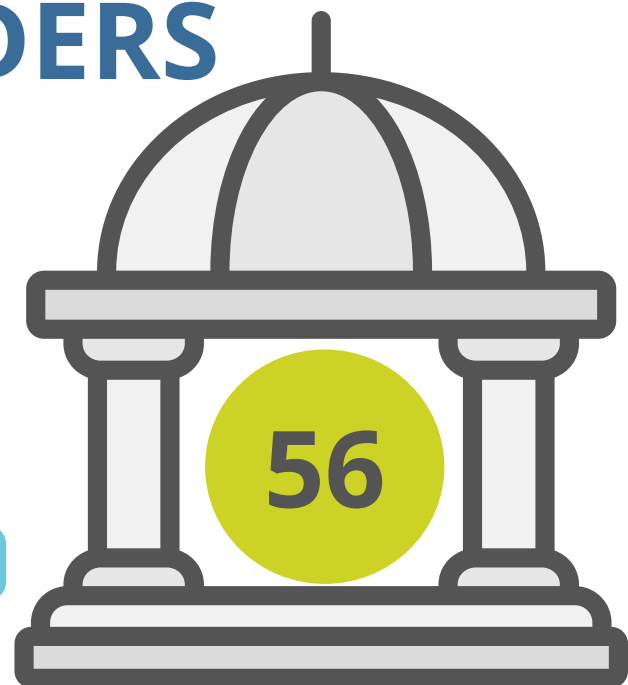


Overall, organisations are engaged and motivated, but require greater structure, resources, and strategic planning to maximise their impact.



# STAKEHOLDERS

A total of 56 responses were collected from stakeholders (public administrations, sports federations, educational centers, social services, etc.). Across all countries, there is a strong consensus that sport is an effective tool for social integration, representing one of the most consistent findings in the entire study.



Stakeholders generally report:

- Positive perceptions of sport's role in integration
- Moderate to positive levels of coordination between sectors
- Some availability of sport opportunities

At the same time, more critical assessments are observed in:

- **Implementation of inclusion policies**
- **Access to sport for vulnerable groups**
- **Use of data and monitoring systems**
- **Consideration of gender and intersectionality**



However, a clear gap emerges between:

- 1 The recognised potential of sport
- 2 The effectiveness of systems and structures supporting inclusion

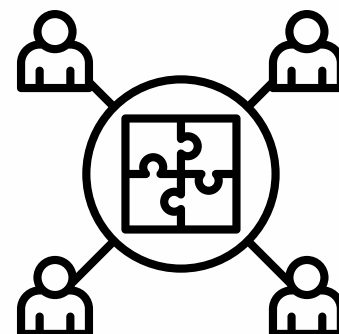




# STAKEHOLDERS

The main system-level barriers identified include:

1. Lack of coordination between sectors
2. Insufficient funding and long-term support
3. Policy gaps or weak implementation
4. Limited awareness and outreach
5. Difficulty reaching vulnerable populations



Qualitative responses highlight:

- The need for stronger institutional commitment and leadership
- Improved cross-sector collaboration
- More accessible and inclusive sport opportunities
- Better data collection and evidence-based decision-making
- The importance of long-term strategies rather than short-term initiatives



Overall, the findings suggest that while sport is widely recognised as a powerful tool for integration, its full potential is limited by structural, institutional, and coordination challenges. Strengthening these areas is essential to ensure sustainable and effective inclusion outcomes.





## FINAL EVALUATION OF THE SELF-AWARENESS SURVEYS

The results across all participating countries indicate that the SELF-AWARENESS TOOL has proven to be an effective and valuable instrument for promoting reflection and understanding of intercultural inclusion in sport environments.

The tool successfully captures perspectives from multiple stakeholder groups, allowing for a comprehensive and multi-level analysis of inclusion, from individual experiences to organisational and systemic dimensions. It highlights both strengths (positive attitudes, strong belief in sport as a tool for integration) and key challenges (language barriers, structural obstacles, and gaps in implementation) in a consistent way across different national contexts.

Importantly, the tool not only gathers data but also encourages self-reflection among participants, particularly coaches, organisations, and stakeholders, supporting a more conscious and intentional approach to inclusion.

**Overall, the project emphasises the need for practical, creative, and student-centred approaches that support wellbeing and foster more inclusive, connected, and resilient school communities.**





# KEY FINDINGS



**SPORT IS WIDELY RECOGNISED AS A POWERFUL TOOL FOR INTEGRATION.**

Across all countries and stakeholder groups, there is a strong and consistent belief that sport promotes social inclusion, reduces prejudice, and fosters a sense of belonging.

**OVERALL EXPERIENCES IN SPORT ENVIRONMENTS ARE POSITIVE.**



Migrants and refugees generally report feeling welcomed, safe, and respected, with sport contributing significantly to community connection and social interaction.



**LANGUAGE BARRIERS ARE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CROSS-CUTTING CHALLENGE.**

Communication difficulties affect participation, confidence, and interaction across all groups, highlighting the need for multilingual support and adapted communication strategies.





# KEY FINDINGS

## STRUCTURAL BARRIERS CONTINUE TO LIMIT PARTICIPATION.



Cost, transport, time constraints, and administrative requirements (e.g. documentation) are consistently identified as key obstacles to accessing sport activities.

5

## POSITIVE ATTITUDES EXIST, BUT ARE NOT SUFFICIENT ON THEIR OWN.

While host-national participants and organisations show strong support for inclusion, effective integration requires active efforts, structured approaches, and consistent practices.

## COACHES PLAY A CRUCIAL ROLE BUT NEED MORE SUPPORT.



Coaches are highly motivated and committed to inclusion, yet require additional training in areas such as intercultural communication, managing diversity, and addressing sensitive situations.





## KEY FINDINGS

7

**ORGANISATIONS SHOW COMMITMENT BUT LACK STRUCTURE AND RESOURCES.**

Clubs and NGOs are engaged in inclusion efforts, but often face limitations in funding, staff training, and systematic implementation of policies and monitoring systems.

**GAP BETWEEN POLICY AND PRACTICE AT SYSTEM LEVEL.**

8

Stakeholders highlight that, despite existing policies and recognition of sport's value, implementation, coordination, and accessibility remain insufficient in many contexts.

9

**NEED FOR STRONGER COORDINATION AND LONG-TERM STRATEGIES.**

Collaboration between sport organisations, public institutions, and social services is essential but still underdeveloped in many cases.





# KEY FINDINGS

## LIMITED USE OF DATA AND MONITORING SYSTEMS.

10

Across countries, there is a lack of systematic data collection and evaluation, which limits the ability to measure impact and improve inclusion initiatives.

11

## INCLUSION REQUIRES A SHIFT FROM PASSIVE TO ACTIVE APPROACHES.

Moving beyond “open access” towards intentional, targeted, and evidence-based inclusion strategies is a key priority identified across all levels.



# TRANSNATIONAL FOCUS GROUP

## REPORT

### 1. SUMMARY OF MAIN DISCUSSION POINTS

Across all five countries (Spain, Ireland, Türkiye, Lithuania and Italy), participants strongly agreed that sport is a powerful tool for promoting inclusion, interaction and a sense of belonging between migrants/refugees and host communities. However, a consistent finding is that inclusion through sport is not automatic and depends on intentional, structured and well-supported practices.

A key shared issue is the gap between policy and practice. Although inclusion, safeguarding and anti-discrimination frameworks exist in all contexts, they are often:

- **Not sufficiently known by practitioners**
- **Not clearly communicated**
- **Not consistently implemented in everyday sport environments**

This gap limits the real impact of otherwise well-established policies.

Another major cross-cutting theme is the presence of structural barriers to participation, including:

- **Language and communication barriers**
- **Financial constraints and cost of participation**
- **Transport and accessibility issues**
- **Bureaucratic and licensing obstacles (particularly relevant in Türkiye)**
- **Limited access to information and poor communication strategies (especially in Lithuania)**

Importantly, in several contexts, barriers are not due to lack of willingness, but rather to limitations in communication, resources and organisational capacity.

The role of coaches and sports professionals emerged as central in all countries. They are key actors in shaping inclusive environments, yet they:

- **Often lack practical tools and training**
- **Feel unprepared to manage discrimination, cultural differences or sensitive situations**
- **Face constraints such as limited time and resources (highlighted in Spain and Lithuania)**



## ACROSS ALL REPORTS, THERE IS A STRONG EMPHASIS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF SOFT SKILLS AND VALUES

**EMPATHY**

**RESPECT**

**TEAMWORK**

## INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

These values should be systematically promoted, not only in response to conflict situations, and should be embedded from an early age.

Additional important transnational insights include:

**1**

Family engagement is crucial for participation, especially for young migrants (Türkiye)

**2**

Communication is a key structural barrier, particularly when information is not accessible or multilingual (Lithuania)

**3**

Inclusion may remain superficial if participants are present but do not fully understand or feel part of the group (Italy)

**4**

Differences between contexts (schools vs clubs, public vs private systems, age groups) significantly affect inclusion outcomes

Overall, the main conclusion is that sport has strong potential for integration, but only when supported by intentional, inclusive and well-resourced approaches that address both individual and structural factors.





## 2. KEY FEEDBACK ON QUESTIONNAIRES

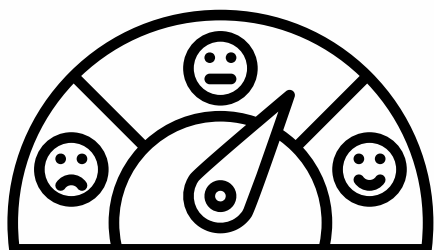
Across the five countries, participants agreed that the questionnaires are relevant and useful as self-awareness tools, capturing many of the key dimensions of integration through sport.

However, consistent feedback highlighted several areas for improvement:

- **Stronger focus on practical application**
- **Questionnaires tend to focus more on perceptions and attitudes than on practical ability to act**
- **There is a need to better assess how stakeholders handle real-life situations, particularly discrimination and inclusion challenges**

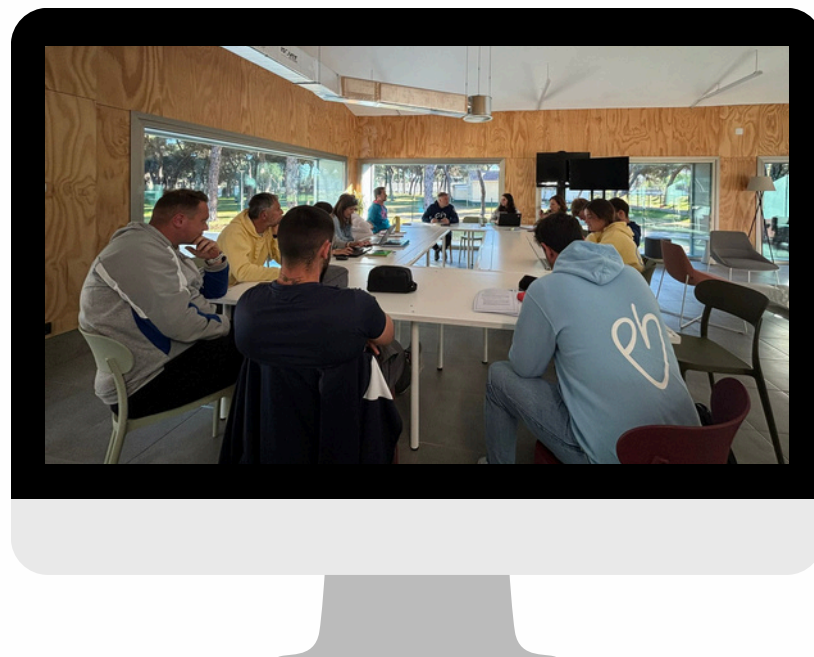
Better reflection of structural barriers

- Greater attention should be given to:
  - **Resource limitations (time, funding, organisational capacity)**
  - **Bureaucratic barriers (Türkiye)**
  - **Communication gaps and lack of accessible information (Lithuania)**
  - **Cost and access issues (Ireland, Italy)**



Policy awareness and implementation

- Need to include questions assessing:
  - **Awareness of existing laws and safeguarding systems**
  - **Real implementation in practice**





# CLARITY, ACCESSIBILITY AND METHODOLOGY

- Simplify language and ensure accessibility for all target groups
- Improve structure and flow of questions (from individual to systemic levels)
- Consider methodological improvements (e.g. scale formats, sample size relevance)

Greater emphasis on soft skills and inclusion culture

- Reinforce:

1

**EMPATHY**

2

**TEAMWORK**

3

**COMMUNICATION**

4

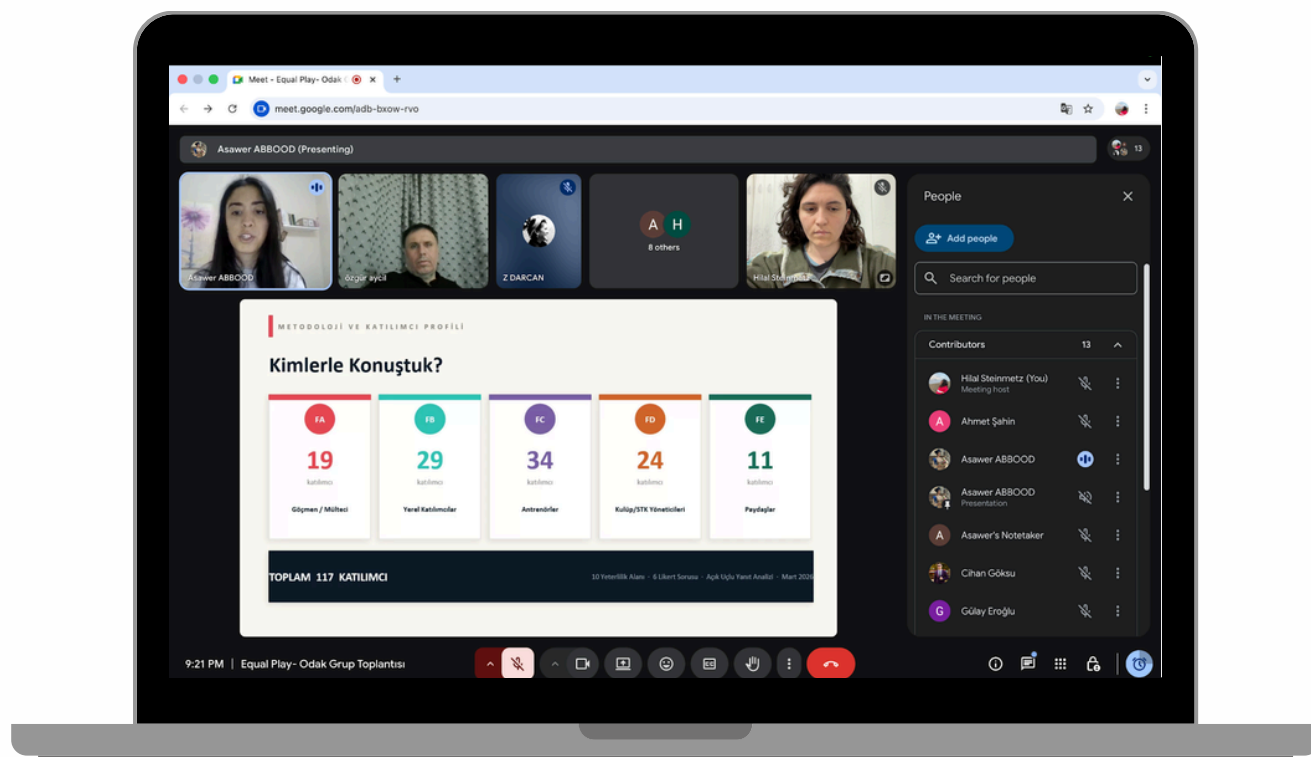
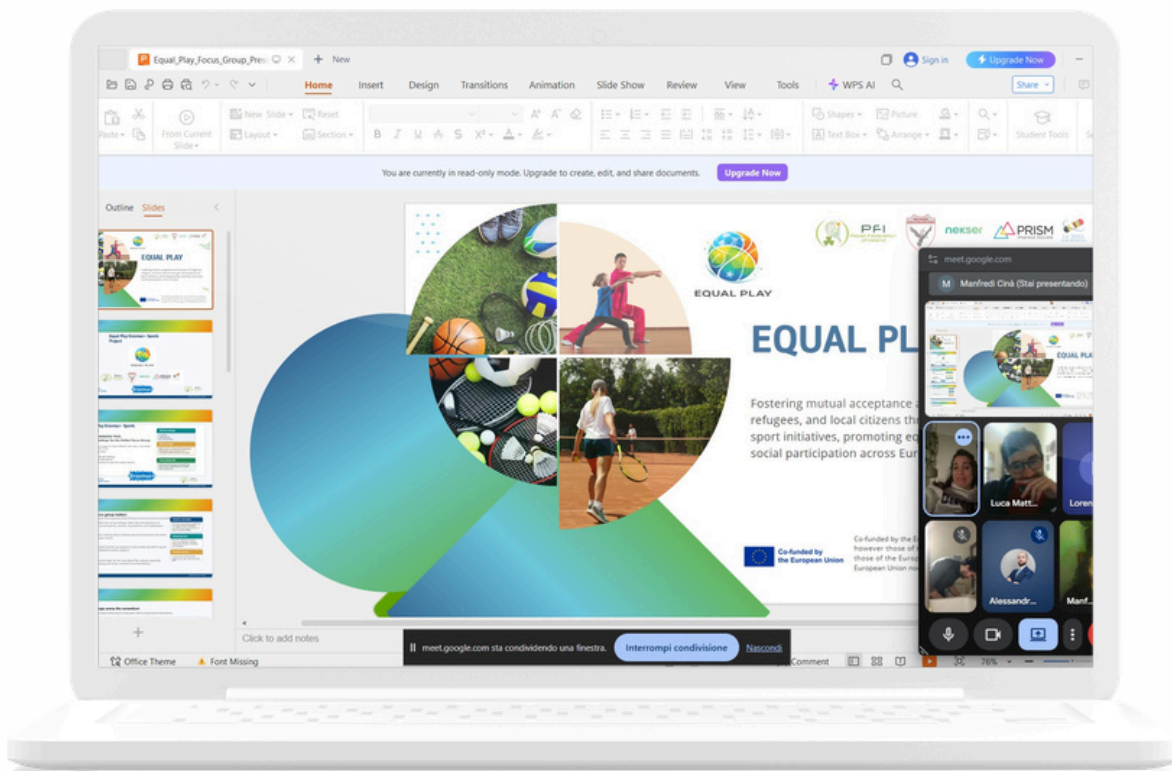
**INCLUSION**

Overall, the feedback suggests that the questionnaires should evolve from awareness-based tools into more action-oriented and practice-driven instruments, bridging the gap between knowledge and implementation.





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## 3. LIST OF PROPOSED KEY QUESTIONS / THEMES FOR TRAINING PILLS

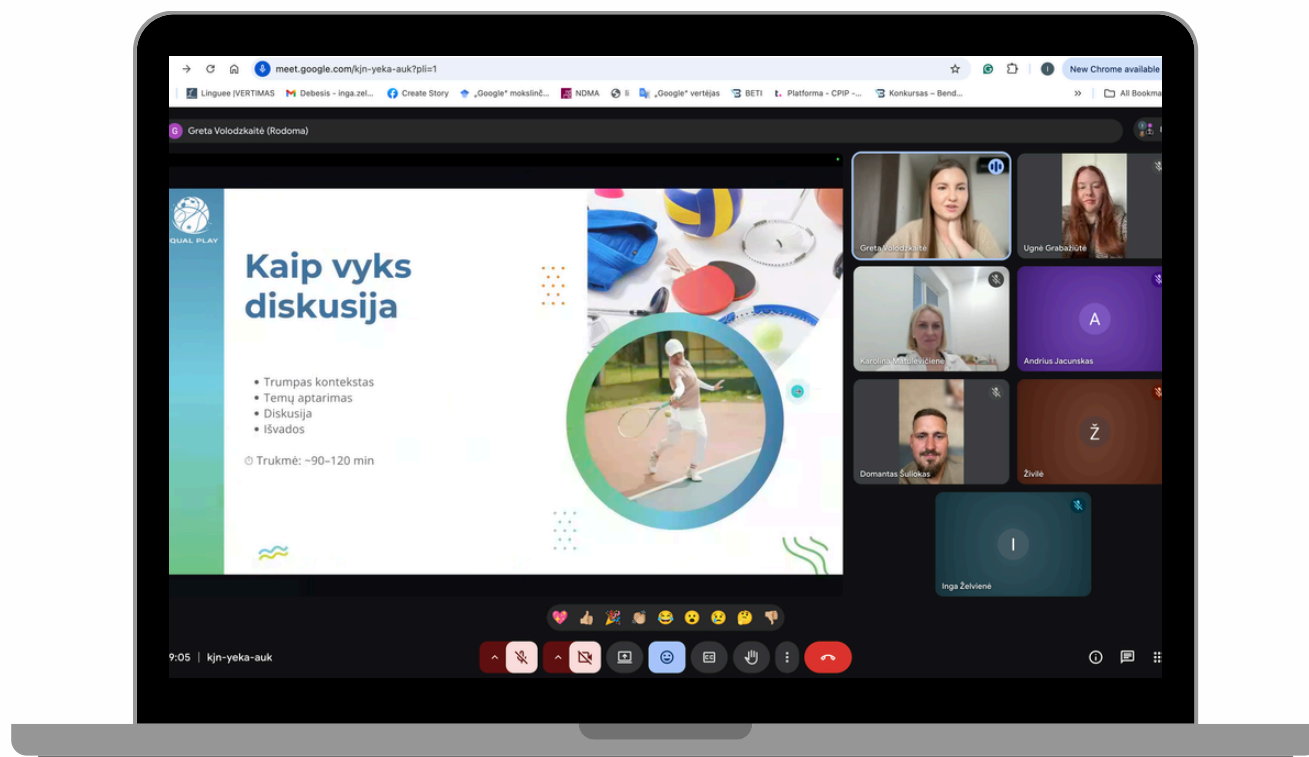
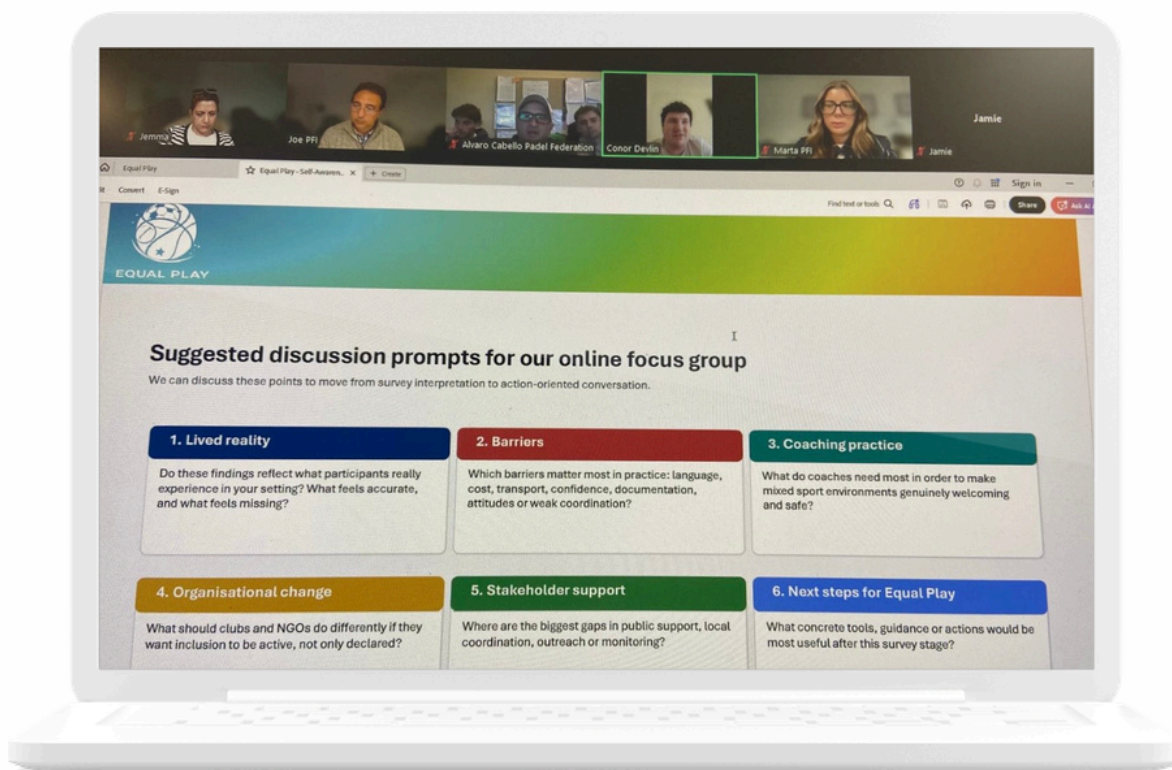
### Key Themes (Transnational Priorities)

Based on the combined findings, the following themes were identified as priorities at European level:

- **Prevention and management of discrimination in sport**
- **Intercultural competence and communication**
- **Empathy, teamwork and respect in diverse groups**
- **Role of coaches and sports professionals in inclusion**
- **Awareness and implementation of anti-discrimination laws and policies**
- **Bridging the gap between policy and practice**
- **Addressing structural barriers (cost, transport, bureaucracy, access to information)**
- **Inclusive communication strategies (multilingual, visual and accessible tools)**
- **Family engagement and trust-building in sport participation**
- **Safeguarding systems and clear reporting mechanisms**
- **Capacity building and training for coaches and organisations**
- **Sports psychology and understanding participants' emotional and social needs**
- **Age-sensitive approaches (especially for adolescents)**
- **From passive inclusion to active and intentional inclusion practices**
- **Education in inclusive values from an early age through sport**

## Key Questions (Transnational Level)

- How prepared are sports professionals to address discrimination and intercultural challenges in practice?
- What practical tools are needed to support inclusive coaching and group management?
- To what extent are inclusion and anti-discrimination policies known and applied in sport organisations?
- What are the main structural barriers limiting access and participation in sport?
- How can communication be improved to ensure accessibility for migrants and refugees?
- How can sport environments promote empathy, teamwork and mutual respect on a daily basis?
- How can families be effectively engaged to support participation in sport?
- What mechanisms ensure safeguarding, support and reporting within sport settings?
- How can sport activities be intentionally designed to promote real inclusion rather than assumed inclusion?
- How can inclusive values be taught through sport from an early age?





# CONCLUSIONS

The combined findings from the questionnaires and national focus groups across partner countries confirm that sport has strong potential as a tool for promoting inclusion, social cohesion and a sense of belonging between migrants/refugees and host communities.

However, a key conclusion is that inclusion through sport is not automatic. While attitudes towards diversity and inclusion are generally positive, there remains a significant gap between awareness and actual implementation in everyday sport practices.

Both the questionnaires and focus groups consistently highlight the importance of addressing structural barriers, such as language, cost, access to information, transport and administrative procedures. These barriers often limit participation more than negative attitudes.

**Another central finding is the critical role of coaches and sport organisations. Although they are highly influential in shaping inclusive environments, many professionals lack the practical tools, training and resources needed to effectively manage diversity, prevent discrimination and foster inclusive group dynamics.**





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# CONCLUSIONS

The results also underline the importance of soft skills and values, such as empathy, teamwork and intercultural understanding, as essential components of inclusive sport environments. These should be promoted proactively and from an early age.

In addition, the findings point to the need for stronger communication strategies, ensuring accessibility and inclusiveness, greater awareness and implementation of policies and safeguarding mechanisms and more intentional and structured approaches to inclusion, moving from passive access to active participation.

**Overall, the project highlights the need to support stakeholders in transitioning from general openness to inclusion towards practical, consistent and sustainable inclusive practices in sport.**



**PFI**  
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