

# Basket Bridges

## Migrant integration through basketball

Good project practices

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*This publication is based on the project team’s experiences, interviews with participants, observations of local activities, and materials developed during the course of the project.*



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# Chapter 1

## Introduction: why sport can build bridges

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About migration, loneliness, language barriers, trauma, exclusion, and why basketball is a good tool for integration.



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## Migration is rarely just a change of place of residence

For many people, it means the disruption of their previous life, the loss of familiar reference points, separation from family, legal uncertainty, economic difficulties, and the need to find one's way in a foreign language and new social rules. A migrating person arrives in a new country not only with a suitcase of belongings, but also with a baggage of experiences: sometimes war, violence, poverty, being forced to leave home, fear for loved ones, guilt, exhaustion, or a long life in limbo.

That is why integration cannot be understood solely as an administrative process of legalising one's stay, enrolling a child in school, finding accommodation, or taking up employment. These are, of course, fundamental matters, but they do not exhaust the experience of becoming part of a new society. Integration also has an emotional, relational, and communal dimension.

People need not only documents, but also a sense that they are being noticed. They need not only a place to sleep, but also a space where they can meet others.

Through the project, we saw that for many people, the first step towards integration was not a conversation about documents or their life situation, but simply turning up in a safe group, where they could just be themselves for a while.



They need not only help, but also agency — the experience of being able to co-create something, to belong to something, to be part of a group.

## The Basket Bridges Project

It is precisely here that sport can become an exceptionally effective tool for building bridges. The Basket Bridges project was based on the premise that basketball can support the integration of migrants, increase their participation in sporting activities, strengthen relationships with local communities, and create more inclusive spaces for people to come together.

The project did not treat basketball as an end in itself, but as a tool for social, educational and integration work. In practice, this involved very specific actions: discussions with migrant centres, the development of resources for those working with migrants, training sessions, workshops, local sporting events, discussions with participants and the compilation of experiences in the form of this guide. Not everything could be planned from the outset — some solutions only emerged once we saw the participants' actual needs.



## Migration as an experience of loneliness and suspension

In discussions about migration, numbers, procedures, support systems, and migration policy are often talked about. Loneliness is discussed far less frequently. Yet loneliness is one of the most painful, and at the same time least visible, dimensions of migration. A person who leaves their country often loses their natural network of everyday relationships: neighbours, acquaintances, family, local places, rituals, language, sense of humour, and obvious cultural codes.





Migratory loneliness does not always mean being physically alone. One can live in a centre, be surrounded by other people, go to an office, school or work, and yet not feel part of any community. One can meet many people every day, but have no one to talk to freely. One can be visible as a migrant, a refugee, a person from abroad, and at the same time invisible as a specific human being with their own story, talents, sense of humour, passions and needs.

In many cases, migration is also accompanied by a prolonged sense of suspension. People awaiting administrative decisions, living in temporary conditions, uncertain about their family's future or employment prospects, function in a state of constant tension. In such a situation, it is difficult to plan the future, build relationships, sign up for local activities or take initiative. The longer this state lasts, the greater the risk of withdrawal, isolation and loss of faith in the possibility of normal participation in social life.



Sport does not solve all these problems. However, it can create something that is very often lacking: a simple, safe and repeatable space for contact.

It can provide the experience that for an hour or two, one is not merely a person in a procedure, a person waiting, a person dependent on others' decisions. One is a team member. Someone who passes the ball, makes decisions, supports others, laughs, learns, tries, makes mistakes and returns to the game.



# Language barriers, or when words are not enough

One of the most frequently cited barriers to integration is language. A lack of knowledge of the host country's language makes almost everything more difficult: contact with offices, schools, doctors, employers, neighbours, coaches, or peers. The language barrier can lead to shame, withdrawal and avoidance of social situations. A person who cannot speak freely may be wrongly perceived as disengaged, shy, reluctant, or passive. Yet very often it is not a lack of motivation, but a fear of being misunderstood, ridiculed, or making a mistake.



Basketball has enormous value in this context because it allows contact to begin without the need for lengthy conversation. Of course, language is still needed — rules must be explained, safety ensured, and the course of activities agreed upon. However, much of the communication on the court is non-verbal: through gesture, movement, eye contact, body positioning, passing the ball, reacting to a partner, and the shared rhythm of the game. A participant can engage in the activity before they begin to speak freely.

Integration often begins not with conversation, but with shared experience. First comes eye contact, a smile, a pass, a joint exercise. Only later do words follow.

In multilingual groups, this sequence is often more natural and less burdensome. Participants do not have to immediately present themselves, explain their story, or prove their language competence. They can start with simple action.





That is why simplifying communication is so important in sport-integration projects. The coach should speak in short sentences, demonstrate exercises, use gestures, images, demonstrations, repetitions and pair work. It is also worth involving bilingual individuals, volunteers or participants who can help with translation. The point, however, is not to eliminate language entirely. The point is that language should not be a gate through which only the most confident can pass.

## Trauma, stress and the need for safety

When working with migrants, one must remember that some participants may have difficult, and sometimes traumatic, experiences behind them. Not everyone will want to talk about them. Not everyone will reveal them. Not everyone will even explicitly identify them as trauma. Organisers of integration activities should not assume they know participants' stories, let alone ask about them out of curiosity. They should, however, design activities in a way that is safe, predictable and free from unnecessary pressure.

Trauma can affect the body, emotions, concentration, trust and the way a person responds to a group. A person with experience of violence, flight, war, loss or prolonged uncertainty may withdraw more quickly, react with tension to noise, struggle with competition, cope poorly with shouting, time pressure or physical contact.

That is why integration sport must differ from sport focused solely on results. The point is not to abandon the dynamics and emotions of the game entirely. The point is to run sessions consciously.



Safe sporting activity should have a clear structure. Participants should know what will happen, how long the session will last, what the rules are, and that they may decline to take part in an exercise if they feel uncomfortable.

It is worth starting with simple, calm activities that do not require immediate physical contact or performing in front of the group. More dynamic elements can be introduced gradually, while observing participants' reactions.

In this approach, the coach is not a therapist, but should be an attentive person. Their task is not to diagnose trauma, but to create an environment in which a participant can feel safe. Sometimes the best intervention is not a comment, but giving space. Sometimes one need not ask: Why aren't you exercising?, but rather offer a gentle alternative. Sometimes one need not push someone by force, but allow them to observe the group from the side during their first session.



Sport can help in regaining contact with the body, a sense of energy, rhythm and agency. It can provide the experience that the body is not merely a carrier of stress, fatigue and fear, but also a source of movement, joy, cooperation and strength. This, however, is only possible when sessions are conducted with respect for participants' boundaries.



# Exclusion is not always visible

The exclusion of migrants does not always take an obvious form. Sometimes it does not involve a formal ban on participation, but rather the existence of barriers that in practice make participation impossible. Sessions may be theoretically open to everyone, but if information is only in the local language, they take place far from where people live, require a fee, special clothing, prior online registration or the courage to enter an unfamiliar group, then for many migrants they remain inaccessible.

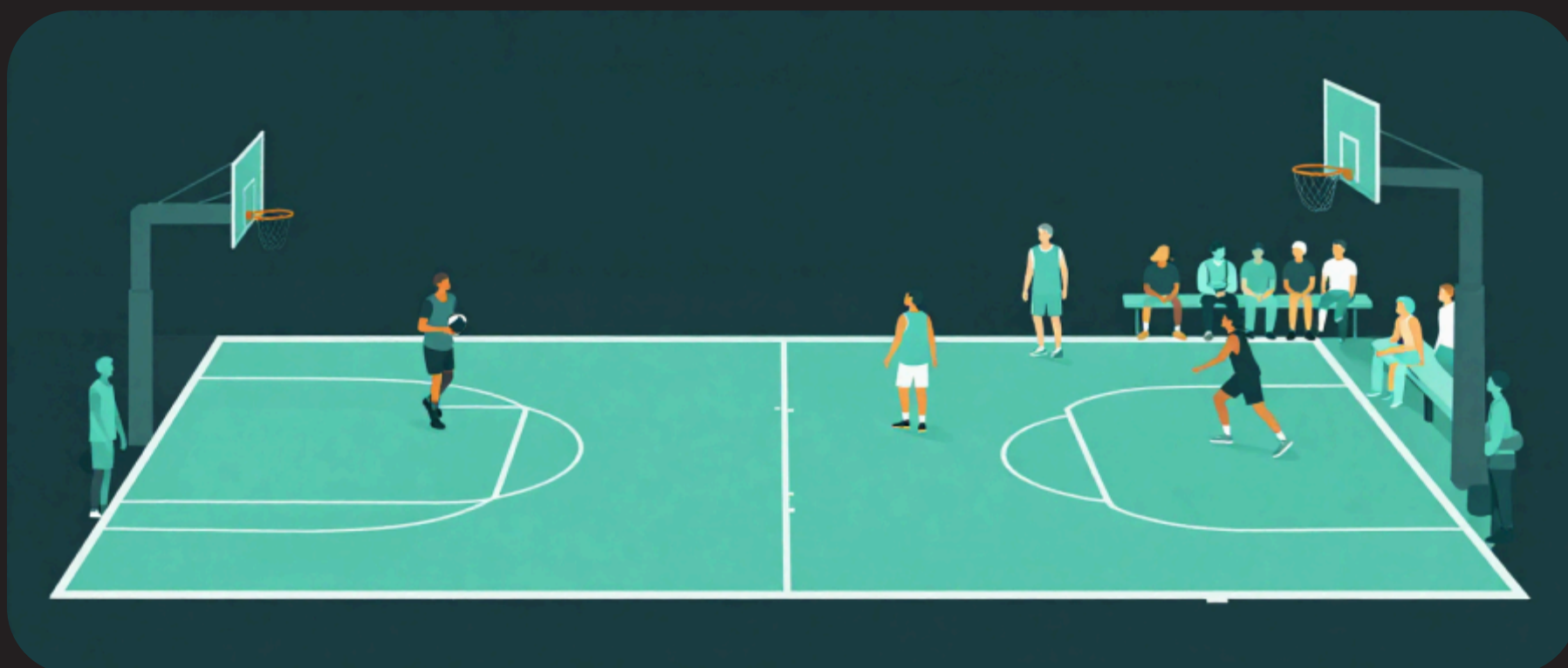


That is why in integration projects the perspective must be reversed. It is not enough to say: Everyone is welcome. One must ask: who can realistically take up this invitation? Who will learn about it? Who will understand it? Who will have transport? Who will feel welcome? Who will have someone to come with? Who fears judgement? Who does not have sports clothing? Who must care for children at that time? Who, for cultural, religious or personal reasons, may not wish to exercise in a mixed group?

Good integration activities do not begin with the expectation that participants will adapt on their own. They begin with designing accessibility.



Sometimes this means providing transport. Sometimes translating information. Sometimes a personal invitation from a migrant centre worker. Sometimes organising sessions closer to where people live. Sometimes preparing a separate space for women or accommodating childcare. Sometimes abandoning the pressure of sports clothing and allowing someone to exercise as they can.



Basketball is a good integration tool precisely because it can be easily adapted. There is no immediate need for a full-sized court, professional kit or an advanced sporting level.

One can start with a single ball, a simple hoop, a small hall, pair exercises, movement games and team games based on cooperation. This means basketball can become a space for a first step, not only for those who are fit and confident, but also for those who are just getting used to the group.

# Why basketball?

Basketball has several features that make it particularly useful in integration projects.



1. Teamwork — success depends on cooperation, passing, observing others and responding to the situation as a team.

In basketball, no one acts entirely on their own, even if it is just one person taking a shot. Every move requires spotting a teammate, making a decision, trusting someone on the team and being ready to support them. For people with experience of migration, this is very important, as it allows them to form a connection without having to spend a long time explaining themselves and their story. A participant may feel that they are needed by the group — because they passed the ball, helped in defence, encouraged another person, or simply were part of a joint effort. This is precisely why basketball can foster a sense of belonging more quickly than many traditional forms of integration.

2. Simple rules — they can be demonstrated without a lengthy explanation, and the level of difficulty can be easily adjusted.

Basketball is based on simple, straightforward actions: pass, catch, dribble, shoot, position yourself, get back, help out. These actions can be demonstrated without lengthy explanations. They can be practised in pairs, small groups and larger teams. The level of difficulty can easily be adjusted. A beginner can join in from the very start, even if they don't know all the rules.





3. A quick sense of community — a team is formed by a shared goal, not just by talking.

Basketball creates a quick sense of community. A team is formed not only through conversation, but through a shared goal. Even a short game can spark emotions, laughter, cheering, mutual support and a sense of togetherness. In the context of migration, such an experience is particularly valuable. A participant who feels like a stranger in their everyday life can experience being part of a group on the court.

4. Non-verbal communication — passing the ball is a simple gesture of trust.

Basketball allows us to work on non-verbal communication. Passing the ball is a simple gesture of trust. It means: I see you, you're part of the game, you can take action. In an inclusive project, such a gesture can be more important than formal declarations of openness. A participant doesn't need to hear a long speech about inclusion. They can experience it when someone invites them to take part in an exercise, passes them the ball, waits for their move and celebrates their success.

5. Social values — fair play, respect and cooperation — become a reality, not just an abstract concept.

Basketball provides an opportunity to work on social values. Fair play, respect, accepting mistakes, taking responsibility for those less able, responding without aggression, and cooperating despite differences — all of these can be practised on the court in a very concrete way. As a result, these values do not remain abstract concepts. They become a way of life.



# The situation in partner countries as the shared backdrop of the project

The strength of the Basket Bridges project lay in the partnership of organisations from five countries: Serbia, Poland, Greece, Turkey and Spain. Each of these countries had a different migratory context, different social experiences and different integration challenges. The partners were able to look at migrant integration from various perspectives: a transit country, a country receiving war refugees, a border country of the European Union, a country with a very large number of refugees, and a country dealing with intensive migratory processes.



## Serbia

Serbia has for years been situated on an important migratory route through the Western Balkans. For many migrants, it is not solely a destination country, but also a country of transit, waiting and temporary stay. This context means that integration activities must take into account the high variability of participants' situations. Some people may stay in the country briefly, some may be in a state of waiting, and some may not know where they will be in a few months.

Basketball offers the possibility of quickly joining a group without a lengthy formal process. It can be particularly valuable in reception centres and environments where migrants struggle with waiting and inactivity.





## Poland

In recent years, Poland has become one of the most important countries receiving people fleeing the war in Ukraine. According to UNHCR, in February 2025 there were 998,070 registered refugees from Ukraine in Poland. After the stage of immediate solidarity comes the stage of everyday life: schools, work, neighbourly relations, local tensions, social fatigue, and the need to create shared spaces.

In Poland, sport can play an important role especially in work with children, young people and families. It can facilitate contact with peers and break down distance in schools and local communities.



## Greece

Greece has for many years been on the front line of European migratory challenges. Its geographical location makes it one of the main arrival points for people crossing the Mediterranean Sea and land borders. According to UNHCR data, in 2025 there were 41,696 arrivals by sea and 7,075 by land. Significant groups came from Afghanistan, Egypt and Sudan, among others.

In this context, sport can be a space of respite from everyday life dominated by procedures, queues, documents and uncertainty. Basketball can help create situations in which migrants meet not only institutional workers, but also local residents, coaches and peers.





## Turkey

Turkey remains one of the most important refugee-hosting countries in the world. According to the UNHCR annual review for 2025, the country hosted 2.3 million Syrians under temporary protection and approximately 166,000 refugees and asylum seekers from Iraq, Afghanistan and other countries. With such a large number of people under protection, local, flexible solutions accessible to different age groups are necessary.

Basketball can become a simple pretext for a meeting in which participants are not first defined by nationality or legal status, but by shared activity.



## Spain

Spain is a country receiving both people seeking international protection and migrants arriving from Latin America, Africa and other regions. According to UNHCR, in 2025 Spain received 144,396 applications for international protection; the largest group were citizens of Venezuela, followed by Mali and Colombia. Data also indicated 471,099 refugees and 276,450 asylum seekers.

The Spanish context shows that the absence of a language barrier does not automatically mean integration. The participation of the Galician Basketball Federation brought sporting, organisational and training experience to the project — effective integration through sport requires not only goodwill, but also organisational competence.



# Common denominator: the need for encounter

Although the situation in Serbia, Poland, Greece, Turkey and Spain differed in terms of the scale of migration, the profile of migrants, institutional solutions and local tensions, all these contexts shared one need: the need to create safe spaces for encounter. Migrants needed places where they could be active, visible and treated as subjects. Local communities needed opportunities to see concrete people in migrants, rather than an abstract social category. Organisations and institutions needed tools that allowed them to move from declarations of integration to practical action.

Sport can build bridges precisely because it operates at the level of experience. It does not require immediate closeness or full agreement on all matters from participants. A shared rule, a shared movement, a shared goal is enough.

The court becomes a place where differences do not disappear, but cease to be the only axis of relationships. For a moment, what matters more is who passes the ball to whom, who helps in defence, who encourages after a missed shot, who notices the person standing on the sidelines.



In this sense, basketball is something more than physical activity. It is an exercise in being together. It teaches that a team is not formed from similarity, but from cooperation. It shows that communication can begin with a gesture. It allows one to experience that a person previously perceived as a stranger can become a partner in the game.

And this is one of the first, simplest and most important steps of integration.

The Basket Bridges project grew precisely from this understanding of sport. It was not about creating ideal players or organising a one-off event. It was about building a model in which basketball helped to overcome loneliness, language barriers, distrust, exclusion and the distance between communities.



The aim was for the ball to become a pretext for meeting, training — a space for relationships, and the court — a bridge leading from strangeness to community.







## Chapter 2

# About the "Basket Bridges" project

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Basketball as a deliberate social intervention for migrant integration



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## About the Basket Bridges project

The "Basket Bridges – migrant integration through basketball" project was an international socio-sporting initiative whose main goal was to use basketball as a tool for migrant integration, strengthening the cohesion of local communities and building relationships between people with migration experience and host communities.

The project was not conceived as a one-off sporting event, tournament, showcase or promotional campaign. Its essence was a deliberate social intervention in which sport became a tool for working with people, and the court — a space for meeting, rebuilding trust and learning cooperation.



Basketball was chosen because it combines simplicity of rules, the possibility of non-verbal communication, teamwork, movement, emotions and a rapid experience of belonging. The project emphasised that participation in basketball activities was intended to give migrants opportunities for contact with local communities, developing social relationships and participating in activities promoting inclusion and a sense of belonging.



# The project as a response to the need for integration

Basket Bridges grew from a very specific diagnosis: migrating persons, particularly those staying in centres, reception facilities or receiving support from social organisations, often have limited opportunities to participate in ordinary local life. Their daily existence is frequently dominated by procedures, waiting, uncertainty and the need to solve basic problems.

In such a context, sport may seem like something additional, less urgent than documents, housing, work or school. However, the project demonstrated that physical activity is not a luxury. It can be one of the first steps towards regaining agency, contact with others and a sense of normality.

Integration does not happen solely through formal support systems. A person also needs relationships. They need the experience that someone knows their name, invites them to join in, waits for them at sessions.

In this sense, the project was a response to exclusion understood not only as a lack of access to services, but also as a lack of access to social relationships. A migrant may formally reside in a given locality, yet have no opportunity to meet its residents. They may live next to the local community, but not together with it.

Basketball was particularly important here because it allowed participants to enter into relationships without needing to immediately overcome all barriers. A person who does not know the language, does not know how to start a conversation, fears rejection or is unsure how they will be received, could begin with the simplest gesture: participating in an exercise, passing the ball, playing together.

In the project, sport was therefore a language that preceded words.





# International partnership

The project was built as a partnership of organisations from five countries: Serbia, Greece, Poland, Turkey and Spain. Each partner brought different experiences, resources and competences, meaning the project combined sporting, social, educational, psychological and communication perspectives.

**OKK Junior (Serbia)** — project coordinator, a basketball club with experience in working with children and young people. It brought practical knowledge of running basketball sessions, organising sporting events and using sport to develop social attitudes.

**Fifty-Fifty (Greece)** — an organisation bringing experience in non-formal education, social work and strengthening social cohesion. Its role was particularly important where the project went beyond sport and became an educational process.

**Inthinknity Foundation (Poland)** — an organisation working for social inclusion through sport and art therapy, particularly in relation to marginalised groups, including young migrants and refugees. It brought a social, educational and psychological perspective.

**SORGED (Turkey)** — experience in youth work, non-formal education, volunteering and European projects.

**Federacion Gallega de Baloncesto (Spain)** — strong basketball, organisational and training infrastructure.



# The court as a meeting space

The most important idea of the project was to treat the court as a meeting space. Not as a place of selection, competition and fitness assessment, but as a space where people from different backgrounds could make contact on more equal terms. On the court, what mattered most was not where someone came from, what their legal status was, or how well they spoke the local language. What mattered was that they were part of the exercise, the game, the team and the shared activity.

In the project, basketball served several functions simultaneously:

**Physical activity** — supported health, movement and energy

**Social education** — taught cooperation, responsibility and fair play

**Integration tool** — created situations of contact between migrants and residents

**A pretext for conversation** — about respect, equality, non-discrimination and community

The project did not assume that the mere presence of migrants on the court automatically meant integration. Integration required the conscious design of situations. It was necessary to ensure the manner of inviting participants, the preparation of staff, the atmosphere of sessions, simple language, a sense of safety, accessibility, relationships with migrant centres and the involvement of the local community.

This is why Basket Bridges could be regarded as a model of social intervention — an action planned to address a specific problem, initiate change and leave behind solutions that could be replicated.



# Main objectives of the project

The project was planned around several interrelated objectives. Each of them addressed a different dimension of exclusion and the need for integration.

## **Objective 1: Increasing migrant participation in sport**

The aim was for migrants not to remain solely recipients of assistance, but to be able to actively participate in community life. Sport offered this possibility because it was accessible, engaging and understandable even with limited language skills.

## **Objective 2: Building relationships between migrants and local communities**

The project was not limited to working within a closed group of migrants. Its premise was to create situations of encounter. Integration was understood as a two-way process, requiring openness also on the part of the host community.

## **Objective 3: Equipping staff with tools**

The project envisaged the development of a toolkit — a set of tools to support people working with migrants in organising basketball-based activities. Even the best idea could not be properly implemented without adequately prepared individuals.

## **Objective 4: Testing activities in practice**

The project envisaged real engagement with local environments, contact with centres, the organisation of events and testing which solutions worked and which required modification.

## **Objective 5: Documenting participants' experiences**

Interviews, storytelling and video materials made it possible to capture change not only in numbers, but also in human stories. Sometimes the most important change was that someone felt part of a group for the first time in many months.

## **Objective 6: Developing a good practice guide**

The project assumed that the experiences gained should not remain solely the internal knowledge of the partnership, but could be organised and passed on as a model for use in other communities.





# Main project activities

The project was built as a process. Its activities followed one another in a logical sequence: from mapping the environment, through preparing tools and staff, to direct work with migrants.

## 1. Mapping and cooperation with migrant centres

It was not merely about finding places where migrants were staying. It was about building relationships with institutions and organisations that knew their situation, needs and possibilities.

## 2. Development of the toolkit

The toolkit was intended to explain why it is worthwhile to include migrants in sporting activities and how to do so in a safe, inclusive manner, consistent with the values of non-discrimination and respect for diversity.

## 3. Training for centre staff

The aim was to increase the competences of people who could become local facilitators of the integration process. Centre staff were often closest to migrants and knew their daily reality.

## 4. Workshops for migrants

Workshops allowed participants to become familiar with the sporting space, learn the rules, build initial contacts, break down barriers and engage in activity without the pressure of a professional sporting level.



# Main project activities (cont.)

**5. Local activities with migrants**

Training sessions, friendly games, integration events, friendship matches and activities involving local communities. Migrants and residents were to have the opportunity for joint action.

**6. Interviews with migrants**

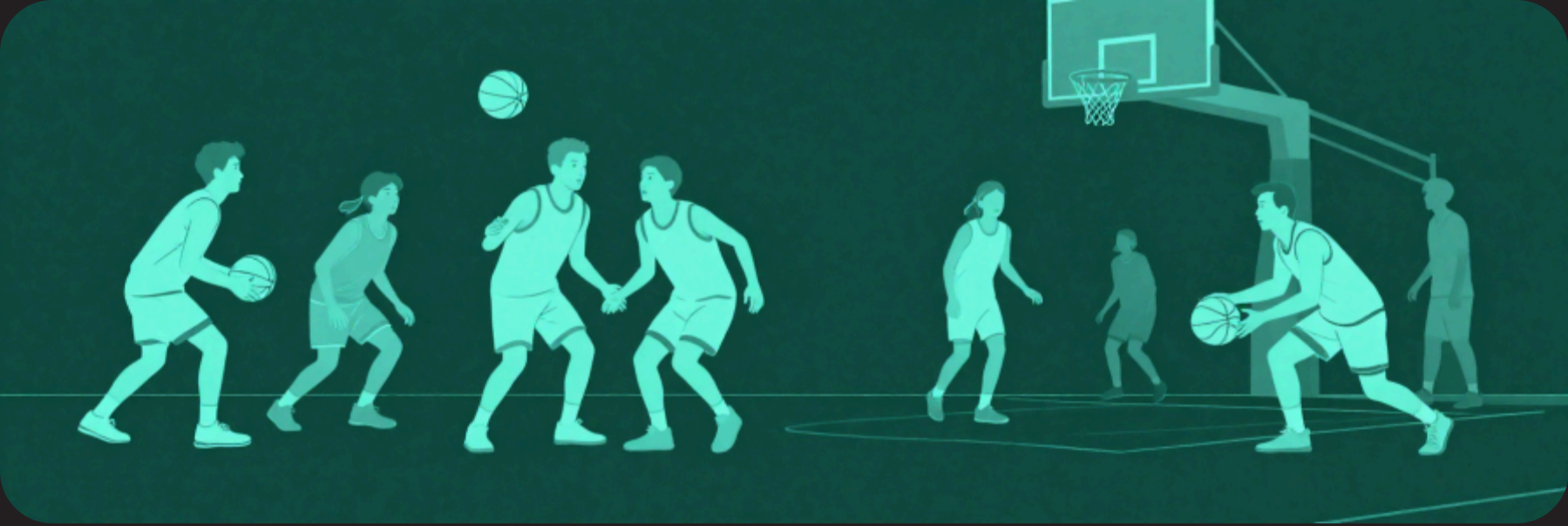
The project envisaged conducting at least twenty conversations before participation in activities and after their completion. The aim was to capture changes in well-being, relationships and sense of belonging.

**7. Communication and dissemination**

Social media, video materials, a YouTube channel, photographs, reports, appearances in local media and articles presenting the achievements and impact of the project.

**8. Good practice guide**

A result of particular importance — it was intended to organise the project's experiences and ensure that its effects would not end with the final sessions. A practical source of knowledge for other organisations.



# The project as a process, not a one-off event

One of the most important features of Basket Bridges was that the project did not reduce integration to a single sporting event. A tournament, picnic or match can be important, but on their own they are not enough to build lasting relationships.

First, it was necessary to identify who we were working with and in what context. Then to prepare tools. Next, to train the people who would work with migrants. Only then to deliver workshops and local activities. In parallel, it was necessary to document experiences, listen to participants and disseminate conclusions.

Integration takes time. It requires repetition. It requires presence. A person who comes to the first session may not immediately join the group. Only after several meetings do they begin to feel they have the right to be there.

## Project results

The project results can be understood on several levels:

- 1. Organisational:** toolkit, training, workshops, interviews, good practice guide.
- 2. Educational:** strengthening the competences of centre staff, coaches and facilitators in integration through sport.
- 3. Social:** greater opportunities for migrants to make contact with others, build relationships and develop a sense of belonging.
- 4. Symbolic:** the migrant as participant, player, team member — not merely a recipient of assistance.
- 5. Sustainability:** a guide enabling the transfer of experiences beyond the partnership and the adaptation of the model in other locations.





# Why Basket Bridges was not a sports tournament

The project was not a sports tournament because its aim was not to select winners. It was not about the match result, the points table, medals, or competition between teams. It was about a social process in which basketball was a method of building relationships.

A tournament usually begins with dividing into teams, rules, and competition. An integration project begins earlier: with the question of who actually has the courage to step onto the court. Who received an invitation. Who understood the information. Who had transport. Who feels safe in a group. Who needs language support. Who does not have sports clothing. Who is afraid of being laughed at.



## The social value of the project

The social value of Basket Bridges lay in the fact that the project combined the simplicity of the tool with the depth of the goal. The tool was basketball — an activity that is well-known, dynamic, team-based, and relatively easy to adapt. The goal was integration — a process that is delicate, complex, and requires trust and time.

The ball itself does not integrate. What integrates is the way it is used: who it is passed to, who is invited, who feels safe, who is allowed to make a mistake, who is noticed.

The project also had educational value for sports organisations. It showed that a club, coach, or federation can play an important social role. Sport does not have to be confined to the world of competitions, results, and technical training. It can be a tool for combating exclusion.



# Project results

One of the most important assumptions was to leave behind something more than documentation of completed activities. The project was to create knowledge that could be passed on. The toolkit and good practice guide were not additions, but part of the project's legacy. They were intended to enable other organisations to draw on the partnership's experience and adapt the model to their own conditions.

The project results can also be understood as a change in mindset. Basket Bridges showed that integration should not be treated as a one-sided obligation of migrants. It is not about the migrating person finding their way to the local community alone, without support and without invitation. The community must also build a bridge.



A bridge does not belong to only one side. A bridge connects two banks. For integration to be genuine, movement is needed from both sides: the openness of migrants and the readiness of the host community, the engagement of sports organisations and the knowledge of social organisations.

The project showed that such a bridge can begin with a very simple gesture. With passing the ball. With an invitation to the team. With a shared training session. With a local match in which the most important thing was not who won, but who for the first time felt they were no longer standing on the sidelines.





## Chapter 3

# Diagnosing the needs of migrants and local communities

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From careful assessment of the situation to actions that truly include





# Why a needs diagnosis?

Effective integration activities did not begin with a ready-made training scenario, a list of exercises, or booking a court. They began much earlier — with a careful assessment of the situation of the people the project was aimed at. In the case of Basket Bridges, it was particularly important not to treat migrants as one homogeneous group. People with migration experience could have very different needs, different histories, different levels of language proficiency, different attitudes to physical activity, and different levels of readiness to engage with the local community.

A sports-integration project, if it was to be truly inclusive, could not rely on the simple belief: we will organise a training session and migrants will come. Such an approach would be too superficial. In practice, many people might not come not because they were not interested, but because they did not understand the invitation, did not have transport, were afraid of being judged, did not have sports clothing, did not feel safe in a mixed group, or simply did not yet trust the organisers.

The needs diagnosis was the first step towards designing activities that responded to the real situation of participants, rather than to the organisers' assumptions.

Already at the project description stage, it was indicated that one of the key activities was to be mapping and establishing cooperation with migrant centres in local communities, followed by conducting workshops, local activities, and work with migrants. The aim was not to create yet another sports offer, but to use basketball as a tool for integration, building social relationships, and strengthening participation in local life.



# Why you must not start from assumptions

One of the most common mistakes in social projects is starting activities from ready-made answers. An organisation assumes it knows what participants need because it has previously worked with a similar group, read a report, or knows the local community well. Yet every group is different, and in the case of migrants, the differences can be particularly significant.

Some participants might primarily need contact with other people. For them, sports activities were an opportunity to escape loneliness. Others might first need safety. Perhaps they were not ready for a loud, dynamic activity. Still others might have been interested in sport but feared they would not cope linguistically or physically. Some people may have had experiences of violence, war, flight, or institutional stress behind them.

That is why the organisers' first task was to pause before acting and ask a few simple but very important questions: who are the people we want to invite? What do we already know about their situation? What do we not know? Who can help us understand their needs? What barriers might mean that despite their willingness, they will not take part?

Assumptions can be dangerous because they are often invisible. We may assume that everyone likes sport. That basketball is easy. That free means accessible. That women and men will want to exercise together. That the main barrier is language, when the bigger problem turns out to be transport, shame, lack of trust, or childcare.

The needs diagnosis made it possible to verify these assumptions. It was not about creating complicated studies or multi-page reports. It was about attentiveness. About checking whether the project responds to people's real needs, rather than simply looking good on the schedule.



# How the real needs of migrants were identified

Identifying the needs of migrants should be a simple but multi-source process. A single survey or a single conversation was not enough. It was best to combine several methods of gathering information: conversations with migrant centres, consultations with staff, information meetings, short anonymous surveys, observation, informal conversations with participants, and an analysis of organisational barriers.

The first and very important source of knowledge were staff at migrant centres, aid organisations, schools, community centres, or local institutions. They often knew best what difficulties migrants faced on a daily basis. They could indicate what times were realistic for activities, whether transport was needed, whether the group had sporting experience, whether participants needed translation, or whether there were women in the group who would not take part in mixed sessions.

The second source of knowledge were the migrants themselves. However, the manner of conducting the conversation was important here. One could not begin with overly personal questions. Simple questions about participation in the project were sufficient: Would you like to take part in sports activities? What times would be good? Do you need transport? Would you prefer sessions for beginners? Would you prefer to exercise in a mixed or separate group? What would help you feel safe?

Information meetings at the migrant centre or in a neutral local space were also very valuable. Their purpose was not only to convey information about the project. It was also an opportunity to observe participants' reactions, questions, and concerns.

Good diagnosis did not end before the first training session. It should continue throughout the entire project. After each session, it was worth asking oneself: who came and who did not? Who was active and who stood on the sidelines?





# Language and communication barriers

The language barrier was one of the most obvious, yet also one of the most complex barriers. It was not only about whether a participant understood an instruction. It was also about whether they felt confident enough to engage with the group, ask a question, request a repetition, admit they did not understand something, or say they did not want to do a particular exercise.

In sports activities, the language barrier could be partially reduced through demonstration. A coach could show an exercise, use a gesture, point a direction, divide the group into pairs. Basketball lends itself well to this because many actions are visually clear: passing, shooting, dribbling, standing in a circle.

Communication should be simple, short, and repeatable. Instead of a lengthy explanation of the rules, it was better to use a few simple commands: pass, shoot, switch, stop, together, good, try again. It was worth preparing basic words in participants' languages or at least using symbols, pictograms, and demonstrations.

Avoiding embarrassment was very important. If someone did not understand an instruction, one should not react with impatience. Communicative patience is one of the fundamental competences of integration staff.

It was also worth remembering that communication is not just instructions. It is also atmosphere. A smile, a calm tone of voice, open body language, no shouting, encouragement after a mistake, and clear rules of behaviour built a sense of safety. For a person who does not know the language, tone and gesture often said more than words.



# Psychological barriers

Psychological barriers were less visible than language or transport, but could have an even greater impact on participation in the project. A person with migration experience might not come to a session because they were afraid of a new place. They might feel shame due to a lack of sporting skills. They might not trust the organisers. They might have had negative experiences with institutions in the past.

Therefore, the needs assessment had to include the question of emotional safety. Not directly, but through the organisation of activities. Did participants know who was leading the session? Did they know the venue? Could they come with someone they knew? Was the first meeting gentle? Could one observe without immediately participating? Was it clearly stated that no sporting experience was required?

Trauma requires particular caution. Organisers did not need to be therapists, but they should be aware that some participants might react more strongly to noise, shouting, pressure, sudden gestures, physical contact, or competition. At the beginning, calmer exercises based on cooperation worked better.

Shame was another important barrier. In an integration project, the coach should particularly emphasise messages such as: you do not need to know how, we are learning together, mistakes are normal, this is not about the result, everyone participates at their own level.

Distrust was also natural. Trust is built through repetition, punctuality, keeping promises, and respect. If the organisers said the sessions would be free, they had to be free. If they promised transport, transport had to be provided. In integration projects, credibility is part of the method.



# Logistical barriers

Very often, participation in a project was determined not by grand ideas but by simple organisational matters. Even the best-planned sessions did not fulfil their function if participants could not get there. Transport was one of the key barriers, especially when the migrant centre was far from the court or sports hall.

Therefore, the assessment should include very specific questions: where do participants live? How can they get to the sessions? Do they know the route? Do they have tickets? Is a shared journey needed? Is the venue accessible on foot? Will they be able to return safely after the session? Does the session time fit the transport schedule?

Session times were also of enormous importance. Migrants might work shifts, attend language courses, have family responsibilities, deal with official matters, or care for children. The schedule should be established after consultation, not unilaterally.

Childcare could be particularly important for women and families. If a parent had no one to leave their child with, they would not take part in the sessions. A solution could be organising a parallel activity for children, making sessions family-friendly, or allowing participants to bring their child.

Logistics is not an add-on to integration. It is a precondition. If organisers did not identify logistical barriers, they could unintentionally exclude those who most needed contact and support.

Sportswear was another seemingly minor but genuinely important barrier. In integration projects, it is worth clearly informing participants that comfortable clothing is sufficient. One must also remember those who, for cultural or personal reasons, prefer to exercise in more covering attire. Sessions should accept this.





# Cultural and gender barriers

In projects involving migrants, cultural differences should be treated neither as a problem nor as a curiosity. They are part of the reality that must be understood and respected. Participants might come from countries where relationships between women and men, physical contact, sportswear, the role of the family, girls' activity, or the manner of communicating with a coach are perceived differently.

The participation of women and girls was particularly important. Sports projects very easily, even unintentionally, become more accessible to men and boys. If communication is based on competition, if sessions are led exclusively by a man, if the group is mixed, if the venue does not ensure privacy, if the required attire is uncomfortable — women may not take part.

Organisers should not assume that women are not interested in sport. They should ask what needs to change to make their participation genuinely possible: a separate group, the presence of a female coach, consultation with participants, acceptance of any attire.

Cultural barriers could also relate to communication. In some cultures, speaking directly to the leader can be difficult. A participant may agree out of politeness but then not come. Therefore, organisers should create multiple ways of expressing needs: an individual conversation, a picture-based survey, contact through a centre worker.

Cultural differences did not have to be a barrier if they were treated with respect. They could also become a resource. Playing together provided an opportunity to learn about different communication styles, ways of cooperating, and senses of humour. However, it was important not to reduce participants to cultural stereotypes. The assessment should combine cultural sensitivity with an individual approach.



# Needs of the local community

Assessment in an integration project should not concern migrants alone. Integration is a two-way process, which is why it was also necessary to recognise the situation of the local community. Residents could have very different attitudes: from openness and willingness to help, through indifference, to fear, distance, stereotypes or fatigue with the topic of migration.

The local community may have had no experience of contact with migrants. Their perceptions may have been based on the media, rumours, isolated incidents or political messaging. These fears could not be ignored or ridiculed. They had to be understood, but at the same time not allowed to justify discrimination.

Sport can also be a good tool for working with the local community, as it allows people to come together around a neutral, positive activity. Residents do not have to immediately participate in a debate about migration. They can come to a match, a picnic, a basketball day, a family sports event or a joint training session. They can see migrants not as an abstract category, but as specific people.

Assessment of the local community's needs should include the questions: who can be an ally of the project? Are there sports clubs, schools or community centres in the area? What are the local tensions? How are migrants spoken about? Who can help invite the local community?

It was also important to recognise the language of communication. If the project was promoted solely as an event for migrants, it might not attract residents or might reinforce divisions. A language of shared action worked better: a sports meeting, a friendship match, a basketball day, a family integration event, a joint game for residents and new neighbours.



# Simple assessment tools

Assessment did not have to be complicated. The most important thing was that it was honest, practical and conducted before activities began, and then updated during the project. The organisation could use several simple tools.

1. Conversation with a migrant centre or organisation working with migrants. It is worth preparing a short list of questions: who are the potential participants? What languages do they speak? What are their greatest barriers? How best to invite them?

2. A short questionnaire for participants. It should be simple, ideally available in several languages or using symbols. It should not ask about difficult migration experiences. It should concern participation in activities.

3. Observation of the first session. The facilitator should note not only attendance, but also the atmosphere: who was active, who withdrew, whether the group understood the rules, whether the exercises were appropriate.

4. Conversation after sessions. It did not have to be long. Three questions were enough: What was good? What was difficult? What should we change next time?

5. Barrier map. Organisers could jointly list all potential obstacles: language, transport, clothing, time, gender, childcare, fear, lack of trust. A solution should be noted for each barrier.

Such a barrier map was very practical because it turned the general slogan of accessibility into concrete organisational decisions.





# Assessment as an expression of respect

The most important thing about assessment was that it constituted an expression of respect. An organisation that assesses needs tells participants: we do not assume we know better; we want to understand your situation; we want to prepare activities so that you can truly benefit from them. This is an entirely different attitude from imposing a ready-made programme.

In a project such as Basket Bridges, assessment was also the first element of building trust. Participants could see that their voice mattered. Centre staff could feel like partners, not merely intermediaries in recruitment. The local community could be included in a way that did not reinforce fear, but created a space for encounter.

Good assessment did not delay action. On the contrary — it made the action more meaningful. It helped avoid empty rooms, poorly chosen times, overly difficult exercises, messages incomprehensible to participants, and events that looked good in photographs but did not change relationships.

In this sense, needs assessment was the first pass of the ball. Before participants stepped onto the court, organisers had to make a gesture of openness: ask, listen, adapt, prepare the space. Only then could sport build bridges — not at the level of declarations, but in people's everyday experience.

Key message: Needs assessment is not a formality. It is the first gesture of respect towards participants and the first step towards activities that truly include.





## Chapter 4

# How to build partnerships with migrant centres

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From first contact to shared responsibility for the integration process



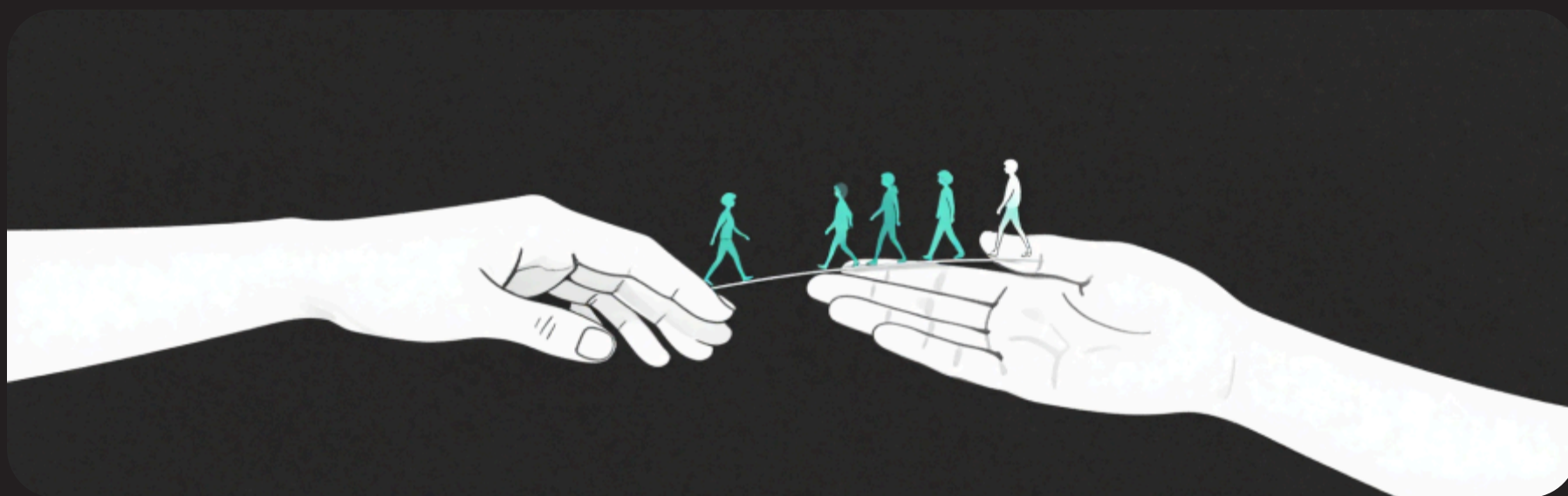
# Partnership with migrant centres

Partnership with migrant centres was one of the key conditions for the effectiveness of the Basket Bridges project. If basketball was to become a genuine tool for integration, it could not be organised alongside the places where migrants lived, sought support, received help and built their first relationships in a new country. A migrant centre was therefore not merely a place for recruiting participants. It was a partner that knew the everyday reality of people who had migrated.

In the Basket Bridges project, one of the specific objectives was to map and establish cooperation with migrant centres in local communities. It was assumed that it was precisely through this cooperation that it would be possible to create more accessible and safer sporting activities for migrants. The project also envisaged preparing centre staff to use sport as a tool for integration.

An integration project should not begin with the question ‘how many participants can we recruit?’ but with the question ‘who should we work with so that participants can truly enter the process safely?’

People who are in a new country often do not know local organisations, do not know whom they can trust, may have had difficult institutional experiences behind them, or may fear that participation in an activity will involve control, assessment or the need to disclose information about themselves. A migrant centre can help reduce this distance, but only if it itself feels treated as a partner.





# The centre as a partner, not a recruitment site

The biggest mistake an organisation can make at the start of a collaboration is to treat the migrant centre solely as a supplier of participants. Centre staff are not there to send people to activities. They are people who deal with a very complex reality every day: procedures, crises, tensions, family needs, language and emotional problems.

If centre staff are to support the project, they must understand its purpose, trust the organisers, and see that the activity can genuinely be good for participants.

Partnership begins with recognising the centre's competence. It is often the centre staff who know who might need group contact, who is withdrawn, who used to play basketball, who is afraid to leave a familiar place, who needs translation, who will not come without transport, and who could serve as a natural group leader. This knowledge is invaluable.

In practice, this means the centre should be involved from the planning stage. Collaboration should not be limited to sending a poster and asking for information to be passed on. A meeting is needed, a conversation about goals, joint identification of the group, discussion of possible barriers, agreement on the schedule and division of responsibilities.

The migrant centre acts as a context translator — explaining to organisers what may be difficult, incomprehensible or worrying for participants.



# First contact and the language of invitation

The first contact with a migrant centre should be well prepared. It is not worth starting with a lengthy project description, a list of activities and expectations of the centre. It is better to begin with a simple explanation of why the project was created, what its value is for participants, and why the organisers want to work together rather than independently.

It is worth avoiding instrumental language. The language of collaboration and care is better: we want to create safe activities together; we care that the activities are tailored to the needs of the people you support.

In the first message, it is worth clearly stating: who is organising the project, what its aim is, why basketball was chosen, what activities are planned, what is expected of the centre, what the organisers will provide, and what benefits participants may gain. It is important to emphasise that participation will be voluntary and that the activities do not require prior sporting skills.

It can be very helpful to propose a short working meeting. It does not have to be a formal conference. Sometimes the best approach is a calm contact with the centre coordinator, a social worker, or the person responsible for additional activities. The aim of such a meeting is not yet recruitment, but getting to know each other and checking whether collaboration is possible.

The first contact should be realistic. Do not promise things you cannot guarantee. Look for solutions together.



# Building trust with centre staff

Trust does not arise automatically because a project is funded by European funds, has a good idea and a nice name. Trust is built through the way one acts. Centre staff often collaborate with many organisations while having limited time and resources. They may be tired of projects that come from outside, carry out their activities, take photos, collect data, and then disappear.

The first element of building trust: listening. Give centre staff space to say what is possible and what is not.

If they say the group will not come to activities at a certain time, this should not be treated as a lack of willingness to cooperate. It is knowledge derived from daily practice. If they indicate that women may not feel comfortable in a mixed group, this must be taken seriously.

The second element: transparency. The centre should know who is responsible for the project, what data will be collected, and what the safety rules are.

The third element: keeping agreements. If the organisers committed to sending a schedule, they should do so. If they promised materials in plain language, these should be produced. In work with institutions supporting migrants, credibility is built through small, concrete actions.

The fourth element: recognising the role of staff. Invite them not only to recruit, but to co-decide, observe sessions, and evaluate activities.





# Establishing cooperation rules

After the initial conversations, it is necessary to establish clear rules of cooperation. Even if the partnership is friendly and informal in character, basic matters should be written down or confirmed by email. This helps avoid misunderstandings and gives all parties a sense of security.

It is necessary to jointly determine who is responsible for individual elements: the programme, coaches, materials, insurance, the venue, communication, evaluation, and documentation.

The centre can support needs assessment, contact with participants, passing on information, translating context, having a trusted person present at the first sessions, or helping to resolve difficult situations. However, it is important that the centre's scope of tasks is realistic and does not overburden staff.

It is necessary to establish communication channels. Who is the contact person on the organiser's side? Who on the centre's side? Is communication conducted by email, phone, messenger, or during regular meetings? How quickly must information about changes be passed on?

It is worth establishing rules for responding to difficult situations: what to do if a participant feels unwell? Who responds in the event of a conflict? Who has contact details for guardians?

Good cooperation rules should be simple but specific. Their aim is not to bureaucratised the relationship, but to protect participants, centre staff, and organisers. The more vulnerable the group, the greater the importance of clarity of responsibility.



# Participant safety

Safety in a sport-integration project has several dimensions. The most obvious is physical safety. Sessions should be led by competent people, in a place suited to the activity, taking into account the age, fitness, and experience of participants.

Emotional safety: participants must know they will not be ridiculed, judged, or forced to take part in exercises they are not ready for.

In the group, simple rules should apply: we respect each other, we do not comment on others' bodies or fitness, we do not laugh at mistakes, we help beginners, we do not use verbal or physical violence, and everyone can ask for a break.

Privacy safety: consent for photos and videos must be voluntary, informed, and possible to withdraw. The participant should understand where the material will be published.

Safety also includes the language of communication. Terms that stigmatise, infantilise, or present migrants as passive recipients of help should be avoided. Project participants were not a problem to be solved or beneficiaries to be showcased. They were people who co-created the activity.

The migrant centre can help organisers identify particular risks. Staff may know whether there are people in the group who have had difficult experiences, people who are very withdrawn, people with health limitations, or participants requiring additional language support. Only the information necessary for safely running the sessions is needed.



# The role of centre staff

Migrant centre staff played the role of trust intermediaries in the project. For participants, they could be familiar, safe and credible people. Their presence at the first meeting, during recruitment or at the start of sessions could significantly reduce anxiety levels.

Centre staff can help with needs assessment, schedule adjustment, explaining rules, group observation, responding to barriers and collecting feedback.

They were often the first to notice that someone was interested but afraid to come; that someone needed transport; that a group of women would prefer separate sessions; that participants did not understand the consent information; that the training was too intensive.

Centre staff can also support recruitment through relationships. In integration projects, a personal invitation often works far better than a poster. A calm explanation is more effective: These are sessions for beginners. You do not need to play well. You can come with a friend. There will be someone to help with translation. You can come and watch first.

Remember: centre staff are often overloaded. The project should not impose additional duties on them without prior agreement.





# Recruiting participants through relationships

Recruiting migrants for sporting activities requires more than a poster and a registration form. The most important thing is the relationship. Migrants may not know the organisation, may fear that sports experience is required, or that participation involves formalities.

Good recruitment starts with a clear message: sessions are free, participation is voluntary, you do not need to know how to play, you can come for a trial, you can withdraw.

Particular attention should be paid to less visible individuals. In sports projects, it is easy to attract those who are already active and confident. Yet the integrative purpose of the project lies in reaching lonely people, women with caring responsibilities, older people, withdrawn young people, and those without sports experience.

Recruitment should ask not only who wants to join?, but also who else might be gently invited because they may need this space the most? It is important not to exert pressure. Participation should be voluntary. The aim is not to fill a list, but to create a process in which participants come because they feel it could be good for them.

The migrant centre will help identify the best way to reach people: an information meeting, an individual conversation, an invitation through a community leader or someone who has previously participated in similar activities.



# Schedule, transport and accessibility

The session schedule should be agreed with the centre and adapted to participants' real lives. Migrants may have language courses, official appointments, shift work, family responsibilities or transport limitations. There is no single universal solution.

Regularity provides a sense of predictability, and predictability is particularly important for people living in uncertainty. At the same time, the schedule should be flexible.

Transport was one of the most decisive elements of cooperation. If participants could not get to sessions, the project was not accessible. It is worth establishing early on in discussions with the centre where participants live, how far the venue is, whether they know local public transport and whether they have funds for tickets.

Accessibility also means no hidden costs. If sessions are free, participants should not later discover they need to buy kit or pay for transport. The fewer entry conditions, the greater the chance that less confident individuals will decide to come.

Initial meetings should be more about familiarisation. The process leads participants from safety to activity, from activity to relationships, from relationships to a shared event.



# Consent, data and image rights

In social projects, activities are very often documented: photographs are taken, videos recorded, attendance lists collected. In the case of migrants, this must be done particularly carefully. Participants should know exactly what they are consenting to and that refusing consent for photographs does not affect their ability to take part in sessions.

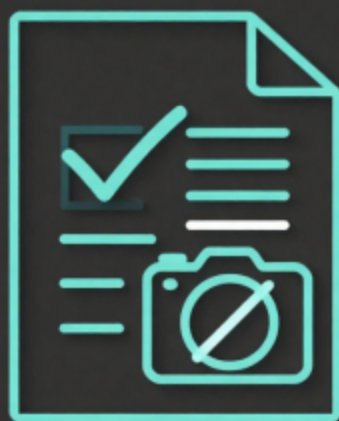
Consent for the use of one's image should be separate from consent to participate. A person may want to play but not want to be photographed. Such differences must be respected.

Consent to participate should be simple and understandable. If participants do not know the local language, translation must be provided. Consent cannot be merely a formal document to sign. It should be preceded by an explanation: what the project is about, what data will be collected, whether participation is voluntary and whether one can withdraw.

## How to maintain cooperation after the project ends

A good partnership should not end with the final session. It is worth thinking about continuation during the activities: can the centre continue to use the materials? Can a local sports club invite migrants to open sessions? Can volunteers maintain contact?

After completing a cycle, it is worth organising a summary meeting: what worked, what was difficult, what barriers remained, what solutions are worth repeating.



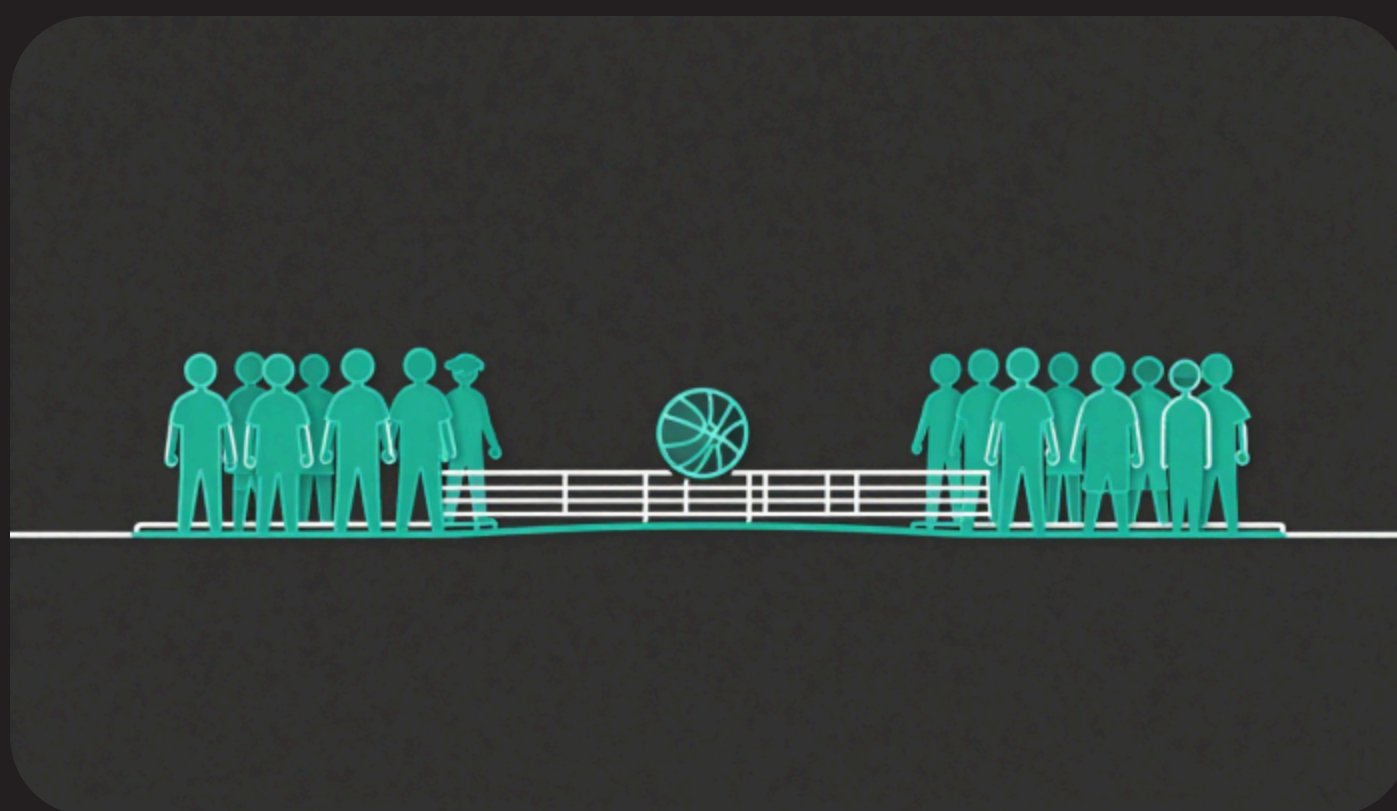
# Partnership as a bridge

Partnership with migrant centres was one of the first bridges in the Basket Bridges project, even before participants stepped onto the court. It was between the organisers and the centre that trust had to be established first, so that trust could later develop between migrants, coaches and the local community.

Good partnership is based on simple principles: listen, do not assume; ask, do not impose; explain, do not complicate; keep promises; respect centre staff's time; protect participants' safety.

Cooperation with migrant centres was more than an organisational stage. It was part of the integration methodology. It showed that an effective project does not begin with a ball, but with a relationship. Before the first pass on the court, there must be a first pass between institutions: a gesture of trust, an invitation to cooperate and a readiness for shared responsibility.

Only then can basketball truly build bridges. Not as a one-off activity, but as a process in which everyone creates a shared meeting space together.







## Chapter 5

# Basketball as a tool for integration

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From a simple pass to the experience of community



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# Basketball as a tool for social work

Basketball in the Basket Bridges project was not treated solely as a sporting discipline. It was not merely about learning to dribble, improving shooting technique, or developing physical fitness. Basketball became a tool for social work — a way of building relationships, strengthening trust, breaking down language barriers, and creating situations in which people with migration experience could feel part of a group.

A pass is not just an element of the game — it becomes an exercise in noticing another person. A team becomes the first experience of belonging. A match becomes an opportunity for cooperation.

In traditional sports training, the main goal is the development of the player's skills. In integration training, sport remains sport, but its most important meaning shifts towards relationships. The project aimed to increase migrants' participation in sport as a way of supporting social inclusion and building a sense of belonging.





# Basketball as a tool for social work – examples of project activities



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Basketball as a tool for social work – examples of project activities



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# Basketball as a language of shared action

One of the greatest advantages of basketball in working with migrants is that it can be understood through action. One does not need to know the language perfectly to see that someone is passing the ball, running towards the basket, or waiting for a partner. In a multilingual group, this is of enormous value.

Basketball allows participants to make contact before conversation begins. On the court, one does not have to start by telling one's story. One can start with a gesture: catching the ball, passing, shooting, standing in a circle. Sport does not require immediate closeness or a lengthy self-introduction. Shared activity is enough.

Good practice: the first sessions should be as simple as possible. The aim is for every participant to feel: I can be here, I understand what to do, I don't have to be the best.

In practice, the coach should consciously harness this potential. Rather than starting with a lengthy instruction, they can begin with a simple demonstration exercise. Rather than explaining all the rules, they can introduce them gradually, using gestures, demonstrations, and repetition.



# Exercise example: the ball goes round, the name stays

## SOCIAL AIM

Learning names, breaking the initial distance, creating a calm atmosphere.

## SPORTING AIM

Getting comfortable with the ball, simple passing, focusing on a partner.

## PROCEDURE (10–15 min)

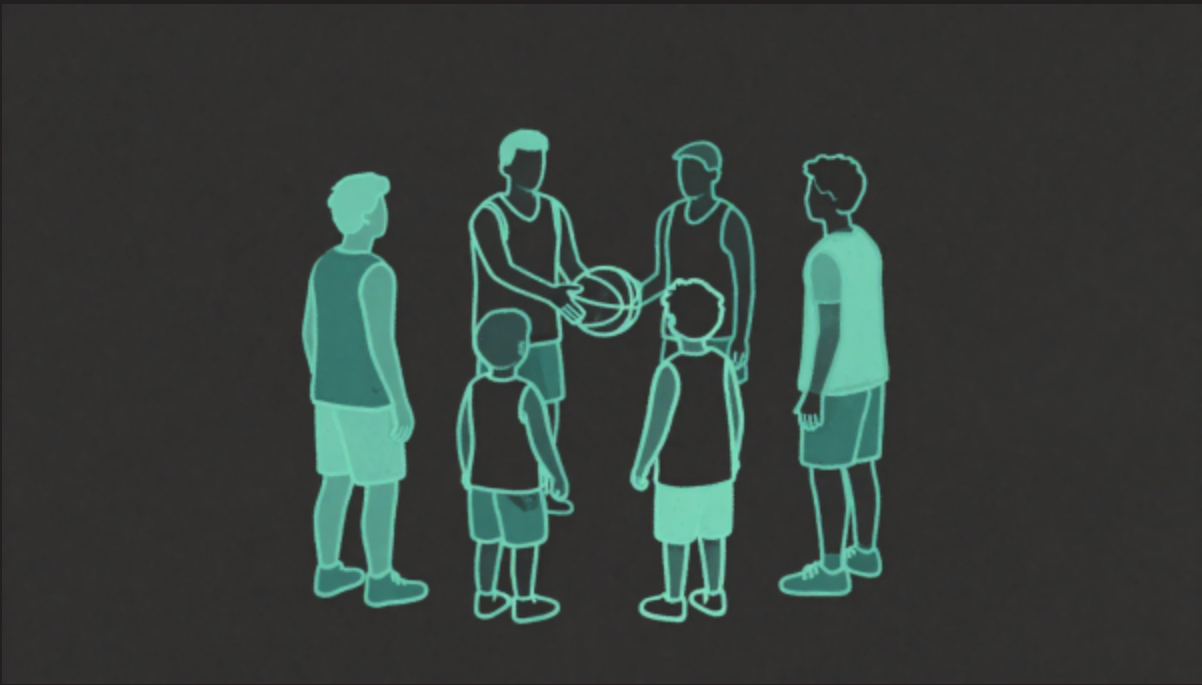
Participants stand in a circle. The facilitator holds the ball, says their name, and passes the ball to a chosen person. That person says their name and passes it on. In the second round, the participant says the name of the person they are passing to before making the pass.

## VARIATIONS

Easier: passing to the person next to you.

Harder: a second ball or an additional word (e.g. I like...).

Never embarrass people who cannot remember names. The exercise is meant to support, not to test.



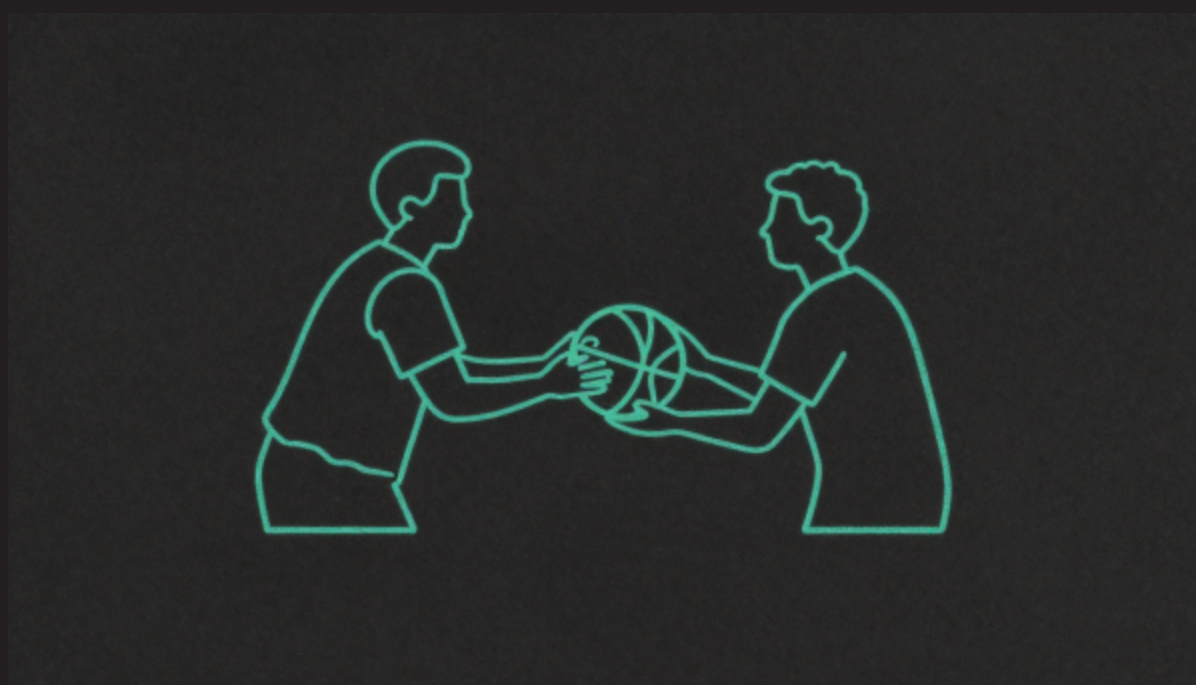
# The pass as a symbol of trust

The pass is one of the most important gestures in basketball. Without passing, there is no team. A player who does not pass closes the game off to themselves. A player who passes acknowledges the presence of another person and gives them the opportunity to act.

For a person with migration experience, being noticed can be very important. On the court, passing the ball is a simple message: I see you, you are part of the game, your action matters.

Passing also requires responsibility. The passer must look, assess the situation, and notice the partner's readiness. The receiver must trust that the ball is directed at them. If the pass fails, the group learns to respond without laughter or criticism.

It is worth designing passing exercises not as mechanical technical tasks, but as relational exercises. You can tell participants: in this exercise, the most important thing is not how hard you pass, but whether you notice your partner.





## Exercise: pass with eye contact

### SOCIAL GOAL

Building attentiveness towards others, strengthening contact, reducing chaos in the group.

### SPORTING GOAL

Accurate two-handed chest pass, catching the ball.

### PROCEDURE (10 min)

Participants stand in pairs facing each other. Before passing the ball, they must make eye contact and say their partner's name or make a simple gesture. Only then do they pass the ball. After several passes, they change partners.

**HIDDEN GOAL:** participants learn that effective communication begins with noticing their partner.

## Exercise: pass to the person who hasn't had the ball yet

### SOCIAL GOAL

Including those standing on the sidelines, noticing less active participants.

### PROCEDURE (10-15 min)

The group moves freely around the hall. Task: the ball must reach every person. You cannot pass to the same person twice until everyone has touched the ball.

**DISCUSSION:** Did anyone wait a long time for the ball? What helped to notice people further away? How does this relate to being part of a group?

The exercise shows that community requires active inclusion, not just waiting for someone to volunteer.



# The team as a first experience of belonging

A basketball team is more than a collection of individuals. It is a group that shares a common goal, common rules and common responsibility. For migrants, the experience of being part of a team can be very important, as it provides a sense of belonging without the need to immediately prove that one fits into the new community.

Someone is waiting for my pass. Someone is counting on my presence. Someone says: we are together. Someone celebrates my shot. This is precisely the moment when sport begins to build community.

It is important, however, that teams do not create new divisions. In integration projects, it is worth creating mixed teams, changing line-ups, avoiding fixed hierarchies and ensuring that more experienced players support beginners.

The team should be a safe space. If someone physically weaker is ignored, if the ball only goes to the best players, if beginners are overlooked, the team stops integrating. It becomes a copy of exclusion mechanisms. That is why the coach must observe who is truly in the game and who is formally on the court but not really participating.



# Fair play as a practice of respect

Fair play in an integration project is not an add-on to sport. It is a fundamental social principle. In basketball, emotions easily arise: joy, frustration, the desire to win, anger after a mistake. These emotions are not a problem. They are a natural part of the game. What matters, however, is how the group learns to handle them.

For participants from different backgrounds, fair play rules can become a shared language of respect. We do not need to have the same experiences, speak the same language or know the same cultural codes to agree on a few basic principles: we do not mock mistakes, we do not use violence, we help someone who has fallen, we accept the facilitator's decisions.

## EXAMPLE GROUP RULES

- We do not laugh at mistakes
- We also pass to beginners
- We stop the game when someone needs help
- We do not shout at each other
- Everyone has the right to a break
- We play together, not against each other

It is worth reacting to small situations. If someone hears laughter after a missed shot, the coach should stop the group and calmly remind them of the rule. Fair play is not about the absence of conflict, but about learning how to respond when tension arises.





# Exercise: point for support

**SOCIAL GOAL**

Reinforcing positive behaviours, learning to notice support.

**SPORTING GOAL**

Team game with basketball elements.

**PROCEDURE (15-20 min)**

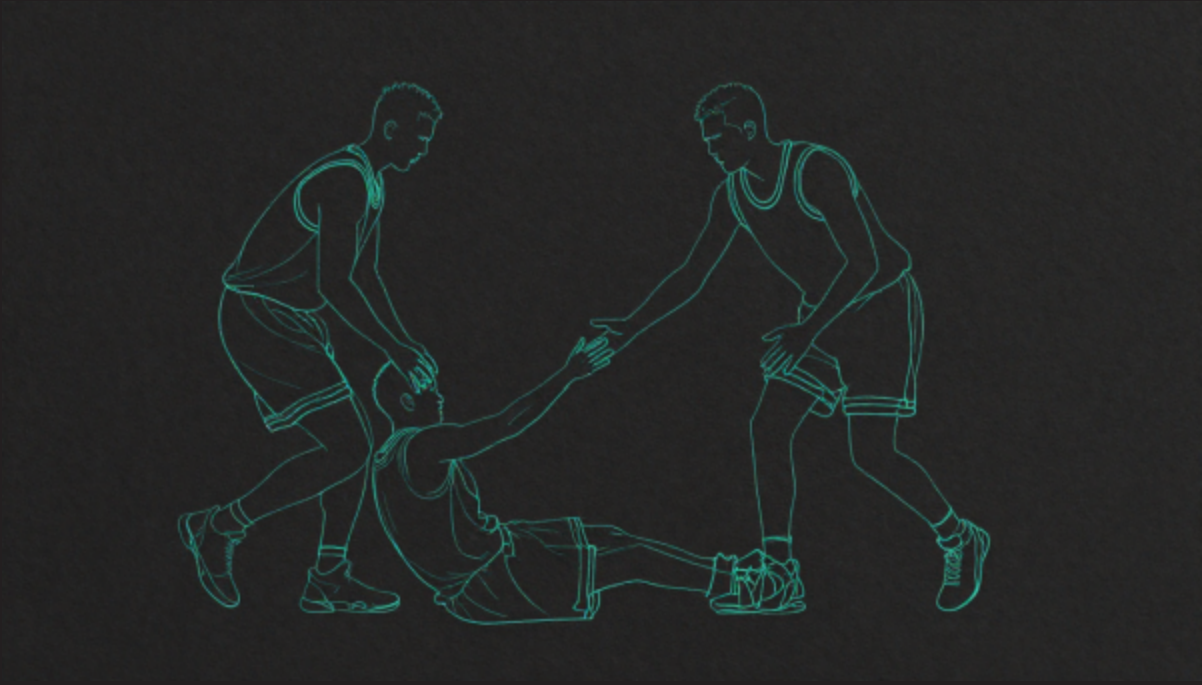
Teams score points not only for baskets, but also for fair play behaviours: passing to a beginner, helping after a fall, praising a partner, responding calmly after a mistake, including someone standing on the sidelines. Points for support are awarded by the facilitator or observers.

**VARIANT**

After each short game, teams themselves identify one fair play behaviour from their opponents.



Participants learn that the value of the game depends not solely on the score, but on the quality of relationships within the team.



# Competition without exclusion

Competition in itself is not bad. It can provide energy, motivation, joy and a sense of excitement. In integration projects, however, one must be very careful that competition does not exclude those who are weaker, less confident or just beginning. If we introduce a classic match too quickly, those with sporting experience may take over the game, while the rest become passive observers.

Competition should be gradual. First, exercises without the pressure of a result, then tasks in pairs, followed by small groups, then short games with simplified rules, and only at the end a match. It is worth using cooperative games in which the group competes not against each other, but against a challenge.

## Exercise: the whole group against the clock

### SOCIAL GOAL

Cooperation instead of competition, building a shared goal.

### SPORTING GOAL

Shooting baskets, rebounding, quick passes.

### PROCEDURE (10-15 min)

The group must collectively score a set number of points within a given time. Every participant must take at least one shot. Those who are not shooting collect the balls and pass to the next person.

### VARIANTS

Easier: lowered basket or shots from close range.

Harder: each subsequent point must be scored by a different person.

The group experiences success as a shared result, not as one side's victory over another.



# Exercise: match without a score

## SOCIAL AIM

Reducing pressure, focusing on cooperation and everyone's participation.

## SPORTING AIM

Basics of the game, movement, passing, shooting.

## PROCEDURE (10-15 min)

Teams play a short match, but no score is kept. After each play, the coach highlights positive behaviours: a good pass, support, communication, inclusion of a beginner.

## VARIATION

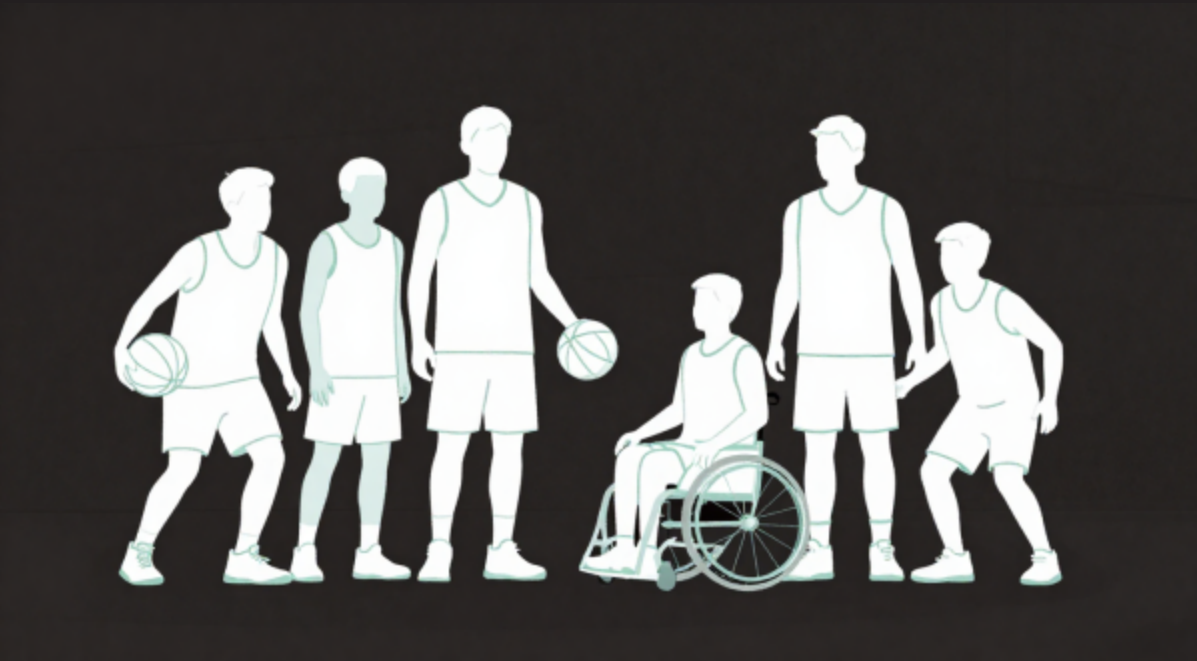
Instead of points for baskets, teams receive cooperation points.

## How to adapt rules to different fitness levels

In an integration group, fitness levels can vary greatly. One person may have previously played in a club, another may never have held a ball. Adapting the rules does not mean lowering the value of the sessions. It means creating conditions in which everyone can participate.

A very good practice is the principle: different roles, equal value. Not everyone has to do the same thing to be an important part of the group.

In basketball, you can change: court size, number of players, playing time, distance from the basket, type of ball, pace, dribbling rules, physical contact, scoring method and team composition.





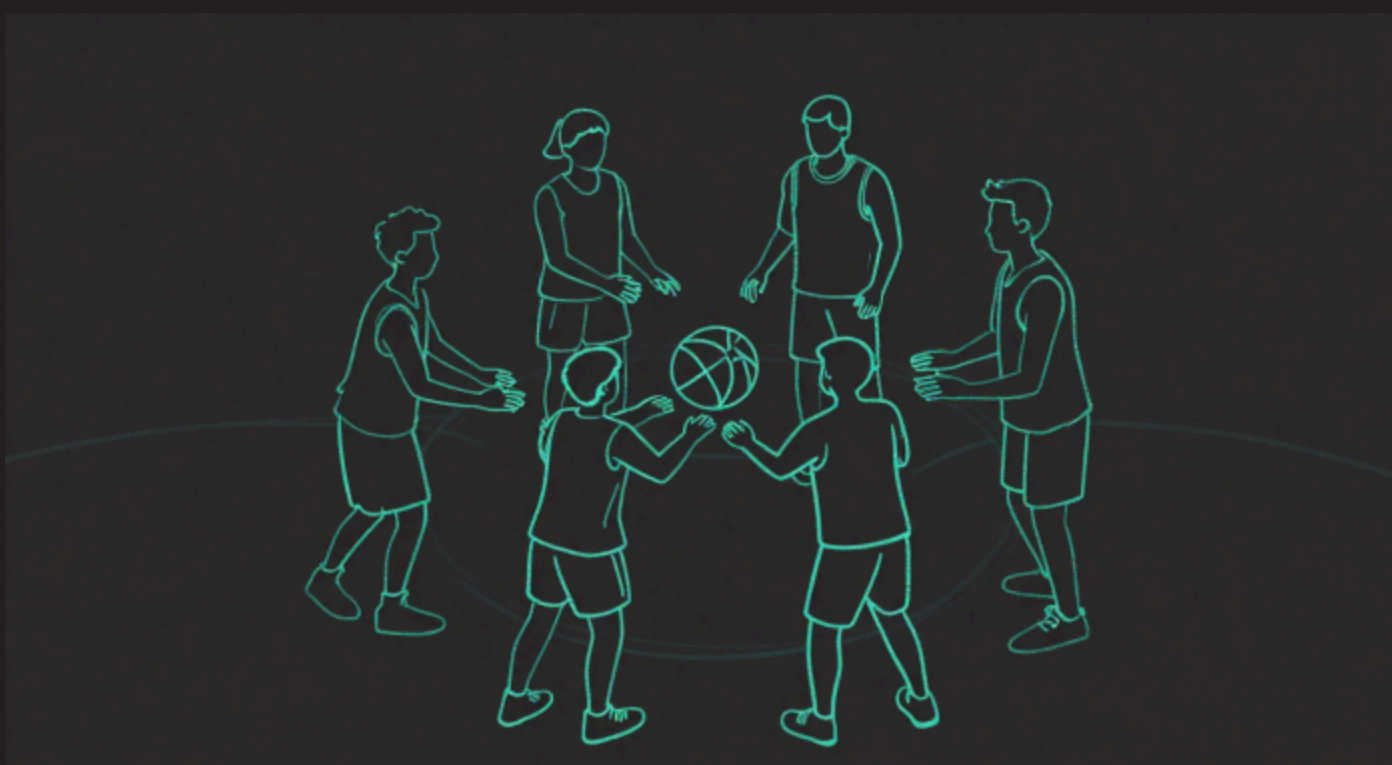
# Examples of rule modifications

- No-dribble game — participants can only pass, which forces cooperation
- Point after three passes — a shot can only be taken after three passes
- Every shot counts — points for a beginner's attempt at a shot
- Smaller court — makes it easier for those with lower fitness to participate
- Safety zones — no pressure from physical contact
- Supportive partner role — an experienced person helps a beginner
- Team rotation — changing team compositions every few minutes
- Points for passing diversity — an extra point for including a less active person

Such modifications make basketball more democratic. It does not lose its sporting character, but it ceases to be a space dominated by the strongest.

## Integration exercises with a ball

Integration exercises should be conducted in such a way that participants do not feel they are being tested. Their aim is to gradually familiarise the group, strengthen contact, build trust and introduce elements of basketball. Below is a set of exercises for use in a workshop cycle.



# Integration exercises with a ball (1-4)

## EXERCISE 1: Group warm-up in a circle

**Social aim:** breaking down distance, the feeling that everyone starts together.

**Sporting aim:** preparing the body for movement.

**Time:** 10 minutes.

**Procedure:** The group stands in a circle. Each person demonstrates one simple warm-up movement, and the rest repeat it. The facilitator begins with a very easy movement.

**Variation:** A person may choose a movement previously shown by someone else.

**Significance:** Everyone briefly influences the group, but no one is forced into a complicated performance.

## EXERCISE 2: Mirror with a ball

**Social aim:** attentiveness, cooperation in pairs, non-verbal contact.

**Sporting aim:** coordination, ball control, movement.

**Time:** 10 minutes.

**Procedure:** Participants work in pairs. One person performs simple movements with the ball, the other tries to mirror them. After one minute, roles switch.

**Easier variation:** Without dribbling, only arm movements.

**Significance:** Communication can happen without language.

## EXERCISE 3: Passing bridge

**Social aim:** building cooperation across the whole group, attentiveness to others' pace.

**Sporting aim:** passing, catching, concentration.

**Time:** 10-15 minutes.

**Procedure:** The group lines up in two rows facing each other. The ball must travel across the bridge from the first to the last person and back.

**Variation:** After each pass, the person runs to the end of the row.

**Significance:** Success depends on adapting to others, not on one person's strength.

## EXERCISE 4: Basket of kind words

**Social aim:** strengthening a positive atmosphere, supportive communication.

**Sporting aim:** shots at the basket from close range.

**Time:** 10 minutes.

**Procedure:** Each person takes a shot. Regardless of the result, the group says one supportive word or gesture (applause, well done, try again).

**Variation:** Before shooting, the person says what they need: calm, silence, encouragement.

**Significance:** The group's reaction can build courage or take it away.



# Integration exercises with a ball (5-8)

## EXERCISE 5: The ball asks

**Social aim:** gentle getting to know each other, without delving into difficult stories.

**Sporting aim:** passing in a circle.

**Time:** 10-15 minutes.

**Procedure:** The person holding the ball answers a simple question, then passes it on.

Questions: what sport do you like? what do you like to eat? what music gives you energy?

**Important:** We do not ask about trauma, reasons for migration, or legal status.

**Significance:** Participants get to know each other as people, not as categories.

## EXERCISE 6: Game of three roles

**Social aim:** showing that there are different roles in a group and each one is important.

**Sporting aim:** passing, shooting, organising play.

**Time:** 20 minutes.

**Procedure:** Participants in small teams are given roles: passer, shooter, supporter. After a few minutes, roles rotate.

**Discussion:** Which role was easiest? Which was most important?

**Significance:** Not everyone has to score points to be important.

## EXERCISE 7: Silent match

**Social aim:** non-verbal communication, attentiveness to gestures and movement.

**Sporting aim:** team play, observation, positioning.

**Time:** 10 minutes.

**Procedure:** Teams play a short simplified game, but without speaking. They can only communicate through gestures.

**Discussion:** What was difficult? How did we show that we wanted the ball?

**Significance:** Lack of words does not mean lack of participation.

## EXERCISE 8: My first point

**Social aim:** empowering beginners, building an experience of success.

**Sporting aim:** shooting at the basket, working on composure.

**Time:** 15 minutes.

**Procedure:** The group helps each person score a point. Experienced players collect balls, pass, and encourage.

**Variation:** The target can be a board or a hoop set lower.

**Significance:** The group celebrates the success of each person, not just the best players.





# From training to community

The greatest value of basketball in an integration project reveals itself when training ceases to be just training. This happens gradually. At first, participants come cautiously, often with reserve. Then they begin to recognise faces. Over time, the first conversations appear, jokes, waiting together for sessions, mutual support.

Someone passed me the ball. Someone remembered my name.  
Someone waited until I understood the exercise. Someone helped me score. Someone invited me to the team. Someone did not laugh when I made a mistake. Someone said: good, try again.

In an integration project, such moments are the result. They cannot always be easily entered into a table of indicators, but they show whether the activity truly works. If a person who initially stood on the sidelines asks for the ball after a few meetings — that is change. If participants from different countries begin to form one team — that is change.

Basketball can be a tool for integration if it is conducted consciously. The ball alone is not enough. The court alone is not enough. The match alone is not enough. What is needed is intention: we want to include, not select; we want to build trust, not just a score; we want to create a team in which everyone has a place.

Community is not about everyone being the same. It is about being able to play together despite differences. About seeing one another. About passing the ball to each other. About making space for a person who is only just entering the game.

And from such an experience, integration begins — not as a slogan, but as the practice of being together every day.





## Chapter 6

# Preparing staff: a coach is not just a coach

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From running a training session to creating a safe space for integration



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# The coach as a first point of contact

For many migrants, the coach or facilitator may be one of the first people outside the support system with whom they have regular, positive contact. The coach on the court does not ask for documents, does not request justification of their story, does not assess their legal situation. They invite them to act together.

Here you do not have to talk about what you have been through. Here you can simply be, move, play, try, make mistakes and learn together with others.

Such a role requires responsibility. If the coach behaves carelessly, too harshly or in a shaming way, they can very quickly shut participants down. A person who spent a long time gathering the courage to attend may never return after one unpleasant comment.

The first sessions are not a test of sporting ability. They are a test of safety. Participants check whether they can trust the group, whether they will be laughed at, whether they will understand the instructions, whether they can cope physically, whether someone will help them, whether they can refuse.





# Competencies of an integration coach

An integration coach should possess several types of competencies that go beyond standard sports preparation.

## Sporting competencies

Knowledge of basketball basics, leading a warm-up, physical safety, adjusting intensity.

## Social competencies

Building atmosphere, noticing withdrawn individuals, empowering participants, responding to tensions.

## Intercultural competencies

Awareness that my norms are not the only ones. Willingness to ask rather than assume. Respect for differences.

## Communication competencies

Speaking simply and briefly. More showing than explaining. Gestures, demonstrations, repetitions.

## Emotional safety

Understanding that some participants may have experiences of trauma. Calm responses, no pressure.



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# Working with a multicultural group

A multicultural group is a richness, but it requires good facilitation. Participants may differ in language, religion, social norms, sporting experience, attitudes to gender, age and level of trust.

## 1. Simplicity

The more complicated the rules, the greater the risk of exclusion. At the beginning, short exercises, pair work, passing and games without the pressure of results work better.

## 2. Not assuming

The coach should not assume that everyone knows basketball, wants to compete or feels comfortable in a mixed group. Instead of assuming — observe and ask.

## 3. Shared rules

We respect each other, we do not laugh at mistakes, we help one another, everyone has the right to a break, we do not comment on others' bodies or fitness, photos only with consent.

## 4. Gentle mixing of groups

If participants stick to people who speak the same language — that is natural. Gradually create mixed pairs, starting with simple exercises.

## 5. Awareness of hierarchies

Who speaks, who is silent, who gets the ball, who is overlooked? Integration requires consciously balancing participation within the group.





# How to respond to a participant's withdrawal

Withdrawal is a very common reaction in new groups. A participant may stand on the sidelines, not speak up, avoid eye contact, or be reluctant to take part in an activity. Such behaviour should not automatically be interpreted as a lack of interest.

There may be many reasons: a language barrier, fear of judgement, a lack of sporting experience, trauma, fatigue, mistrust, a sense of alienation, body shame, previous negative experiences, or simply one's temperament.

## What to do instead of putting pressure on someone

Approach them calmly, away from the spotlight, and suggest a gentle alternative:

- You can just watch for now
- You can just try passing the ball
- You can play alongside me
- You can join in when you're ready

It's important to give the participant a sense of control.

Support roles work very well: passing the ball, keeping track of fair play points, helping to set out the cones, acting as an observer, and working in pairs with a support person.

A coach should build on small steps. If someone who previously stood on the sidelines makes a single pass — that's a success. If they join in with the pair — that's a success. In inclusion projects, not all results are spectacular. Sometimes the most important change is very subtle.





# How to deal with conflict

Conflict within a sports group can arise quickly. Playing a game stirs up emotions, rivalry, a sense of injustice and tension. In a multicultural group, language differences, stereotypes and different ways of expressing emotions can be additional factors.

## 1. A quick, smooth stop

Stop the game. Don't pretend nothing has happened. The response should not be humiliating — the aim is to restore a sense of safety.

## 2. Distinguishing behaviour from the person

Instead of saying: 'You're being aggressive', say: 'That behaviour is not in line with our rules.' Using language like this helps to de-escalate the situation.

## 3. A return to a common code

Refer to the agreed rules: We agreed that we wouldn't shout at each other. The coach doesn't act arbitrarily, but reminds us of what we've agreed together.

## 4. Not attributing it to identity

If two people from different countries have an argument, do not portray it as a conflict between nationalities. It is a conflict between specific individuals in a specific situation.

## 5. A conversation after the emotions have subsided

Some issues cannot be resolved during the game. Pause the game, let everyone calm down, change the activity, and then talk about it later, either one-to-one or in a small group.



# How to respond to fear

Fear can appear before the first session, before contact with the group, before an exercise, before making a mistake, before photographs, before a match. In an inclusion project, fear is not an obstacle to be removed by force. It is a signal that the participant needs more safety.

## How to reduce fear

- Clear structure: say what is going to happen
- Choice: those who can say no are more likely to try
- Repetition: a consistent greeting ritual builds predictability
- Calm language: You can try at your own pace
- Avoid: don't be afraid, it's nothing, everyone manages

# Trauma and the principle of sensitivity

When working with migrants, one must assume that some participants may have traumatic experiences. This does not mean that sessions should be therapeutic in nature. It means they should be conducted with a principle of sensitivity.

## The principle of sensitivity means:

- We do not force, shame, or touch without consent
- We do not shout or ask about the past
- We do not do exercises based on sudden surprise
- We do not publish anyone's image without informed consent
- We do not comment on a participant's reaction publicly
- We respond calmly: a break, water, a trusted person





# Gender inequalities and women's participation

In many sports projects, gender inequalities emerge very quickly. Men more often take over the space, volunteer for games, and dominate in competition. Women may stand on the sidelines or not attend sessions at all.

The barriers can vary: caring responsibilities, lack of family consent, discomfort in a mixed group, reluctance to wear certain clothing, lack of sporting experience, shame, cultural norms, or previous experiences of violence.

## What can help

- A separate group or a female coach/facilitator
- The option to bring children or family sessions
- Clear information about wearing any comfortable clothing
- Smaller groups and a gentler start
- Community-based language rather than competitive
- Inclusive rules: a point for passing to everyone

During sessions, observe: are women receiving the ball? Are they invited to take shots? Do they take on leadership roles? Is their voice heard? Are they not being overlooked by more dominant participants?





# Lack of language skills

A lack of a common language should not be a reason for exclusion from sessions. Basketball offers many opportunities for non-verbal communication, but the facilitator must use them consciously.

## Show

Instead of lengthy explanations, demonstrate the exercise. Calmly, step by step, with one or two people.

## Repeat

Use consistent gestures and simple words: start, stop, pass, shoot, switch, together, slower, good, break.

## Check in action

Don't ask whether everyone has understood. Show the exercise, ask for a demonstration, and calmly correct.





# Staff training as an investment in sustainability

Staff training was important not only for the quality of ongoing activities, but also for the sustainability of the project. If coaches and centre workers understood the methodology of integration through sport, they could continue to use it after the project ended. The knowledge did not disappear with the last training session.

Good training should be practical. Participants should experience the exercises they will later deliver: how a game without words works, how to modify rules, how to include a beginner, how to respond to conflict, how to lead a debrief.

## What a coach should avoid

- Shaming participants, commenting on their body, fitness, clothing or accent
- Saying ‘it’s easy’ when an exercise is difficult for someone
- Comparing participants and holding up the most athletic as role models
- Forcing people to talk about personal migration experiences
- Excessive pressure on results and praising only successful shots
- Dismissing cultural and gender barriers
- Tokenistic actions: a group photo alone does not mean community
- Exercises based on elimination, group judgement, or aggressive competition
- Touching without consent and publicly commenting on a participant’s reaction

### Coach self-reflection

Every facilitator brings their own habits and beliefs onto the court. Training should help them recognise these patterns and shift them towards greater inclusivity.



# Code of good practice for an inclusion coach

- Sees the person before the athlete
- Builds safety before competition
- Speaks simply and shows more than explains
- Does not assume everyone has the same needs
- Adapts rules to the group
- Notices those standing on the sidelines
- Praises effort, cooperation and courage, not just results
- Responds to mockery, exclusion and aggression
- Does not force people to share personal stories
- Respects cultural, religious, gender and emotional boundaries
- Ensures the participation of women and girls
- Treats mistakes as part of learning
- Collaborates with centre staff
- Protects participants' privacy and image
- Remembers that the goal is integration, and basketball is the tool

## The coach as a bridge builder

In the Basket Bridges project, the coach was not merely someone who led exercises. They were a bridge builder. They connected people who might not share a common language. They helped those who were afraid of the first step to join the group. They intervened when competition began to exclude.

In a well-run project, the coach did not only ask: 'Did the participants learn to shoot?' They also asked: 'Did someone join the group for the first time today?', 'Did the withdrawn person receive the ball?', 'Did the competition take away someone's courage?'







## Chapter 7

# Summary: key conclusions from the project

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From a one-off activity to a lasting integration practice



# From a one-off activity to a lasting practice

The project showed that sport can be much more than a form of recreation. In appropriately designed conditions, basketball became a tool for social integration, building relationships, breaking down barriers and strengthening a sense of belonging.

## The most important conclusion

Integration does not happen on its own. It is not enough to invite migrants to sessions and hope that relationships will build automatically. It requires careful preparation, needs assessment, trust, cooperation with migrant centres and well-prepared staff.

The project included:

- Cooperation with migrant centres
- Preparation of a toolkit for people working with migrants
- Training sessions and workshops
- Local sports activities
- Interviews with participants and storytelling
- Development of a good practice guide

As a result, it was not a one-off event, but a well-thought-out social intervention based on sport.





# Sport does not integrate by itself

Sport in itself is not automatically integrative. It can connect, but it can also exclude. It can build trust, but it can also reinforce hierarchies. It can give a sense of belonging, but it can also remind a weaker person that they are once again on the margins.

What was key was not only that basketball was chosen, but **how** it was used:

## In an integration project, sport is conducted differently:

- A pass = a gesture of noticing another person
- A team = an experience of belonging
- Fair play = a practice of respect
- Changing roles = learning flexibility
- A match = an opportunity for cooperation, not just competition

## First piece of advice

Do not assume that sport will automatically include everyone. Design sport so that it is truly accessible. Change the rules. Simplify communication. Praise support, courage and cooperation.





# The migrant centre is a partner

Without the knowledge of migrant centres, the project could have become an external action, nicely designed but not adapted to the real lives of migrants. The centre should not be treated as a recruitment site. It should be a co-creator of the process.

## Questions the centre can help answer:

- What time for sessions is realistic?
- Is transport needed?
- Will participants understand the invitation?
- Will women feel comfortable in a mixed group?
- Does the group need translation?
- Are there people worth inviting individually?
- Could taking photos be a problem for someone?



## Advice

Do not start with a poster and an attendance list. Start with a conversation with the centre. Ask what the group needs. Agree on rules together. Partnership does not end with recruitment.





# Start with relationships, not training

In activities with migrants, the first goal should not be teaching basketball technique. The first goal should be building a sense of safety.

A person who comes to a session may:

- not know the language
- not know the facilitators
- not understand the rules
- not know whether they will be photographed
- not have sports clothing
- fear being laughed at
- not be ready for intense contact with the group



## Small changes, big impact

Someone picked up a ball for the first time. Someone said their name in the group. Someone was paired with a person from outside their community. Someone stayed a little longer after the session. These are the successes of integration.

## Good practice

Do not rush the process. Trust is not built from the first whistle. It is built through repetition, calm and respect.



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# The coach is not just a coach

Staff leading sports activities must be prepared not only technically, but also socially. The coach was also responsible for the atmosphere, sense of safety, simple communication, responding to withdrawal, conflicts, fear and language barriers.

## A group of migrants can be very diverse:

- One person knows the sport and wants competition
- Another is afraid to step into the centre
- Someone does not know the language
- Someone has experienced trauma
- Someone does not want to be touched
- Someone does not consent to photos
- Someone will not come without their child
- Someone needs a personal invitation



## A good integration coach

Sees differences. Does not treat them as obstacles. Can simplify an exercise, stop a game when exclusion appears, praise a pass and say: you can try at your own pace.



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# Good practices from the project (1-5)

## 1. Start with a diagnosis

Do not assume you know what migrants need. Ask the centre, talk to participants, check barriers.

## 2. Lower the entry threshold

Activities should be free, clearly explained, logistically accessible and open to people with no sporting experience.

## 3. Build atmosphere before competition

The beginning should be based on cooperation, simple exercises, getting to know each other and building a sense of safety.

## 4. Create mixed teams with sensitivity

Mixing groups supports integration, but it should not be forced. Gradually create cross-cultural pairs.

## 5. Praise cooperation

If we praise passing, support, courage and including a weaker person, we show that the team matters.





# Good practices from the project (6-10)

- 6. Look after women and girls**

Check barriers. Perhaps a female coach is needed, a separate group, a different time, the possibility of coming with a child.
- 7. Do not force people to share their stories**

Participants do not have to share difficult experiences. Sport allows them to simply be a team member.
- 8. Document change ethically**

Consent for image use must be informed, voluntary and separate from consent to participate. Refusal must be respected.
- 9. Engage the local community wisely**

An event should be a joint action, not a display of help. Residents and migrants as partners.
- 10. Leave something lasting behind**

The best project does not end with the last event. Tools, relationships and trained people remain.





# Risks and difficulties (1-4)

Every integration project encounters difficulties. They should not be treated as failures, but as a natural part of the process.

## 1. Low attendance

Often the causes are deeper: wrong time, lack of transport, unclear invitation, fear, lack of trust, childcare responsibilities.

## 2. Language barriers

They can be reduced through demonstrations, gestures, simple language, pictograms and repeatable signals.

## 3. Competition introduced too quickly

A classic match can exclude beginners. It is worth starting with cooperative exercises and games without a score.

## 4. Gender inequalities

If they are not noticed, the project may become a space mainly for boys and men.





# Risks and difficulties (5-8)

## 5. Conflicts and tensions in the group

They can arise from sporting emotions, language differences, stereotypes or frustration. The coach must react quickly and calmly.

## 6. Instrumental use of stories

Storytelling can be valuable, but only when it is ethical. Difficult experiences cannot be used as promotional material.

## 7. Overburdening centre staff

The centre is a partner, but it operates under heavy workload. Recruitment and care cannot be entirely shifted onto it.

## 8. Lack of continuation

A one-off activity can produce good emotions, but if nothing follows, the effect quickly fades.





# Storytelling and interviews with participants

The project involved conducting interviews with migrants before and after the activities. This made it possible to capture change that is not visible in attendance alone. Numbers show how many people came. Stories help understand what it meant to them.

## The principle of ethical storytelling

It is not about seeking the most dramatic stories. It is about giving participants the opportunity to talk about what they themselves consider important: about their first training session, about meeting new people, about overcoming shyness, about feeling part of a team.

## Sample interview questions:

- What encouraged you to take part?
- Did you have any concerns?
- What was easiest for you?
- Did you meet anyone new?
- Did you feel part of the group?
- What should the organisers change?





# Local sporting events

Local sporting events were one of the most important moments of the project, as they allowed participants to go beyond the closed workshop group. It was there that basketball could become a visible bridge between migrants and residents.

## The most important principle

An integration event should not reinforce the division between hosts and guests. It should create situations of joint action: mixed teams, a friendly match, sports stations for families.

## What works well:

- Teams made up of migrants and residents
- Friendly match without pressure to win
- Sports stations for families
- Shooting competition in pairs
- Joint warm-up and cooperative tasks
- Sports picnic and post-game conversations
- Certificates for all participants





# Monitoring and evaluation

In integration projects, it is necessary to measure outcomes, but one cannot limit oneself to counting participants. Attendance is important, but it does not answer the question of whether integration actually took place.

## Quantitative indicators

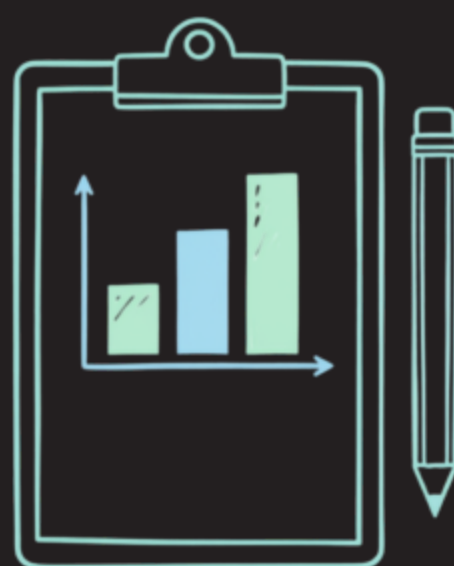
- Number of centres
- Number of workshops
- Number of participants
- Number of women and men
- Number of local events
- Number of people trained

## Qualitative indicators

- Whether participants return
- Whether withdrawn ones become active
- Whether new relationships emerge
- Whether women have real participation
- Whether coaches modify methods
- Whether the centre sees change

## Questions after each session:

- Who was active today? Who stood aside?
- Did everyone understand the instructions?
- Was anyone left out of the game?
- Were the exercises too hard or too easy?
- Did women and girls have real space?
- What needs to change next time?





# Advice for organisations

- 1. Understand the local context**

Check who lives in your community, what the needs are, where the barriers lie and who can help understand them.
- 2. Find partners**

A migrant centre, a school, a sports club, a community organisation — integration requires a network.
- 3. Prepare your staff**

Not every coach understands integration work. Training, a conversation about values and a toolkit are needed.
- 4. Start with small actions**

First a small group, safe exercises, getting to know participants, building trust.
- 5. Simplify the rules**

No dribbling, points for cooperation, a compulsory pass to everyone — that means more integration.





# Advice for organisations

## 6. Take care of logistics

Transport, time, venue, clothing, childcare and clear information often determine participation.

## 7. Communicate without stereotypes

Do not portray migrants as passive recipients of help. Speak about playing together and new neighbours.

## 8. Protect privacy

Do not publish photos and stories without informed consent. Give participants the right to public invisibility.

## 9. Do not end with the event

Plan what comes next. Will there be another training? Will the club accept participants? Will the centre receive tools?

## 10. Integration is a relationship

Indicators are needed, but they must not obscure the people. The most important outcomes are often quiet.



# The most important lesson of the project

Integration does not begin with grand declarations, but with creating a space where a person stops being a stranger. Sometimes it starts with a single pass of the ball — a gesture that says more than words: I see you, you are part of the team, we play together.

Basketball proved to be a good tool because it allowed the transition from words to action. Passing the ball was a small gesture, but it could mean a great deal:

I see you.

You are part of  
the game.

You can try.

You don't have to  
be perfect.

We play together.

Integration through sport makes sense when it is conscious, attentive and well prepared. Not when sport becomes a decoration for a project. Integration works when the court becomes a place of genuine encounter.

*What can we do so that everyone has their place in the game?*

