

Title and acronym: TACKLE Racism in Grassroots Football [TACKLE]

Project type: Erasmus+ project, Collaborative Partnerships in Sport

Ref. no.: 622561-EPP-1-2020-1-CY-SPO-SCP

Promoter /Coordinator: CARDET - Centre for the Advancement of Research and Development in Educational Technology - Cyprus

Duration: 01/01/2021 to 31/12/2022 Extended to: 30/06/2023

Total project grant: 298.170 Euro

Total expenditure (grant) for the University of Pitești: 30255 Euro

Local coordinator for the University of Pitești: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Eng. Dumitru CHIRLESAN

Summary:

In recent years, a steadily growing number of initiatives around Europe that aim to combat racism in sport are being observed. However, the vast majority of these actions mainly focus on professional sport and football while UNESCO and organizations such as Kik it Out that are dedicated in working to root out the problem of racism out of football, highlight that the problem is the same in amateur football (including youth football) as it is at the professional level. The same psychosocial 'mechanisms' exist, it is just not that known due to limited coverage by the

media. Moreover, it is noted that players themselves often use racist discourse among themselves ‘in provocative strategic attitudes of destabilisation’ that are simply ‘part of the social game’”. Most importantly, UNESCO’s report stresses the lack of empirical studies on the ground.

The aforementioned points verify and further Bradbury’s (2002) assertion that there is a lack of actions that focus on combating racism and xenophobia incidents in amateur sports. Unfortunately, racism is making a resurgence around Europe and football represents another field where it is being expressed, witnessed and felt. Additionally, there has been limited action and work to address it at a grassroots level, namely where there is limited coverage and support for the players, coaches and fans involved. Taking into consideration that this often involves young players and children makes the need for action in the field ever so present. As a result, these observations have served as the driving factors in designing the plan for the TACKLE project and the Consortium’s decision to focus on grassroots football.

It is also important to take into consideration the number of people involved in grassroots football. Namely, Bradbury (2013) estimates that around 21 million people are registered to take part in organised amateur football in the UK and Europe. In this regard, there is a need for a wider approach to the fight against racism, which should start from the bottom of the sporting pyramid, namely the grassroots and the amateur clubs and academies. Moreover, and despite the fact that racist incidents often appear in football fields, the power of the sport to bring people together and to promote respect and tolerance must be harnessed in order to contribute to the pan-European attempt to tackle racism and xenophobia.

Thus, the project responds to the increasing calls for action to address the rising number of incidents of discrimination and violence in grassroots football. Unfortunately the issue is underreported and there has been limited research and information both at a European level and in each of the participating countries on the extent of the problem and its effect on young

players and grassroots football in general. Most importantly, there is limited information, guidelines, resources and support for grassroots (youth and amateur) staff and coaches to be in a position to actively address incidents of racism and adequately guide and support their players.

TACKLE actively contributes in **combating racism, discrimination and intolerance in sport** by putting forward a comprehensive approach to address and assist in rooting out racism in football, specifically in grassroots football. To that end, the project focuses on coaches and managers working in

grassroots football

clubs that per UEFA's definition is the "non-professional football and includes among others youth football and amateur football". To do so, the project will benefit from the collective multidisciplinary expertise of the implementing project team that is comprised by organizations that possess in depth know-how in the field of football, sports, education and training, integration and inclusion. The project participation of

UEFA's Charitable organization the UEFA Foundation

and the

FARE Network

that has been actively working on reporting and addressing racism in football for many years will make a concrete contribution across all stages of the project work including the development, implementation and dissemination of the project products.

Objectives:

TACKLE aims to

- develop applied tools and methodologies that will help to proactively prevent and mitigate

racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance in football by raising awareness and undertaking capacity building activities for professionals working in football, and more specifically in grassroots football clubs.

- raise awareness and guide its target groups to get a better understanding of the forms xenophobia and racism are being expressed in football and their adverse effects to footballers, the sport and society in general. It will do so with specifically catered training material that addresses the needs and the special context within which these professionals operate in transferring concepts and practices from other principles (social sciences, non-formal education) to sport.

- identify, enhance and promote best practices to prevent and mitigate hatred related issues in grassroots football through the development and implementation of a toolkit followed by capacity building activities for football coaches – and related stakeholders- but also wider audiences.

- create a knowledge transfer pool to share the experiences acquired through the implementation providing valuable information for the wider application of the developed tools at wider EU and international scales.

- help generate a better understanding of the present *modus operandi* in the field, generate knowledge and understanding of the issues and challenges at hand and contribute in the formulation and setting in place responses to tackle racism to first and foremost safeguard young children in football and assist in rooting out the phenomenon.

Outcomes:

WP1. Project Management, quality assurance & evaluation – aims to Set in place quality and management arrangements that will safeguard the implementation of the project and the expert delivery of its work

WP2. Research on present challenges and Best Practices to combat racism in grassroots

football, which contains the following Intellectual Output of the project:

Intellectual Output:

IO1 - Development & Translation of the Report – aims to increase Awareness and understanding in regards to the existence of racism in grassroots football as well as the forms it is being expressed; helps identifying and promoting effective approaches and tools in the field and develops resources to support grassroots football clubs in combating racism

WP3. Development of Blended learning Modules and Tools, which contains the following

Intellectual Outputs:

IO2 – Curriculum

IO3 – Toolkit

IO4 – E-learning platform

IO2, IO3 and IO4 aims to:

- Enhance the awareness and competences of football coaches and managers in grassroots football to proactively manage and prevent racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance

- Contribute in the prevention & mitigation of racism and xenophobia incidents in grassroots football

- Enhance awareness of national and transnational football-sports stakeholders as well as the general public on the severe impact of racism on players, grassroots football and sports in general

WP4. Dissemination & Exploitation aims to:

- To increase awareness and understanding in regards to existence of racism in grassroots football, the forms it is being expressed and the need for concrete responses

- To strengthened cooperation between football institutions and organisations in identifying and addressing racism

- Enhance awareness of national and transnational football-sports stakeholders as well as the general public on severe impact of racism on players, grassroots football and sports in general

- Disseminate and promote the adoption of the resources and outputs of the project

Partnership:

1. Centre for Advancement of Research and Development in Education – Cyprus
(Coordinator)
2. Stichting Farent - Netherlands
3. Universitatea din Pitesti – Romania
4. Kentro Merimnas Oikogeneias Kai Paidiou - Greece
5. UEFA Foundation For Children Fondation Uefa Pour L'enfance – Switzerland
6. Spectrum Research Centre CLG – Ireland
7. Neophytos Ch Charalambous (Institute Of Development LTD) - Cyprus

Website: <https://tackleproject.eu/en/>

[TACKLE flyer_EN](#)

[Final Conference at UEFA headquarters in Nyon \(Switzerland\), on 23 June 2023](#)

[Press release](#)