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Integration Through Sport

Some remarks on criteria for success of programmes and projects

What is the topical challenge?

Undoubtedly sport has been recognized as a popular and appropriate tool for social integration in the civil society as well as on political level. Numerous declarations on national and international level, national and international “action plans”, thousands of projects and programmes could be listed in this field of action. And the challenge to improve the efforts seem to become even more important.

Integration of ethnic minorities has become one of the most demanding social-political challenges in our European societies. The quantitative relation between native citizens and foreigners changed dramatically. More and more foreigners stand against less native citizens.

The number of migrants increased by more than 2.5 million persons in Germany within the last ten years. More than 10 mill. migrants currently live in Germany (2 mill. of them are Muslims). In 2050 we expect that 16 mill. migrants will live in Germany. Already now one quarter of our youngsters (under 15 years old) have a migration background.

A lot of bad incidents make us aware nearly every day, that in our European societies a smoothly running, peaceful and constructive living together with people coming from different ethnic origin, from different cultures and from different religious background is not at all natural until now, but still in deficit. Xenophobia is still increasing; isolation of migrants in “parallel societies” is still reality!

The potential of sport to contribute to the process of social integration seems to be a matter of course, seems not to be questioned any longer. But isn't it surprising that we can hardly find a serious, evidence-based, longitudinal evaluation study on the real and sustainable effects of sport participation for the process of integration of migrants? That doesn't mean that individual particular projects had not been launched without any success. We can find many statements about good results. But it should make us sensible to ask strongly, if anyway the results of projects and programmes related to “integration through sport” can fulfill the expectations and what they are really able to contribute to social integration in a substantial way. Or to say it in another way: What kind of criteria are suitable for planning and carrying out projects/programmes in the field of “integration through sport”, to make more likely a substantial contribution to the entire process of integration.

To find an answer for this question, it seems to be necessary to have a deeper insight in the term, the basic conditions and the process of integration.

“Integration” as a complex and diversified process

When we are going to talk about “Integration through sport” as a topic of the Round Table “Sport for All as the element of intercultural dialogue” this topic seems already to be restricted to “social integration of ethnic minorities. This is a particular target group within the entire field of social integration. “Social Integration” is a term, used in

sociology and several other social sciences, and it means in general the process of combining a group of persons like minority groups (e.g. handicapped people, drug or alcohol addicted persons, old people), refugees, underprivileged sections of the society, ethnic or religious minorities to integrate into the mainstream of the society and to make available the opportunities, rights and services of the mainstream society.

Integration of minorities is an indispensable social-political aim of governments and civil societies pursuing human rights and values and is substantial for a smoothly running, peaceful society.

Social integration is a long lasting and very differentiated process of joining together and growing together. It needs: convergence, argumentation, communication, finding agreements, identification of differences, assumption of common responsibilities. In contrary to "Assimilation" (total conformity) "Integration" demands not to surrender own cultural identity. Integration is to keep independence, but to acknowledge the culture of the up taking country as a "guiding culture". The existence and setting up of "parallel societies" is counteracting to the process of integration.

The process of integration can be differentiated into 4 steps:

- **Accommodation** (structural integration): Migrants become recognized as members of the up taking society; they get entrance to social positions and get equal chances within the society. Preconditions: ability to speak the language and to have knowledge about social rules of the up taking country.
- **Acculturation** (cultural integration): Learning and internalization of the culture in the up taking country, which enables to participate in the social life; but to keep as well own cultural identity (cultural balance).
- **Social Integration:** The up taking society accepts the migrants in the private sector, when they participate in social activities and become members in social groups (e.g. sport clubs).
- **Identification integration:** Migrants develop a personal feeling of affiliation.

Obstacles for successful integration

We know today, that unequal social chances of migrants are the most important reasons for failing successful integration. Many migrants are underprivileged in respect

- To education opportunities
- To gainful employment
- To meaningful perspectives of living.

- The efforts towards a better integration need a multiple and networking strategy in different fields (holistic approach):
- Language acquisition
- Increase in level of education
- Participation in working life
- Participation in meaningful leisure activities (e.g. culture; sport)

Those general remarks on "integration" may be a little bit too academic for our Round Table topic. But in my opinion they can make us aware that the process of integration in general –and even if we are going to facilitate integration through sport– is a difficult, long-lasting and complex process. This insight may prevent us from too high expectations in our integration programmes and projects related to sport. Those

remarks make us realize as well that the process of integration is not running for itself, is not coming automatically. Integration has to be strived for:

- On one hand from the position of the up taking society has to be organized and needs strategically-methodological planning, established by different entities on local and/or national level.
- On the other hand the migrant himself has to do his part; he has to be willing for active engagement in public or private offers, has to make efforts for learning either the language, professional skills or cultural habits.

Resume

Social integration is a long-lasting, multi-faceted process. This process has to be arranged as a holistic and educational orientated approach through different stakeholders. Sport can only give a part-payment and assist to successful integration. It takes more than sport and physical activity to facilitate relevant and valuable results within the process of integration.

Sport as a suitable tool for integration

As it was already pointed out, that sport activities had been used since a long time successful for the aims of integration in many projects and programmes. But why is sport a suitable medium for integration?

- Mutual experience through and with our bodies makes it easier to get known of each other and to come close together.
- Sport follows rather uniformed rules and norms.
- Language is less important for communication than in other parts of our social life.
- Jointly experiencing victories, defeat and emotions create a feeling of community. Nationality, color and philosophy of life lose in importance.
- Sportive values of fair play, respect, international understanding creates an atmosphere of familiarity.

But we should also be aware, that this favorable structural characteristic of sport in regard to integration is not a matter of course, is not coming automatically. The effects need to be strived for. The activities have to be arranged methodically in an appropriate way by experienced instructors.

We know as well that sport can also provoke negative racist effects, hate, violence and xenophobia. Every weekend we can observe many examples of separation instead of integration through sport on soccer fields. (DFB has started a big campaign counteracting those negative behavior of spectators).

Undoubtedly sport offers a high potential for the process of integration, particularly in the first phase of this long lasting process (accommodation phase). Sport can/should be a "door-opener" and later on a constant, supporting companion within this multi-faceted process. But also in sport the effects of integration have to be strived for carefully, have to be organized, need a systematical and continuous approach, need specially educated instructors and managers.

10 recommendations for project planning on “integration through sport”

1. Be aware of the limits of a sport-project on integration!
2. Don't expect fast success; have a whip hand!
3. Try to set up reliable, stable organizational structures (e.g. permanent working group, competent leadership, tools for communication, set of rules for rights and obligations).
4. Have a holistic view of your project concept; include more than only sport activities:
 - Offering language courses
 - Individual taking care of private social problems
 - Support in dealing with local authorities
 - Consultation and support in arrangement of employment (using relationships)
 - Carrying out social event (camps; barbecues, common breakfast; ...)
 - Instructor-education of migrants.
5. Exchange your experience with other projects (networking).
6. Be open and strive for evaluation; look for measurable evaluation criteria; be open for changes every time.
7. Not every sport activity is suitable to support integration effects. Some activities are more dangerous to segregate persons than to bring them together. Generally sport for all activities seem to be better than strong competitive sports, team sport better than individual sports.
8. Demand an active collaboration and contribution from migrants themselves. Mutual giving and taking.
9. Take care for the human resources to run the project. Financial resources are less important than human resources. Motivate and give opportunity to attend special qualification measures. Try to include migrants to qualification measures (instructor education). Give responsibilities to migrants themselves.
10. When you are going to start a (time limited) project, take into consideration already in the very beginning the possibilities for a permanent, long-lasting programme.

Finally: Individual projects of local civil society organisations (e.g. sport clubs) are very welcome. But they need a staple (a tie into bundles) to become more effective for the entire development of the integration process as a social-political challenge for a society. Good practice demand a binding umbrella in kind of campaigns and long lasting programmes, guided by a strong civil society organization on national or international level.

Sport associations have already verified their competence to run such programmes. Example: DOSB programme “Integration through sport”. This programme is running already since 12 years with strong governmental support (5 mill € per year). DOSB is appointed as one of the main stakeholders in the “National Action Plan for Integration”.

Role of ISCA

ISCA and its members have also dedicated its policy towards integration through sport with multiple actions:

- ISCA president was appointed as expert in the ERICarts-project (study "Sharing Diversity" of the Europ. Institute for culture research for the European Commission)
- ISCA representatives contributed to national and international congresses, conferences, seminars (Stuttgart, TAFISA-Frankfurt, Istanbul,....)
- ISCA-Youth project "Intercultural dialogue"
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ISCA is and will be in the future a reliable, competent and also a critical, admonishing stakeholder in the field of intercultural dialogue and integration through sport.

Annex:

Outline of the DOSB programme:

1. Organizational structure
2. Practical measures for migrants
 - 2.1 Regular activities/course in base-clubs
 - 2.2 On the spot (selective) activities
 - 2.3 Camps / weekend courses
 - 2.4 Big events / festivals
3. Services
 - 3.1 Education of instructors
 - Qualification as “start-helpers”
 - Qualification of migrants as instructors
 - 3.2 Knowledge transfer and PR
 - Web: [www.integration-durch-sport .de](http://www.integration-durch-sport.de)
 - Media partnership
 - Awards : « The real stars of sport » ; « Sport without borders »;