

MOVING ON

ACCESS TO SPORT FOR ROMA, SINTI, & TRAVELLERS IN EUROPE



**"Collaborative Review of Local Strategies for RST"
Based on National Reports**



Citizens, Equality, Rights and
Values programme



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D4 "Collaborative review of local strategies for RST" based on national reports.

The document D4, titled "Collaborative Review of Local Strategies for Roma, Sinti, and Travellers (RST) Based on National Reports," is a detailed look into how different countries are working to include Roma communities in sports. It explores the specific plans and actions each country is taking to encourage Roma, Sinti, and Traveller people to participate in sports. Our main goal is to understand these strategies well, find out what challenges they face, and suggest ways to make them better.

We closely examine the situations in four countries: Ireland, Italy, the Czech Republic, and Spain. By studying their approaches, we learn about the various ways they're trying to make sports more inclusive for marginalized groups. We also want to set up meetings with government officials and others in charge of sports and discrimination issues to learn more about their plans and see how we can work together.

D4 "Collaborative review of local strategies for RST" based on national reports.

Our aim is to promote fairness and make sports welcoming to everyone. We believe it's crucial to see how effective the current approaches are at including marginalized groups like the Roma, Sinti, and Travellers in sports. Through this review, we want to understand each country's approach better, pointing out what they're doing well and where they can improve.

Throughout the document, we take a close look at the challenges Roma communities face in joining sports. It's not just about getting people active; it's also about bringing communities together, respecting their cultures, and making sure they feel empowered. These aspects are essential for making sports meaningful and inclusive for everyone.

Our ultimate goal isn't just to spot problems but to find real solutions. By working together, sharing what we know, and coming up with new ideas, we hope to make sports more welcoming for everyone. We want to celebrate our differences and make sure everyone, including Roma, Sinti, and Traveller communities, feels valued in the world of sports.



Methodology

Taims of the report

This report is intended to act as a fact-finding study to inform the wider 'Moving On Project' on the main barriers to participation in sport and physical activity facing Romani and Traveller communities in the Czech Republic, Ireland, Italy, and Spain.

The report is largely based on the activities and expertise of the European Roma Rights Centre and national organisations (INEXSDA, Exchange House Ireland, GEA, FAGiC) implementing the project in each of the target countries.

As well as to understand the barriers to sport and physical activities, the study is intended to analyse the representation and consideration of sport and physical activities within the EU and national strategies and policies targeting Romani and Traveller communities. The research is also intended to elucidate gender disparities in sport participation and show how intersecting identities can result in multiple discrimination in accessing sports and physical activity.

This report is not meant to act as a representative study, but rather a snapshot of the situation of sports participation for Romani and Traveller communities in each country to facilitate access programmes and other advocacy work at a national and EU level and improve access for these communities. The work should create an initial base of contacts with relevant and key stakeholders that partners can involve in activities as local, national, and European actors later in the project. The study seeks to discover the extent to which sport is, or could be, used as a tool of inclusion to actively combat discrimination and marginalisation of Romani and Traveller people in Europe.

IRELAND

In Ireland, efforts to include travelers in sports face various challenges that highlight the complexity of promoting inclusivity in the sporting realm.



These challenges, including fear of discrimination, limited participation in specific sports, and difficulties in maintaining connections with traveler organizations and national sports bodies, shape the landscape of traveler inclusion in sports.



Challenges Identified

- **Fear of discrimination and non-acceptance:**

Travelers in Ireland often harbor deep-seated fears of discrimination and struggle with feelings of non-acceptance within certain sports environments. These fears serve as significant barriers, hindering their active engagement in sports activities and undermining their sense of belonging within sports communities.

- **Limited participation in certain sports:**

While football remains popular among travelers, their involvement in other sports, such as Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), is geographically restricted. This geographical disparity in sporting opportunities poses a significant challenge, impeding efforts to promote broader participation and inclusivity among traveler communities.

- **Difficulty in maintaining connections:**

Establishing and maintaining connections with traveler organizations and the inclusion departments of national and local sports bodies present significant obstacles. These connections are crucial for providing ongoing support, resources, and advocacy for traveler inclusion in sports. However, the transient nature of traveler communities and the complexities of engagement pose ongoing challenges.



Possible Solutions:

- **Creation of a directory:**

Developing a comprehensive directory that consolidates services for travelers and the inclusion departments of sports bodies can serve as a valuable resource hub. This directory would streamline access to essential resources and support networks for both traveler communities and sports organizations, facilitating collaboration and knowledge-sharing initiatives aimed at promoting inclusivity in sports.

- **Inclusion module for sports clubs:**

Introducing a specialized inclusion module within sports club training programs, modeled after initiatives offered by Sports Ireland, holds significant promise. This module would equip coaches and administrators with the necessary tools, knowledge, and insights to effectively address the specific needs and challenges faced by traveler participants, fostering a more inclusive and supportive sporting environment.

- **Formation of a national body:**

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BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

“A big barrier stopping young travellers going into sport is that they have to work, they have to make money to survive, and I think it’s a big commitment going into sport and not being supported financially.”⁹ ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

“I’ve played football, and you’ll hear the words ‘tramp’, ‘knacker’, all the derogatory words that’s associated with your ethnicity, and I’ve heard it directed at me and other Traveller players... It stays with you, you’re always conscious of it there...”¹³

“I had coaches from 10-years-old up to about 17, and they were very, very good, but then I got a fella then that – he didn’t like Travellers. This fella didn’t like Travellers and the reason why I knew this was because any time that he had a Traveller on his team in the years before and the years after, he would always have the one issue with him... So, he didn’t want you getting involved and it got to the stage where he wasn’t starting you as much, he didn’t want to play you, no communication, he just didn’t want you around the team. If you were better than the other lads, he still wouldn’t play you because you’re a Traveller.”¹⁵

“Would you want to put yourself out there when you know there’s a high possibility that you’re going to be called names because you’re a Traveller, you’re going to have all these negative stereotypes about your community? You wouldn’t want that... I’ve seen Travellers involved in different sports and when you ask them ‘can we promote them through the social media?’ they’re like – ‘no’ – because the fear is that of the comment section, it’s that one thing all the time.”

CONCLUSIONS

Despite the multifaceted challenges facing Ireland's efforts to promote traveler inclusion in sports, there are promising opportunities for positive change. Through collaborative partnerships, targeted initiatives, and strategic interventions, Ireland can overcome these challenges and foster greater inclusivity within its sporting landscape. Ultimately, these efforts contribute to social cohesion and equity while enriching the diversity and vibrancy of Ireland's sporting culture, ensuring that sports truly become a platform for all to thrive and belong.





ITALY

In an online meeting convened by the municipality of Padua, two counselors, two social workers, a representative from the Quadrato Meticcio association, and three representatives from the GEA cooperative gathered to discuss strategies for reaching the target audience and fostering collaboration.



The objective was to explore methods to engage the community in workshops, round tables, and sports events dedicated to promoting Roma inclusion in sports.

Main Challenges Identified:



In addition to acknowledging the contextual challenges previously outlined, the participants identified the difficulty of gaining the trust of the target audience, particularly project operators and key figures. Building trust and rapport with the community emerged as a significant hurdle in advancing inclusion initiatives.



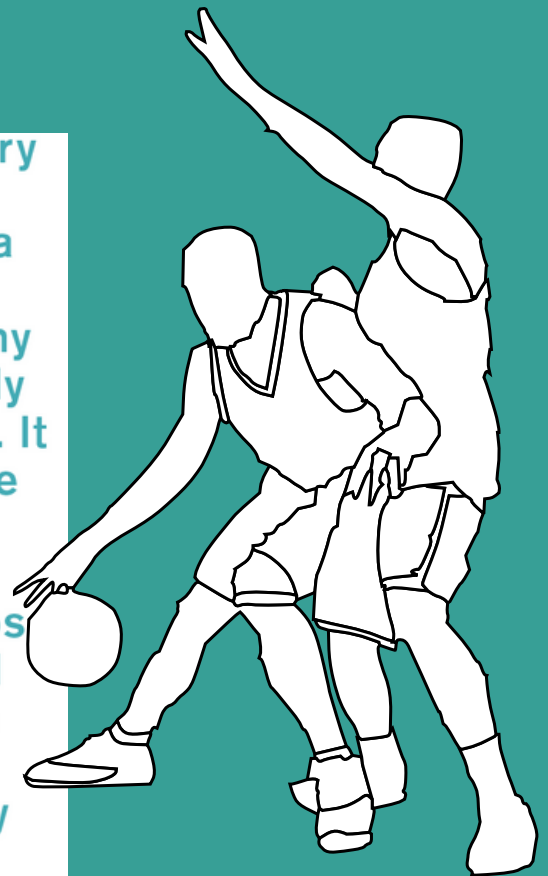
Results of the event:

During the discussion, the Quadrato Meticcio association stepped forward to host one of the Moving On project activities as part of their "City of Ideas" event scheduled for April 25 and 26. They also expressed their readiness to collaborate on future events and engage with families already in contact with their organization.

It was agreed to initiate small afternoon activities within the camps, leveraging the Quadrato Meticcio association's existing contacts to build trust with the target audience. Both Quadrato Meticcio and GEA offered their resources for these activities, while the municipality of Padua committed to supporting events beyond the camps and promoting them to the wider community.

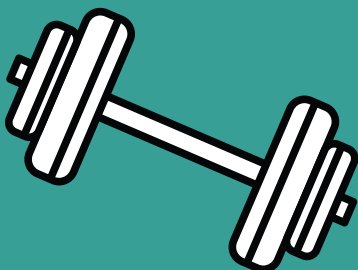
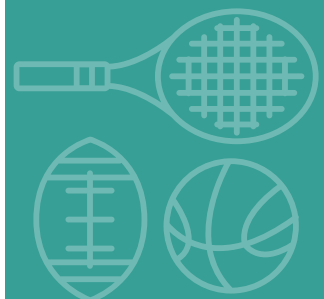
BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

“Before the war we were fine, life was very normal, my mother was a housewife and seamstress, my father a farmer. We had a house, land to farm. Because of the war we escaped. Arriving in Italy for us and my parents was traumatic...We arrived in Italy and found ourselves in the camp system. It was an imposition to find ourselves in the camp, not a choice. If you said you were Roma, once you arrived, you went to the camp. Italy was forced to close the camps. It is apartheid. It is a bad experience and I have lived it. However, after the closure there has to be a concrete housing solution. With evictions you often destroy what little a family builds up.”⁶



“There are higher difficulties with this community. It is a more marginalised and discriminated community. I think of the camps that are close to the bypass roads and far from the city centre, of services.”

“In Via Germagnano [Turin], for example, five little girls who did dance with me, the parents let them participate because they knew me, there was a relationship of trust. However, you can say that there is a very imposing patriarchal system in the camps, in the marginalised part of the Roma, Sinti, and Caminanti communities.”



Future Actions



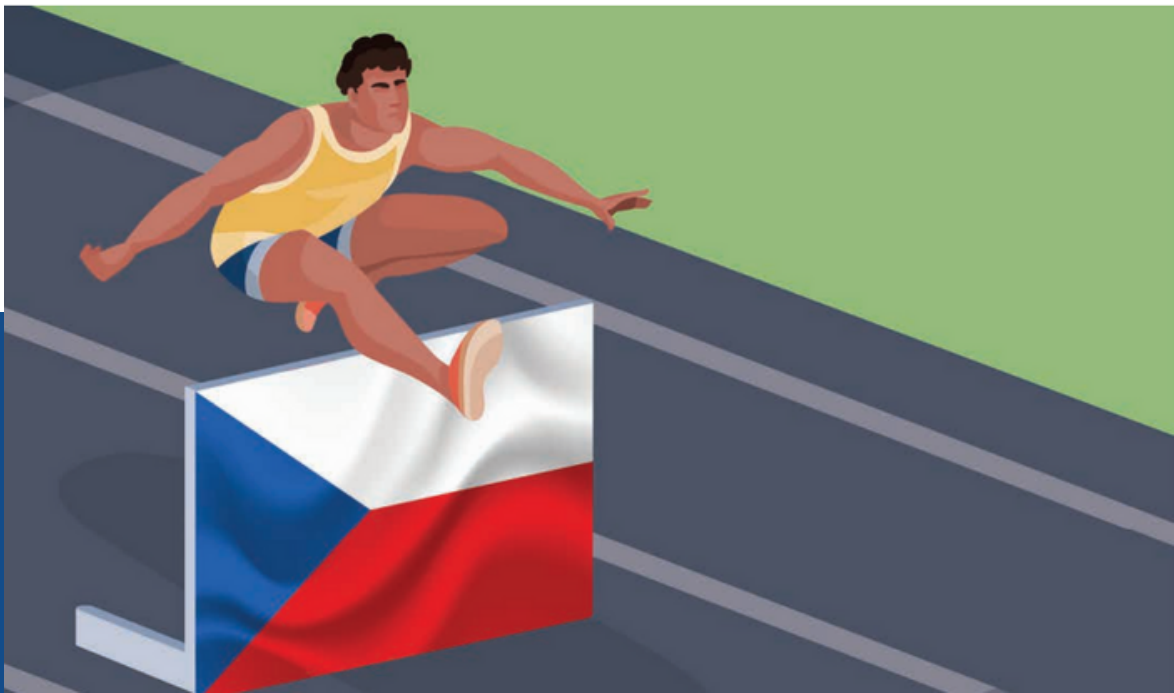
- **Identify schools:** Identify schools as potential partners for inclusion initiatives and sports events.
- **Meeting with families:** Conduct meetings with families to provide detailed explanations of the Moving On project and its objectives.
- **Meeting with local sports associations:** Engage with local sports associations to foster collaboration and support for inclusion efforts.
- **GEA annual presence:** Establish an annual presence of GEA to organize sports sessions and promote ongoing engagement.

Conclusion:

The "Moving On" project in Italy encounters challenges, but with concerted collaboration among organizations and a commitment to specific actions, there are ample opportunities to advance the inclusion of the Roma population in sports and society at large. By addressing trust barriers, leveraging existing networks, and fostering ongoing engagement, Italy can make significant strides towards promoting equity and inclusion in sports.

CZECH REPUBLIC

In the Czech Republic, similar to many other countries, there are ongoing struggles with integrating marginalized communities, especially the Roma population, into various aspects of society, including sports.



Despite efforts to promote diversity and inclusivity, significant obstacles hinder the full participation of Roma individuals in sports. These obstacles include limited access to sports facilities, the impact of polarizing discourse around migrants from Ukraine, and the lack of widespread recognition of football as a tool for social inclusion by social service organizations.

Challenges Identified

- Limited access to sports facilities:

The Roma population faces significant barriers in accessing sports facilities. Many communities lack adequate infrastructure or resources for sports activities, which limits opportunities for participation. Additionally, instances of both overt and covert discrimination exacerbate the problem, with negative stereotypes and prejudices often leading to exclusion from sports clubs or activities, perpetuating a cycle of marginalization.

- Impact of polarizing discourse on Ukraine migrants:

The polarizing discourse surrounding migrants from Ukraine indirectly affects interactions between the Roma population and Ukrainian children. Prejudices and discriminatory attitudes, instilled by parents and society, influence the way these groups interact, resulting in social barriers and exclusion.

- Recognition of football as an inclusion tool:

Football holds significant potential as a vehicle for social inclusion and community building. However, it has not yet gained universal recognition as such by social service organizations in the Czech Republic. This lack of acknowledgment hampers efforts to leverage the sport's positive impact on youth development and integration.

Possible solutions

- Engagement with local authorities and crime prevention institutions:

Collaboration with local authorities and crime prevention institutions is crucial to address the systemic barriers to sports participation faced by the Roma population. By working together, stakeholders can identify and dismantle discriminatory practices and improve access to sports facilities.

- Adapted application of football with the football method:

Implementing football programs utilizing the Football3 methodology shows promise in fostering inclusion among diverse communities, including Ukrainian and Roma children. This approach emphasizes values such as respect, fair play, and teamwork, promoting social cohesion and breaking down stereotypes.

- Regular Meetings among Social Workers:

Facilitating regular meetings among social workers responsible for overseeing Roma and Ukrainian children enables constructive dialogue and strategic planning for effective interventions. These meetings serve as a platform to exchange ideas, share best practices, and develop tailored initiatives to address the specific needs of these communities.

BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

“We had agreement with the primary school in Rotava for the rent of the pitch, but the school director did not like that we organise activities for children who in her opinion didn't deserve it. For her those children don't deserve anything and they criticised us for organising several trips to the mountains or further non-formal educational activities. She said that we had to bring children who deserve it and they she will even recommend some children. But they did not want to understand that we primarily wanted to work with those children exactly to have a positive influence and change in their lives... In the sports halls we cannot go, in the school gym we cannot go. Everywhere we have a ban. In their eyes those children don't deserve it, because they don't fulfil the school attendance, they don't have good grades, sometimes they have punishments from teachers. I understand this not good, but if we break their determination and we only tell them they are worth nothing then we are only making it worse.”

“I think it's more of a boys' thing in Roma families. I don't know, I haven't encountered many girls doing sports with Roma, to be honest. And I think it comes from those families, let's say, the more traditional Roma families. I might be wrong, but I don't recall seeing Roma girls, for example, playing football.”²⁰

“There has been a long-standing antigypsyism here [in the Czech Republic]. I still think that when a Roma comes to someone asking for a job, the person already approaches them with prejudices. The same goes for housing, and it might be the case with sports too.”¹¹

“It's one of the most natural things, when they start playing football together and friendships are being built through it. They start writing each other on social media, they start visiting each other even outside the football matches between different towns. And nobody is speculating if one is Roma or not, the friendship is really natural between them, thanks to the fact that they share the same values and the same aims. They see each other regularly. If we would have more support from the town, we could realise much more towards the social cohesion of those youngsters.”

CONCLUSIONS

Despite the formidable challenges of promoting Roma inclusion in sports in the Czech Republic, there is a tangible path forward through proactive engagement with local authorities, the adoption of innovative football methodologies, and the establishment of comprehensive sports programs. By addressing systemic barriers, combatting discrimination, and fostering greater participation and inclusion, the Czech Republic can create a more equitable and inclusive sporting landscape for Roma communities.

SPAIN

In Spain, a collaborative effort involving various administrations, including the Office of Equal Treatment and Non-Discrimination, the Department of the Presidency, and the Catalan Sports Council, came together to address the challenges hindering the Romani community's access to sports in Catalonia. The issues of structural discrimination, socio-economic disparities, and gender-related concerns within the Romani community underscore the complexity of fostering inclusivity in sports.

In Spain, various public administrations are collaborating to address the challenges facing the Romani community's involvement in sports in Catalonia. This effort involves institutions like the Office of Equal Treatment and Non-Discrimination, the Department of the Presidency, and the Catalan Sports Council. They aim to tackle structural discrimination, socio-economic disparities, and gender-related issues within the Romani community, highlighting the complexity of promoting inclusivity in sports.

Despite legal and policy advancements against anti-Roma discrimination (antigitanismo), there's still a significant lack of focus on combating it within sports. This gap underscores the need for further attention to ensure equitable access for Romani individuals in sporting activities.

Moreover, there's a clear correlation between income levels and participation in extracurricular activities, with disadvantaged neighborhoods facing greater barriers. This exacerbates challenges for the Romani community, necessitating targeted action to bridge the gap and promote inclusivity in sports.

In summary, while collaborative efforts are underway to address barriers to Romani community engagement in sports, there's a pressing need for targeted action against anti-Roma sentiments in sports and to mitigate socio-economic factors hindering access to sports opportunities.



Challenges identified:

- **Persistent discrimination and access barriers:**

Discriminatory practices continue to exist within sports, marked by stigma, social exclusion, and inadequate access to facilities for the Romani community. These barriers pose significant obstacles to active participation and integration.

- **Health disparities:**

Romani individuals encounter notable health challenges, including higher rates of obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases. It's crucial to implement culturally adapted health promotion programs and measures to address healthcare inequalities and improve health outcomes.

- **Gender disparity in participation:**

Gender norms prevalent within the Romani community restrict women's engagement in sports. Overcoming these barriers requires gender-sensitive initiatives empowering Romani women to fully participate in sports activities.





BARRIERS TO PARTICIIPATION

THE COMBAT SPORTS EXCEPTION

Like others who participate in combat sports, the interviewee from Girona described how he has faced no negative treatment on account of his ethnicity since starting at a local boxing club: “I’ve always liked sports, I’ve been trying out [different sports], I’ve done everything, and the truth is that where I am now, they know that I am Romani, and they treat me perfectly. I am another one of them, I am super comfortable, and that is the most important thing. I think the important thing is to do sports and, well, to have an active body and then to be treated well, to be comfortable in a place, that’s the best. That’s why the change [to boxing].” An ex-professional Muay Thai fighter of Romani origin who was interviewed similarly spoke of the lack of obstacles in the sport on account of ethnicity. He attributes this to the multicultural makeup of combat sport clubs and says: “In combat sports you’re all the same in that way – the distinction is more ‘you’re lazy’ or ‘you train well’ or ‘you’re fat’ because you weigh a lot. That’s true, if you’re overweight, there is discrimination because you’re always too fat [in Muay Thai].”¹



CONCLUSION

The collaborative effort underscores the importance of intersectoral collaboration to develop and implement targeted policies and programs. This joint approach is vital for dismantling barriers and promoting the inclusion of the Romani community in Catalonia's sports scene.



Next Steps:

- **Government initiatives:**

Develop comprehensive policies addressing discrimination and enhancing accessibility to sports facilities.

Allocate resources for culturally adapted health promotion initiatives targeting the Romani community.

- **Sports organizations:**

Implement awareness campaigns and training programs within sports clubs to promote inclusive practices.

Design initiatives tailored to the needs of Romani women, fostering gender equity in sports participation.

- **Civil society engagement:**

Collaborate with Romani community organizations to co-design initiatives fostering sports participation and community cohesion.

Advocate for Romani representation in decision-making processes within sports organizations.

- **Monitoring and evaluation:**

Establish mechanisms for continuous monitoring and evaluation to adjust strategies based on feedback.

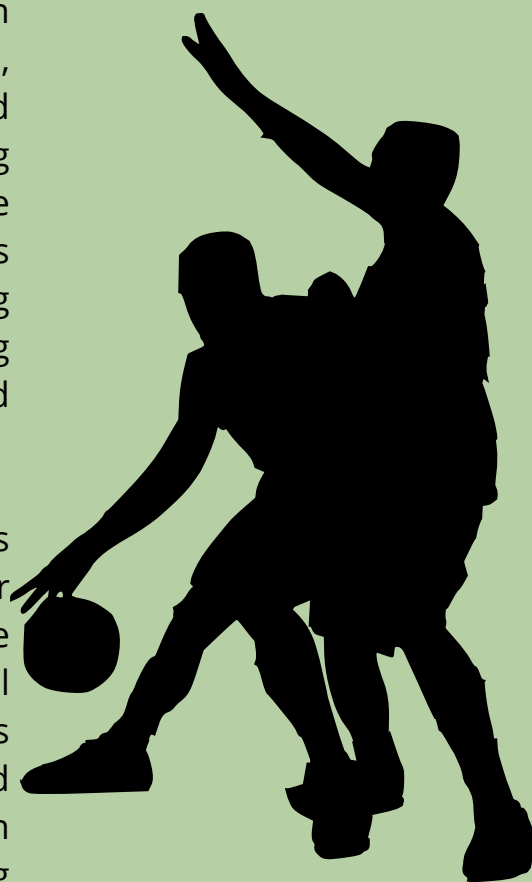
Ensure transparency and accountability by regularly reporting findings and disseminating information on the effectiveness of initiatives.

Conclusions from the Collaborative Review of Local Strategies for RST

- **Recognition of Complexities:** The collaborative review underscores the intricate nature of promoting inclusion in sports for marginalized communities such as the Roma, Sinti, and Travellers (RST). It acknowledges that inclusion efforts extend far beyond merely facilitating participation in physical activities. Instead, they encompass broader societal objectives such as fostering social cohesion, promoting cultural integration, and empowering marginalized groups within the sporting landscape.
- **Identification of Challenges:** Across the examined countries, several recurring challenges emerge, shedding light on the systemic barriers hindering the full participation and integration of RST communities. These challenges include limited access to sports facilities, pervasive fears of discrimination, and the difficulty in maintaining sustained connections between traveler communities and sports organizations. These obstacles collectively underscore the complexity and depth of the challenges faced in fostering inclusivity within the sporting sphere.

Promotion of collaboration: A central theme of the collaborative review is the promotion of collaboration among diverse stakeholders, including local authorities, sports organizations, civil society groups, and marginalized communities themselves. By fostering collaboration, knowledge exchange, and innovative thinking, the review seeks to harness collective efforts towards creating more inclusive and equitable sporting environments. It emphasizes the importance of building partnerships that transcend traditional boundaries and leverage the unique strengths of each stakeholder group.

Call for actionable solutions: While the review identifies a myriad of challenges, it also serves as a catalyst for actionable solutions. These solutions encompass a wide range of initiatives, including engaging with local authorities to address systemic barriers, adapting sports programs to meet the specific needs of marginalized communities, fostering trust and rapport within marginalized communities, and establishing comprehensive support networks to facilitate sustained engagement. The review underscores the importance of tangible actions that lead to meaningful change within the sporting landscape.



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- **Call for actionable solutions:** While the review identifies a myriad of challenges, it also serves as a catalyst for actionable solutions. These solutions encompass a wide range of initiatives, including engaging with local authorities to address systemic barriers, adapting sports programs to meet the specific needs of marginalized communities, fostering trust and rapport within marginalized communities, and establishing comprehensive support networks to facilitate sustained engagement. The review underscores the importance of tangible actions that lead to meaningful change within the sporting landscape.
- **Commitment to tangible change:** Ultimately, the collaborative review reflects a collective commitment to effecting tangible change within the sporting sphere. It calls upon stakeholders across different countries to translate insights and recommendations into concrete actions that advance inclusion efforts. By addressing systemic barriers, combating discrimination, and promoting greater participation and inclusion, the review aims to catalyze lasting transformation within the sporting landscape, ensuring that sports truly become a platform for all individuals, including marginalized communities, to thrive and belong.

In summary, the collaborative review represents a comprehensive and multifaceted exploration of the challenges and opportunities inherent in promoting inclusion in sports for RST communities. It serves as a rallying call for concerted action, emphasizing the need for collaborative efforts, actionable solutions, and a steadfast commitment to driving positive change within the sporting landscape.



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