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Social inclusion of migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons through sport

Motion for a resolution

tabled by the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

Social inclusion is an important process which creates conditions for individuals or groups to participate actively in the life of society. It can also be a powerful tool to fight discrimination, intolerance, racism and xenophobia.

Many migrants, refugees and displaced persons experience difficulties in social participation due to displacement and living in an unknown environment, where they often don't have family, friends and support networks. Therefore, they risk feeling excluded from the social life of the community. However, the practice of sports and physical activity, especially in groups, could facilitate their social and human contacts and create a favourable environment for their better inclusion. Furthermore, availability of sporting activities in refugee and IDPs camps can help people, in particular children and youth, to better cope with their situation, and keep in good physical and mental condition.

Many European countries have implemented projects facilitating migrants' inclusion through sports. For example, the Turkish Olympic Committee launched a project for Syrian refugee children to increase their access to sport in schools to strengthen both their physical and mental wellbeing. It would be highly useful to share such positive experiences between the 47 member States of the Council of Europe. In this respect it is important to build on the work being done in the Council of Europe through the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS), connecting up with initiatives such as the ASPIRE initiative (Activity, Sport, Play, for the Inclusion of Refugees). Sport can also be an important tool of reconciliation and confidence building measures, in conflict areas.

Social inclusion is a two-way process and it is important to find out how to engage migrants, refugees and displaced persons and better facilitate their access to local sport networks and communities.

The Parliamentary Assembly should evaluate the effect of sport on the social inclusion of migrants and provide recommendations on how to better integrate sport into social inclusion strategies. Particular attention should be paid to the role of local authorities, including the work of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, and civil society in this process, also taking into account the work and outreach of the Council of Europe's Intercultural Cities Programme.

