

SCORE (Sport Connects Against Radicalization in Europe)

Project Impact Analysis

Introduction and Background

The SCORE project was born out of a shared understanding among civil society organizations across France and the Western Balkans: radicalization and discrimination are rising challenges, particularly among youth. These issues threaten not only the well-being of young people but also the cohesion and resilience of entire communities.

To respond, SCORE brought together a committed consortium of partners: PLAY International (France and Kosovo), TAKT (North Macedonia), REGSPO (Montenegro), and DEMSPORT (Kosovo). Over the course of 12 months, these partners implemented SCORE across Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Montenegro, with the goal of harnessing the power of sport and play to build resilience, promote inclusion, and counter radical ideologies in youth.

This project was made possible through co-funding from the European Union through the Erasmus+ program, under its Capacity Building in the Field of Sport stream, which supports innovative, collaborative efforts to use sport for social development and youth empowerment.

Project Purpose and Intervention Logic

SCORE was designed with a clear intervention logic: empowered educators and community actors can become catalysts of social change if provided with the right tools and support. Sport and play, when intentionally structured, create safe, engaging environments where young people can explore sensitive issues, build trust across differences, and develop critical psychosocial skills.

The logic model followed this flow:

1. **Co-create contextual, sport-based pedagogical content** that builds empathy, tolerance, and critical thinking.
2. **Train educators and youth leaders** to deliver this content confidently and effectively.
3. **Implement community-level sport and play sessions** for youth aged 15–24 using the developed methodology.

4. **Capture learning and transformation** through monitoring and evaluation, and disseminate widely to scale impact.

The project was underpinned by a belief that sport is not merely an activity—but a tool for dialogue, empowerment, and peacebuilding.

Achievements and Results

The SCORE project's achievements are structured by work packages (WP):

WP2: Co-creation of Pedagogical Toolkit

- A comprehensive handbook/toolkit of sport- and play-based sessions was collaboratively developed with input from partner organizations and external experts in radicalization and discrimination.
- The toolkit was field-tested, revised, and finalized based on learnings from the ground, ensuring practical relevance and adaptability across the three participating countries.

WP3: Training of Trainers and Educators

- Trainers from each project partner were trained by PLAY International.
- These trainers subsequently trained **89 youth workers, coaches, and educators**:
 - PLAY (Kosovo): 51
 - TAKT (North Macedonia): 19
 - REGSPO (Montenegro): 19

Evaluation Outcomes:

- **88%** of trainees found the toolkit **relevant** to the needs of young people.
- **79%** reported feeling **confident or very confident** in their ability to mobilize youth against discrimination after the training.

WP4: Field Implementation of Activities

Trained members implemented sport- and play-based sessions with local youth:

- **Youth engaged:**
 - Kosovo (PLAY): 272
 - North Macedonia (TAKT): 200

- Montenegro (REGSP0): 160

Impact on Youth (from post-activity questionnaires):

- **82% felt better able to promote tolerance and gender equality.**
- **81% felt better equipped to act against discrimination.**
- **88% expressed a desire to continue participating** in activities promoting tolerance.

These figures affirm the effectiveness of the project's approach, and the sport for development approach more generally: embedding psychosocial learning within structured sport sessions builds tangible shifts in attitudes and capacities.

Feedback from the Field

Participant voices bring these outcomes to life. While not all responses were formal quotes, feedback captured during monitoring and evaluation offers a compelling window into the project's human impact.

"I learned how to listen to others, even when we disagree. The games helped me understand more about people who are different from me."

— *Youth participant, Kosovo*

"Before the training, I wasn't sure how to talk to young people about discrimination. Now I feel I have the tools and the confidence."

— *Youth worker, North Macedonia*

"We always played sports, but this time it felt different. We talked about real issues like equality and respect, and it made me think more deeply."

— *Youth participant, Montenegro*

These reflections highlight how SCORE created not only knowledge gains but also emotional and cognitive shifts among both educators and young people.

Sustainability and Next Steps

The sustainability of SCORE lies in its design. By training local actors - youth workers, local youth civil society members, coaches - the project has created a multiplier effect. These individuals can continue to apply, adapt, and disseminate the sport-based methodology beyond the project's duration.

The co-created toolkit is:

- Available in local languages
- Free to use and adapt
- Built with input from local contexts, increasing ownership and long-term relevance

In particular, trained educators are already integrating SCORE methods into school-based extracurricular activities and community events. This institutional embedding is a crucial pillar of sustainability.

The Need for Continued Action

Despite SCORE's successes, the project also illuminated a continuing and urgent need:

- Discrimination and radicalization are not one-time challenges; they are deep-rooted and evolving.
- Many communities remain underserved and under-resourced.
- The psychosocial needs of youth are growing, particularly in post-conflict and multi-ethnic regions.

There is clear evidence that the sport for development approach works, but it must be scaled, contextualized, and supported with continued funding, training, and policy alignment.

SCORE is a starting point, not a final destination. Expanding the methodology to additional regions, deepening partnerships with education systems, and tailoring content to different age groups and social dynamics are critical next steps.

Conclusion

The SCORE project stands as a testament to what is possible when communities come together with a shared vision and the right tools. By combining sport, education, and social development, the project created pathways for young people to become more resilient, inclusive, and active citizens.

SCORE didn't just run training workshops or field activities. It sparked conversations, shifted perceptions, and planted the seeds of long-term change.

Sport is not just a means of play, it is a powerful tool for peace, dialogue, and a more just society.

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