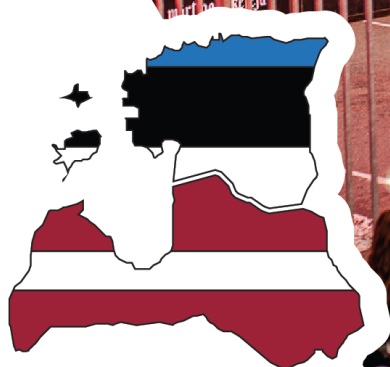# Play forward:
Football for Social Sustainability

Latvian - Estonian football communities for social change and sustainability

Duration: 01.10.2024 - 30.09.2025   EE-LV00124

MANUAL

How street football can contribute to more social societies on a local level?

Welcome words

This project manual introduces "Play Forward: Football for Social Sustainability," a pioneering initiative designed to strengthen cross-border cooperation and foster social inclusion between Latvia and Estonia. Building upon the broader objective of enhancing cross-border contacts and community engagement, "Play Forward" specifically addresses the critical challenge of minority integration within both nations, particularly in scarcely populated rural areas.

The core of this project lies in leveraging street football as a powerful "social glue" to bridge cultural divides, promote acceptance of differences, and build trust among diverse societal groups. While traditional professional football is widely recognized, "Play Forward" will explore and implement various amateur street football formats, such as 5v5, 3v3, and Panna football, to ensure broad participation and accessibility. This innovative approach marks the first time a social project of this nature in football is undertaken at an interprofessional level between Latvia and Estonia.

Recognizing the significant minority populations in both countries—including Russian-speaking, Polish, Azerbaijani, and Georgian communities in Latvia, and Russian-speaking, Polish, and Finnish minorities in Estonia—the project directly aims to promote friendship and their integration into society. Beyond fostering social cohesion, "Play Forward" will also address broader societal challenges such as social inequalities, mobbing, aggression, mental health awareness, and career education through the medium of sport.

The project's key objectives are multifaceted:

1. Strengthening Cooperation: We will strengthen collaboration among Latvian and Estonian local community leaders from Cesis, Valmiera, Ventspils, Haapsalu, Risti, and Parnu.
2. Capacity Building: Forty community leaders will be trained to effectively organize and manage street football tournaments, ensuring the sustainability of activities beyond the project's duration.
3. Strategic Development: A comprehensive and sustainable strategy will be developed for ongoing community engagement and youth development, ensuring that the positive impacts of "Play Forward" extend far into the future.
4. Minority Integration: The project will directly address the challenge of minority integration, promoting acceptance, friendship, and a sense of belonging for all participants, emphasizing their identity as citizens of the Baltic States and the European Union.

"Play Forward" is an integrated initiative that encompasses not only joint events but also extensive training, exchange of best practices at the organizer level, and active involvement of local authorities and football clubs. This project represents a new, international approach to community development, providing young people with a valuable opportunity to feel part of something larger than their regional identity, thereby enhancing their motivation and overall quality of experience.

Introduction

Project "Latvian – Estonian football communities for social change and sustainability "Play Forward: Football for Social Sustainability" was financed by the INTERREG program and was implemented by the grassroots movement "Ghetto Football" (Latvia) and a professional football club "Kalju FC" (Estonia) in 2024-2025.

The project was dedicated to fostering social inclusion for minorities, promoting healthy lifestyles and strengthening cooperation in street football between Latvia and Estonia.

The project included the following directions:

- Strengthening cooperation ties between Latvian and Estonian communities – local community leaders (already active local youth workers, local sports activity and sports life coordinators from the private sector or local municipality);

- Training 40 community leaders (20 from each country) from Cesis, Valmiera, Ventspils, Haapsalu, Risti and Parnu to organize street football tournaments;

- Harnessing the expertise of both partners to develop a sustainable strategy for community engagement and youth development in program areas;

- Address the challenge of minority integration by fostering friendship and a sense of belonging through shared activities and cultural exchange;

- To empower local community members in both countries to continue cross-border cooperation on a long-term basis, grounded in mutually agreed principles;

- Showcase best practices of how street football can contribute to social sustainability in local societies and address minority integration issues.

Table of contents

Terms used in this manual

Within this manual, there are the following terms in use:

- *Community* - the people as a group; a group of people distinguished by shared circumstances of nationality, race, religion, sexuality, etc. such a group living within a larger society from which it is distinct; people who live in the same place; having common or equal rights or rank, as distinguished from the privileged classes; people who share the same interests, pursuits, or occupation[1] and the people who are considered as a unit because of their common interests, social group or nationality[2]

- *Discrimination* - treating a person or particular group of people differently, especially in a worse way than the way you treat other people because of their race, gender, sexuality, etc. (and background which makes them even more vulnerable). Discrimination is also prejudice against people and a refusal to give them their rights[3]

- *Minorities* - any small group in society that is different from the rest because of their race, culture, religion, or political beliefs or a person who belongs to such a group, as well as a group of people who share some characteristic by birth that makes their group smaller than some other groups in a community and may cause others to treat them unfairly[4]

- *Outreach* – an effort to bring services or information to people where they live or spend time[5]

- *People with fewer opportunities* - people who, for economic, social, cultural, geographical or health reasons, a migrant background, or for reasons such as disability and educational difficulties or for any other reasons, including those that can give rise to discrimination under article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, face obstacles that prevent them from having effective access to opportunities[6]

- *Social cohesion* – the quality of social cooperation and togetherness of a collective, defined in geopolitical terms, that is expressed in the attitudes and behaviors of its members. A cohesive society is characterized by resilient social relations, a positive emotional connectedness between its members and the community, and a pronounced focus on the common good[7]

- *Social exclusion* - a situation where not everyone has equal access to the opportunities and services that allow them to lead a decent, happy life. This includes not being able to give input

---

[1]   Oxford English Dictionary article https://www.oed.com/dictionary/community_n?tab=meaning_and_use#8779127
[2]   Cambridge dictionary article https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/community
[3]   Cambridge Dictionary article https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/discrimination
[4]   Cambridge dictionary article, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/minority?q=Minority
[5]   Cambridge dictionary article, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/outreach
[6]   Erasmus+ Guide, Version 2 of 20.01.2025. https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-programme-guide
[7]   Dragolov, G., Ignácz, Z.S., Lorenz, J., Delhey, J., Boehnke, K., Unzicker, K. Theoretical Framework of the Social Cohesion Radar. In Social Cohesion in the Western World, Springer International Publishing, Switzerland, 2016

and have their voice heard on the rules of the society in which they live. The opportunities and services that are inaccessible are things like infrastructure – even basic things like electricity and running water – and services like public education, healthcare or the social welfare system[8]

- *Social inclusion* - the process of improving the terms of participation in society, particularly for disadvantaged people, through enhancing opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights[9]

- *Stakeholder* - a person, who is involved with an organization, society, etc. and therefore has responsibilities towards it and an interest in its success[10]

- *Street football* – an informal game of football played in the street by children or young adults[11]. A unique and creative form of the sport that is played on outdoor urban surfaces, like streets, parking lots, concrete playgrounds, and urban areas. Unlike traditional soccer, street football is characterized by its improvisational style, focus on individual skills, and adaptation to various surfaces, obstacles, and weather conditions. It often involves fewer players and a smaller ball and has fewer rules compared to traditional soccer. [12]

- *Volunteering* – a process when a person gives their time, knowledge and can be – money to it without being paid, and that exists to help other people[13]

---

[8] Civil Liberties Union for Europe, https://www.liberties.eu/en/stories/social-exclusion/43579
[9] Identifying social exclusion and inclusion, Leaving no one behind: the imperative of inclusive development, Report on the World Social Situation 2016, United Nations, 2016, p.17
https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/rwss/2016/chapter1.pdf
[10] Cambridge dictionary article https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/stakeholder
[11] Cambridge dictionary article https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/street-football?q=Street+football
[12] The difference between street football, freestyle football & urbanball fight, Urbanball, 2023 https://urbanball.io/the-difference-between-street-football-freestyle-football-urbanball-fight/
[13] Cambridge dictionary article, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/voluntary

1. Organizing successful football tournaments

Football tournaments are more than just competition - they celebrate community, culture, and youth empowerment. A well-organized football tournament doesn't just happen - it's built with vision, strategy and teamwork.

Whether a local community game or an international tournament, it all begins with strong organization. Football brings people together, but organizing a tournament brings passion, logistics, and leadership together. Vision, strategy and people behind transform a simple game into an unforgettable event. In the world of football, every great play starts with a great setup, just like every great tournament starts with smart organization.

Organizing a football tournament can feel like managing chaos, but with the right approach, it becomes an opportunity to build community and excitement. When done right, a football tournament becomes a platform for inclusion, development, and unforgettable memories. Many tournaments fail not due to a lack of talent, but due to a lack of structure. Let's explore how to fix that!

1.1. What are the key questions to be answered?

The difference between general event management and sports event management lies in the specific focus and requirements of each field. General event management involves planning and organizing a wide range of events, such as conferences, corporate gatherings, and cultural festivals. Meanwhile, sports event management is a specialized type of event management, and it refers to the tasks specialized in planning and executing sporting events and related activities.

Usually, sports event management professionals deal with factors unique to sporting events such as:

- stadium or court selection,
- logistics tailored to sports competitions,
- athlete coordination,
- sports marketing and such.

The business needs and goals related to sports events are also different from other events, as there are different sporting seasons, leaders, sports clubs, and stakeholders to consider. Different localities may also have specific regulations in place for the sports events, depending on the weather conditions of the place and the event plans proposed by sports event managers, as well as ideal seasons to hold events, the best venues for the sport to be done, and the fans' preferences. The facilities and equipment needed for the event also need to be researched well, for each sport has different needs and technicalities to be considered, which can affect budgeting, planning, and operations.

Sports event production is the process of planning, organising and managing sports events of different scales, ensuring their quality, financial and other risk management, safe environment, efficient use of

resources, marketing, teamwork and communication with stakeholders to achieve event objectives and create a positive experience for participants and visitors.

Each event is unique by characteristics (single sport or multi-sport events; a one-off event or a recurring one, indoor or outdoor venue, etc.) as well as because of the unique combination of the people organising the event, and the place or location and the exact moment in time the event takes place.

But, all event organising teams go through the same **basic event life cycle:**

- Planning;
- Implementation
- Wrap up (evaluation and the follow-up).

The difference will be how long an organising team spends in each mode. The bigger the event, the longer the timeline for the life cycle. Irrespective of whether you are applying for a small community event, a national event, or even a global mega event, key questions will need to be answered early to understand the organisational demands of the event. Some of these questions may include:

- What is the purpose of the event?
- Who is the key client, and what is the focus (athlete, spectator, media)?
- Do you have an idea of the budget you have to work with?
- Do you know where this event will take place? (will it be in a stadium or a local park, or will you need to construct something specifically, whether temporary or permanent)
- Who will be leading the project?
- How big does the operational team need to be?
- Do you have a team in place already?
- Will the team be paid staff? Or mainly volunteers?
- Who is funding the event?
- Will you need to raise funds? (if so, how much and how will you raise it – see subsection 1.7.)
- Will you need to promote the event and what strategies will you use?
- Who the stakeholders are and what their expectations are?

These are just some of the fundamental questions that you need to ask or explore. Having answered these questions, you will need to consolidate this information into a clear, concise "business plan". This "business plan" will provide the framework through which the event is organised and delivered. You can share this "business plan" with stakeholders and partners to obtain buy-in and support. In terms of the "business plan" you should determine: the vision, mission, goals, and values of the organising team in the event. It should state the deliverables and sub-deliverables. This will give you an idea of how the event will occur for each function and align plans with the budget.

The "business plan" is transformed into an operational plan which describes the 'who', the 'what', the 'when', the 'where', and how the event will be delivered. It highlights the responsibilities to be fulfilled by each department or function and is an extension of the scope of the event while keeping an eye on the budget.

A large part of the organising team's life is spent in the planning mode. Planning well in advance of the day will be central to the success of the event, and the detailed plans you create will be the foundation through which the event operates. There is one approach to follow:

- **Define the event goals and identify your audience** - sports events managers should begin the planning process by identifying their goals and audience. They must first decide on the type of event, whether it's a competition, social gathering, or marketing opportunity. After they should consider what their audience would want and in what format;

- **Establish a team and a budget** - depending on the stakeholders involved, a sports event manager will then have a working team to help with sports event management. Together, they will calculate the expenses such as venue rental, equipment, marketing, staff, prizes, and any other costs associated with the event. Besides the core team, there are also technical staff and volunteers who should be planned for. Tools such as sports event management software can facilitate a seamless planning experience with the help of checklists, analytics, and integrations;

- **Select date and venue** - sports events managers and their teams must then choose their ideal date for their event while allowing ample time for planning and promotion. They must consider other sporting events that may coincide with their planned events because this can impact fan turnout and sales. The ideal venue for any sporting event should have enough seats, parking, restrooms, and emergency exits in case of emergencies. They must be safe, accessible, and large enough to accommodate participants and spectators;

- **Obtain the necessary permits** - with a set venue and budget, the sports event management team will then move on to securing the necessary permits to proceed with the event. This involves coordinating with the sports club or association's legal teams, the local government where the event will be held, and the legal teams of sponsors and stakeholders. This process can be streamlined with help from an digital platform with cloud storage so all documents and checklists are easily accessible, ensuring compliance with legal requirements;

- **Plan and Promote** - once all the necessary documents and permits have been accomplished, the sports event management team can begin properly planning for the rest of the event. With cooperation from stakeholders, the sports event management team ~~will~~ create a comprehensive plan that outlines all the logistical details of the event while considering information such as the: event schedule; competition format; participant registration process; equipment requirements; transportation; medical services; and security measures. Included in the planning

process is developing the right marketing strategy to promote the event. The team will work to create awareness and generate interest in the sports event through social media, websites, local media, posters, and word-of-mouth to reach their target audience. Training the staff who will be working with the team is also included here;

- **Execute the sports event** - with all marketing plans and event procedures finalized, it's time to proceed with carrying out the sports event. This can take weeks or months to complete, depending on the scale of the event. Every process should be recorded for safety, compliance, and documentation for future events. Part of this stage is preparing the right technology to assist with the event day registration procedures, communications, food and beverage concessionaires, equipment management, and employee tracking;

- **Assess the sports event** - after the sports event is held and executed, the sports event management team will come together with their stakeholders to discuss wins, losses, and points for improvement. Findings from this discussion should be documented and stored in the digital platform for future reference. The assessment plan should be well planned during the planning stage.

Another approach for the planning stage is to plan the following steps:

- **Infrastructure and logistics** (venue, inventory, security, permits, logistics);
- **Events** (registration, tournament calendar, staff, prizes, volunteers);
- **Marketing** (collaborations, budget, community)
- **Experience** (atmosphere, caterers, activities, competitions, special guests).

Each type of venue will have its management challenges. As such, planning and resources must accommodate these challenges. For example, outdoor events have to deal with unpredictable weather and for bigger events you need more roles and people fulfil those roles.

1.2. Tournament structure: Designing effective tournament formats and rules

There are several tournament formats depending on the venue, number of participants and the goals of the tournaments:

1) *Single-Elimination Tournament* - The single-elimination format is by far the easiest to organize. The name says it all, if a team loses one time they are out of the tournament. This type of tournament works best if you have a large number of teams and a short time frame. Single-elimination tournaments don't work well for "matches" that are very short in time. For example, an Arm Wrestling Tournament, where a match takes just a few seconds. If

participants are travelling to enter the tournament, they would like to be around for more than 3 seconds. ~~So you would be better of using one of the other formats listed below;~~[14]

2) *Double-Elimination Tournament* - The double-elimination tournament along with single elimination is the most popular. To be eliminated from this type of tourney, a team or player must lose two times. There is a winner's bracket and a loser's bracket, everyone starts in the winner's bracket. Upon defeat they will move to the loser's bracket where they will battle their way to play in the championship match, in which they must defeat the winner's bracket champion twice;[15]

3) *Triple Elimination Tournament* - Not quite as popular as the Single and the Double, the triple elimination format is good to add to you arsenal if you are looking to add a few extra matches for the participants. Just as with the other two, Triple Elimination simply means that a team or player needs to lose 3 times in order to be eliminated from the tournament. When a team loses in the winner's bracket they will drop to loser's Bracket 1, when they lose there they will drop to loser's bracket 2. If beaten in loser's bracket 2 they are eliminated from the tournament;[16]

4) *Round-Robin* – this type of tournament is fairly popular and simply means that every team will play every other team in the tournament one time. This allows for a wide variety of opponents, and as opposed to an elimination tournament the teams can see how they match up with all teams. Based on the number of participants, the Round-Robin format can be broken up into "pools". A pool is a group of teams that will play Round Robin and the winner of each pool will usually face off in a championship tournament. Example: A normal 24-team Round Robin Tournament would have 276 games, so the ideal way to run this would be to break it up into 6 Pools of 4 teams which would have 36 total games. You could then take the 6 winners from each pool and have a single elimination tournament to decide the overall championship[17];

5) *3 Game Guarantee Tournament* - popular in the Softball world as it allows teams travelling from far distances to be assured they are getting in enough games to make it worth their time and money. Each team will play a minimum of 3 games. The format is similar to double elimination. There is a winner's bracket and a loser's bracket, the main difference being teams

[14] Single Elimination Tournament Brackets, viewed 24.04.2025. https://www.printyourbrackets.com/single-elimination-tournament-brackets.html

[15] Double Elimination Tournament Brackets, viewed 24.04.2025. https://www.printyourbrackets.com/double-elimination-tournament-brackets.html

[16] Triple Elimination Tournament, viewed 24.04.2025. https://www.printyourbrackets.com/triple-elimination-tournament-brackets.html

[17] Round Robin Tournament Brackets, viewed 24.04.2025. https://www.printyourbrackets.com/roundrobin.html

that lose their first two games will get to play an extra game in the loser's bracket to ensure everyone gets to play at least 3 games[18];

6) *Consolation Tournaments* - very popular in the wrestling world. There are quite a few variations to the consolation brackets, but the basic idea behind them is the same. When a team wins in the first round they move/stay in the winner's bracket for the duration of the tournament and will be playing for the overall championship. When a team loses in the first round they will be moved to the Consolation Bracket where they will have no chance of winning the tournament, but instead be competing for the consolation championship. Some Consolation Brackets will also have the losers of later rounds of the winner's bracket drop down to the consolation bracket to compete for the consolation championship[19];

7) *Compass Draw Tournaments* - is used widely in Tennis and Pickleball, but is a nice format that can be used for any sport. The are various brackets on each draw sheet that are marked by points on a compass (East, West, North, South, Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, Southwest). When a team loses they are moved to a different bracket, winners always just advance in their current bracket. This allows players to play in plenty of matches and as the tournament progresses the bracket is designed to automatically pair them with others of their skill level[20].

Ghetto football and International Street Football Association (ISFA) example

The tournament is divided into two parts – a group tournament (round robin) and a play-off.

Within the group tournament, the teams are divided into sub-groups allowing them to play against each other. The best teams will play in the second part of the tournament – play-offs. All the games have limited time for the games.

All this allows within the limited time to play a large number of teams enough to keep the interest to take part in the tournament.

---

[18] 3 Game Guarantee Tournament Brackets, viewed 24.04.2025. https://www.printyourbrackets.com/3-game-guarantee-tournament-brackets.html

[19] Consolation Tournament Brackets, viewed 24.04.2025. https://www.printyourbrackets.com/consolation-tournament-brackets.html#google_vignette

[20] Compass Draw Tournament Brackets, viewed 24.04.2025. https://www.printyourbrackets.com/compass-draw-tournament-brackets.html#google_vignette

Street football rules

Street football (also known as street soccer or freestyle football) is often informal and flexible, but organized street football tournaments follow some commonly accepted rules. These rules are adapted for accessibility, creativity, and fairness rather than strict traditional football regulations. Each of the organizers is going to decide which format exactly is the most appropriate in their local reality.

The main rules typically followed in street football tournaments are:

1) *Team Composition* - number of players usually 3v3, 4v4, or 5v5 with no goalkeepers;

2) *Match Duration* - matches typically last 2 x 6 minutes to 2 x 10 minutes, depending on the format. There is no added time, just a continuous clock, but sometimes a penalty shootout, if tied (in knockout stages), can be used;

3) *Field Setup* – this game is played on small pitches, which is one of this game's advantages. Pitches should be hard surfaces (asphalt, concrete, futsal-style flooring) surrounded by walls or barriers to keep the ball in play. There is no corners or throw-ins – the ball bounces off the walls or is restarted quickly;

4) *Fouls & Fair Play* - physical contact is limited: no sliding tackles. Respect and sportsmanship are emphasized. Disrespectful behaviour or aggression can lead to immediate disqualification;

5) *Goals & Scoring* – there is no offside rule. First team to reach a score limit (e.g., 5 goals), or most goals within game time (including the penalty shootout approach) are the most popular formats;

6) *Game Restart* – one of the specifics of street football is quick restarts are encouraged (no long breaks) and if the ball goes out from a player then there is a penalty. If the ball does not touch anyone, it is given to the opponent team.

Additionally, during the tournament *panna* and/or *freestyle* can be organized. In *panna* and *freestyle* players earn points or win rounds for nutmegs (*panna*) or spectacular tricks. Judges may score based on creativity, control, and flair.

Ghetto football and International Street Football Association (ISFA) example

The tournament is organised as follows: it is usually a one-day tournament, rarely a two-day tournament and it is 4v4 tournament (3 players on the field and 1 substitute player). The duration of the

match shall be 2 periods by 6 minutes (Ghetto Football) or 2 periods by 8 minutes. (in top level ISFA competitions and the recommended one). The typical pitch size is 10mx15m.

The tournament is played from start to finish until a winner is decided. There is no score limit. Each game has a limited time. If, at the end of the game, both teams have the same score, then 3 penalty shots are taken by each team. If the score is still tied, then penalty shots are taken until one team misses.

The tournament is divided into two parts: *a round robin* and *a play-off*. In the group tournament, teams are divided into smaller groups and play each other within each group. The best teams advance to the knockout round. The minimum number of teams in a group is 4. The maximum number of teams in a group is 8. The recommended maximum is 5 teams. Playoffs are single elimination (loser goes home). Teams advance to the semi-finals. Semi-final winners play for 1st place, losers play for 3rd place.

Additional reading:
- Ghetto Football rules https://www.ghettogames.com/rules-v2
- ISFA rules https://www.isfastreet.com/assets/ISFA-3V3-Street-Football-Rules-2025-26.pdf

1.3. Logistics: Venue selection, Scheduling, and Managing registration

In street football, logistics play a crucial role in ensuring tournament smooth operations and a positive experience for all participants. While the informal nature of street football may suggest spontaneity, well-planned logistics are vital, especially when organizing community tournaments or events.

The **venue selection** process includes:
- venue selection according to the sport-specific;
- technical check of the venue to identify what kind of improvements are needed by taking into account the rule of safety first - choose a location free of traffic, debris, or hazards and ensure flat and even surfaces or plan to make it;
- accessibility - pick a venue that is easy to reach by walking or public transport, especially for young players as well as plan the access to toilets, water, and shade;
- permissions and contracts allow to use of the venue;
- preparation of the venue - set up equipment and furnish the area.

Additionally the preparation of the venue includes:
- video and stream - professional cameras provide high-quality content, and live-streaming allows you to reach a wider audience;

- adequate sound system and lights - a quality sound system is essential, and lighting systems create an atmosphere and improve visibility;
- screens and visualisation - large screens enhance the audience experience, and they help to show replays and additional information.

Ghetto Football example

The plus side of street football is that it can take place anywhere. It is also used in Ghetto football Euroleague 2022 - minimum requirements: the area where at least one pitch is to be placed must be 11 meters wide and 17 meters long. The perfect set up for a 5 pitch tournament (can serve 50 teams for 4 hours) is 60x60m. The surface should be asphalt. The ideal location - the very center of the town and/or a very visible place.

The **scheduling** the tournament is a big part of the planning the event as it is allows to escape the overlaps in the dates/times/venues of the members of team, technical staff and the volunteers as well as allow to calculate the time available to define the most appropriate format of the tournament leads to the results of defining of maximum teams can be allowed. To scheduling the tournament the following aspects should be taken into account:

- Fair and balanced match timings - allow adequate rest time between games, especially for youth;
- Create clear timetables - share schedules early via posters, social media, or messaging groups;
- Contingency planning - prepare for delays (e.g., bad weather, injuries) by including buffer time;
- Age and skill levels - separate categories by age or skill to ensure fairness and safety.

Effective registration sets the foundation for a well-run event. **Managing registration** includes:

- Simple and accessible sign-up - use both online forms (Google Forms, WhatsApp, etc.) and offline options to ensure inclusivity, especially for youth without internet access;
- Collect relevant information - name, age, team, contact and emergency contact, and any health conditions;
- Set clear deadlines - avoid last-minute entries to allow for proper scheduling and team organization;
- Confirm participation - send out confirmations or reminders to ensure participants show up;
- Plan the show-up registration at the venue – visible place next to entrance, prepared in advance the check-up forms (online or printed), deadline for the to show-up for smooth run of the tournament.

1.4. Safety protocols: Ensuring the safety of participants and spectators

Ensuring safety protocols for a street football tournament is essential to protect players, spectators, and staff, especially in informal or public environments. Each of the organizer is encouraged to prepare their Safety protocol as the working document for all.

The following guide on what your safety measures should include can be used:

- *Venue safety assessment* - before the event: inspect the playing surface (ensure it's flat, free of glass, potholes, trash, or other hazards); secure the area (use cones, barriers, or rope to mark boundaries and keep vehicles or bystanders out); control traffic (if held near a road, coordinate with local authorities to limit access or redirect traffic);

- *Medical preparedness* - First Aid Kit (fully stocked and easily accessible); designated First Aid officer (a trained volunteer or partner organization, e.g. Red Cross); emergency plan (nearest hospital and contact info, emergency vehicle access, quick evacuation plan if needed); health forms (collected info on allergies, medical conditions, and emergency contacts);

- *Participant safety* - warm-up & cool-down (include structured sessions before and after matches to prevent injury); age/skill division (match players by age or skill level to reduce trauma risk); equipment check (proper shoes - no open sandals or bare feet, shin guards (recommended), no jewellery during play; hydration stations (ensure access to clean drinking water throughout the event);

- *Spectator and crowd safety* - designated viewing areas (keep spectators at a safe distance from the pitch); crowd control (volunteers or signs to direct flow and avoid overcrowding); child safety (have a system in place for lost children (e.g., wristbands or check-in desk)); shade/shelter (if outdoors, provide shade or tents to avoid sunstroke);

- *Risk management and incident reporting* - risk assessment sheet (identify and mitigate possible hazards (e.g. heatstroke, aggressive play) – see an example below); incident report form (for injuries or misconduct, document and follow up); Code of Conduct (clear behaviour expectations for players, coaches, and spectators, anti-bullying, anti-violence, and anti-discrimination rules);

- *Security and supervision* - volunteers or event staff (trained to watch for safety violations or disputes); partnership with local authorities (especially if large crowds are expected); secure equipment (store valuables and gear safely to prevent theft); communication - emergency contact sheet (all staff/volunteers should have access); loudspeaker or megaphone (for quick announcements or evacuations); briefing before event (educate staff and volunteers on all safety procedures).

Risk	*Risk preventive measures*	*Action plan*
Injuries	Safety briefings	Medical staff presence
Technical failures	Equipment inspections	Spare equipment
Bad weather	Alternative plan	Reschedule or adapt event
Safety incidents	Security provision	Evacuation plan

Table: Risks management example. ©Semenaks A., 2025

There can be different roles with specific tasks appointed: Safety coordinator - oversees all safety protocols, emergency plans; First Aid Officer - handles injuries and medical concerns; Field Marshal - ensures rules are followed, checks for unsafe play; Volunteer Coordinator - manages staff and updates them on safety protocol; Spectator Coordinator - monitors crowd behaviour and flow and other.

1.5. Participant engagement: Developing strategies to attract and retain participants

Some of the practical and effective strategies for participant engagement - to both attract and retain young people in the street football tournament or regular sessions can be:

- *Build identity and belonging through team culture* - create a strong sense of community: give teams names, colours, and badges - even if temporary; assign team mentors or captains to foster peer leadership; encourage team chants, group warm-ups, and post-match huddles; host regular small events (e.g. team BBQs, clean-up days) to build relationships. Youth are more likely to stay involved when they feel they belong to something bigger than just a game;

- *Incentivize participation* - reward consistency and effort: offer certificates, medals, or small prizes not only for winners, but also for most improved player, best team spirit or fair play and respect; use a "loyalty card" system (e.g. attend 5 tournaments, get free gear or snacks); highlight players on social media or a wall-of-fame board. Recognition builds motivation - especially for youth who may not always be in the spotlight;

- *Let participants shape the experience* - give the participants a voice and ownership: create a youth advisory group to help co-design activities and rules; regularly ask for feedback via simple surveys

or open discussion; let them suggest match formats, music playlists, or celebration ideas. Involving participants in decision-making increases their sense of responsibility and commitment;

- *Use digital engagement tools* - stay connected and visible online: create a WhatsApp or Telegram group for participants and parents (with clear guidelines); post regular updates, photos, match results, and shout-outs on social media; use free platforms like Canva or Instagram Reels to highlight fun moments or "Player of the Week". Young people are online - meeting them where they are builds community and excitement between events;

- *Partner with local schools, Youth Centers & NGOs* - reach youth through trusted networks: offer introductory sessions or flyers in schools or youth clubs; create joint activities with social workers, community leaders, or local sports clubs; involve parents through family-friendly match days or open tournaments. Trusted adults and organizations can help identify and encourage youth who may be shy, at-risk, or unaware of the opportunity;

- *Link football to personal growth* - show that football is more than a game: run short workshops on topics like leadership, fair play, mental health, or goal setting alongside training; assign small responsibilities (equipment manager, warm-up leader) to help participants build confidence; track personal progress, not just wins, e.g., "You ran more today!" or "You were a great teammate." Many youth - especially those with fewer opportunities - stay engaged when they see football as a way to grow and succeed beyond the field.

1.6. Community outreach: Promoting the tournament and building relationships with community stakeholders

Community outreach is an effort to bring services or information to the people living in one particular area or people who are considered a unit because of their common interests or social groups where they live or spend time. To plan and organize in the most effective way the community outreach, it is essential to define the stakeholders first.

Who are our stakeholders?

There are various stakeholders within the successful football tournament organizing process. Stakeholders can be:

- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
- Government entities;
- Corporate sponsors;
- Local communities;

- Individuals and organizations outside the communities, that have a particular interest in the topic;
- Local schools and such.

Stakeholders can be internal or external to an organization. Internal stakeholders are people whose interest in an organization comes through a direct relationship, such as employment, ownership, or investment. External stakeholders do not directly work for or with an organization but are affected by the actions and outcomes of the work of an organization. Suppliers, creditors, and public interest groups are all considered external stakeholders.[21]

Each particular successful football tournament organizing process requires **stakeholder analysis**, that includes three sequenced steps:

1. Identification and naming of all possible stakeholders to engage (brainstorm technique);
2. Analysis of all identified stakeholders (their needs, aims, networks, available resources, other aspects and define their power-interest relation);
3. Find the common needs and interests among the different stakeholders to set up the communication plan.
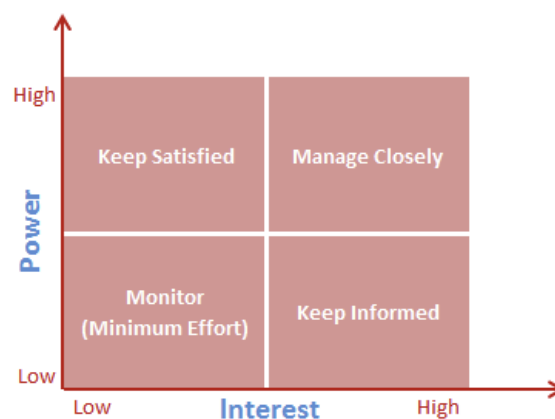
Source: Projectmanagement.com https://www.projectmanagement.com/wikis/368897/stakeholder-analysis--using-the-power-interest-grid

What is the best way to promote the tournament and building relationships with community stakeholders?

Promoting a street football tournament and building strong relationships with community stakeholders are both essential for success and sustainability.

---

[21]   Investopedia, https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/stakeholder.asp

The two-part strategy that combines smart outreach with meaningful partnership-building can be used:

- **PART 1: Effective promotion of the tournament**

  (1) Targeted outreach - schools and youth centres – ask them to help distribute flyers, send emails, or post on bulletin boards; Community Facebook/Instagram pages (post vibrant visuals and short videos); Local WhatsApp/Telegram groups (share concise invites with a clear call to action); Flyers at high-traffic locations (shops, bakeries, gyms, parks, churches/mosques);

  (2) Appealing Messaging - use simple, friendly language (e.g. "Come play. Come cheer. Join the fun!"), Highlight key attractions (free registration or prizes, fair play and inclusive environment, food, music, or special guests) and Include contact info and QR code to sign up online;

  (3) Youth involvement in promotion - ask youth participants to share posters and videos with friends or online and involve them in designing the branding (e.g. name, logo, poster);

- **PART 2: Building relationships with local stakeholders**

  (1) Identify and approach key stakeholders – schools (offer to link football with physical education or school spirit), municipal offices or youth departments (ask for logistical support or recognition), local businesses (propose win-win sponsorships e.g., logo on shirts, stalls at event), police or safety services (involve them for crowd safety or mentorship roles) and NGOs and youth organizations (invite collaboration in outreach or coaching);

  (2) Frame it as a community investment - emphasize youth development, inclusion, and positive engagement, show how the event prevents risky behaviour, boosts community pride, and can be an annual tradition, offer stakeholder roles (booth space, co-branding, guest speaker slots, or volunteer opportunities);

  (3) Follow up and recognize support - thank partners publicly (on social media, during the event), send a simple event report or photo collage afterward to the partners to show their impact, invite the partners to a post-event reflection or feedback session.

1.7. Communication: the importance and power positions of social media, usage of social media trends, podcasts, involvement of key personalities in the project activities

Communication builds awareness and excitement, attracts participants, volunteers, and sponsors, tells your story: football as a tool for community change and builds a positive public image and long-term support.

Sport event marketing in its simplest is the way in which an organising team will promote an event and gauge community stakeholders and generate revenue. The key to an effective event marketing campaign is to correctly **identify the target audience and create an experience that remains** in the participants' memories. The best, most creative events generate interactions that not only reflect

positively on the brand, but also generate a buzz long after the event is over. **Events are about experiences.** And marketers play a key role in delivering that experience.

In identifying the right target audience for your event, you have to ask yourself a few questions:

- What kind of event are you organising? (you should know whether it is an event that is focused on the participants, or one that appeal to a wider audience including spectators or fans);
- Determine who is the target audience - who are they (Age, Gender, Education level, etc.);
- What kind of media do they consume? What kind of products do they use? How often?

We can reach the target audience through posters, leaflets, postcards; direct mails; media advertising, including print media, radio and television; social media and outdoor advertising - including billboards, bus sides, poster sites and street dressing, media releases, press conferences and other promotional activities.

A short guide how to harness the power of communication, especially through social media, trends, podcasts, and key personalities, to elevate your street football project or tournament:

- the **social media** is the modern stadium of novadays communication**.** There are different platforms to prioritize: Instagram & TikTok – best for youth engagement (use Reels, Stories, Challenges); Facebook – useful for reaching families, schools, and community leaders; YouTube – for highlights, interviews, or mini-documentaries and WhatsApp/Telegram – great for organizing, reminders, and community chats; contentwise it is always works challenges, the stories of real participants, GIFs/memes and such;

- **Podcasts** – deeper storytelling – have been became a popular approach to educate the target group. We can start a short monthly podcast featuring youth, coaches, or volunteers in street football. There are free platforms like *Spotify* for podcasters or anchor. Or, collaborate with local podcast creators and offer your project as a guest story. The topics can be diverse - How football changed my life, Women in street football, Football after conflict or migration and such;

- **Key Personalities** (Influencers & Role Models) - invite a local athlete, musician, or youth influencer to attend or support the event; ask the influencers and role models to post a short video invite or shout-out; involve them in award ceremonies or mentorship roles, use their social capital to amplify your message and such. Even small-scale influencers (1,000–10,000 followers) can be powerful if they are trusted in community.

Some TIPS:

- post regularly: at least 3–5 times per week during the active phase of the organizing the tournament/event, but as much as possible will make some added value always;

- use visual storytelling: behind-the-scenes, action shots, transformation stories;

- use relevant hashtags;

- engage: reply to comments, ask questions in posts, run polls or challenges;

- adapt trends to your message - mix fun with purpose (inclusion, fair play, diversity);

- create a content calendar: plan your posts around key dates (registration launch, tournament day, post-event highlights);

- always credit and tag participants in photos/videos (with consent);

- celebrate people, not just scores - share human stories of teamwork, progress, and inclusion.

Ghetto Football example

Its make easy to plan the communication if you define the directions you want to follow. In our case it is:

- Social media – we have an active presence on social media platforms and use hashtags and engage with influencers;

- Traditional marketing – we place posters in strategic locations and cooperate with local media;

- Ticketing – we make the purchase process easy and offer different ticket categories;

- Direct communication – we stay in touch with members and send reminders and updates

---

1.8. Fundraising for the events (sponsorship, grants, crowdfunding, incomes)

Fundraising for sports events - especially community-based or grassroots events like street football tournaments - can be creative, diverse, and engaging. There can be diverse approaches to fundraising depending on local reality. Still, there are also common practices for fundraising related to sports events in general and street football tournaments in particular.

The best approach for fundraising is to **combine different sources** and not rely on only one source. It will allow to minimize the risk of not getting the funds enough or on time before the expenditures appear. More people will be involved in the fundraising more success in a shorter time is possible. If there is only one person with limited time for the fundraising it will take more time to get the resource needed. Some of the rules of the funds require that you start to work on the preparation of the

documents a long time before you apply for the funds - it can be also 10 to 12 months before, but some of the sources may take like 1 to 2 days only to get the funds enough.

The funds will depend largely on the type and scope of the event. For example, the organising a national level tournament may be able to access grants from local, regional or national governments. Meanwhile, for the local tournaments the fundraising will be more connected to the local community, bussiness and govenment.

If funding is limited, you may want to consider personal representations. For example, you could make presentations to schools, Chamber of Commerce, or special groups. You could use social media to create awareness for your event. Let others promote your event by sharing information through their own networks. In paralell the publicity is an important work should be done - let the media know about the importance of the event to the community.

The fundraising approaches that are appropriate for sports events in general:

1) *Sponsorships* - local businesses (gyms, sports shops, cafes) sponsor teams, trophies, or branding. More close to the venue / people of the event / tournament, the bigger the chance to attract the sponsors. For international events / tournaments attraction of the international businesses is the right way. You can offer them logos on shirts, banners, social media; booth space at the event or naming rights (e.g., "Company X Cup");

2) *Registration Fees* - charging a small registration fee for teams or individual players is an option. As well as you can offer discounted early bird prices or group deals or include extras like T-shirts or meal vouchers;

3) *Merchandise Sales* – prepare and sell the branded items: T-shirts, wristbands, water bottles, caps, and limited-edition event merch. For the best benefit try to partner with a local print house for low-cost production;

4) *Ticket Sales (Spectators)* – it can be a small entrance fee for spectators set with variations like family/group pricing or premium seating near the action;

5) *Food and Drink Stalls* – you can organize the sale of snacks, and drinks - invite food trucks and collect some fees from them, or collaborate with local vendors and take a percentage or charge a flat fee for space as an option;

6) *Raffles and Lotteries* - offer fun prizes (sports gear, event passes, gift cards) by buying them in advance or partnering with sponsors for prize donations. Raffle tickets can be sold online and on-site, in advance or during the event;

7) *Online Crowdfunding* – various platforms can be used like GoFundMe, Kickstarter, or Facebook Fundraisers or you can create a local one and manage this platform for others, including getting the percentage from other fundraisers;

8) *Community Fundraising Events* – it is an option to work on pre-event fundraising such as Sports quiz nights; Mini tournaments or exhibitions; Car wash or Bake sale with team participation, etc.;

9) *Grant Applications* – you can apply for sports development, youth, or inclusion grants from local government; sports federations, NGOs or foundations supporting social change through sport. Some good application writing skills and an understanding of common terms (like, sustainability, social inclusion, digitalization and such) are required. There are more funds for cultural exchange, integration or intercultural learning compared the direct support for sports events / tournaments but all this is only about how the idea is presented;

10) *Direct public budget allocations* – if you do apply directly to the local municipality or the ministry (sport, health or so), it can be also possible to get the state budget allocation. This is a logn and specific process should follow the national legislation but very handy for the sport events in general;

11) *Gamified Fundraising* – during the event (or even in advance) there can be a "Sponsor a goal" system (donors pledge money per goal scored) or "Penalty challenge" – spectators pay to take a penalty against a goalkeeper – organized as an option.

Those are just some of the options for fundraising.

If the organisers have enough human resources, it is possible to work in all the directions of fundraising, for sure. But if you have limited human resources, <u>the best in the street football events/tournaments work the following fundraising approach:</u>

- *registration fees* – even a small registration fee make some adds value to the budget of the tournament. The registration fees should be very low to make the tournament affordable;

- *direct budget allocation* – the municipalities (or the state) usually are very welcome to support the sports events being held in their municipalities (or in the state – for the international events). The organizers should take into account that to apply for the budget allocation for the next budget year, all the application and advocacy work should be done a year before the allocation. The budget allocation can be in the form of direct allocation or the procurement procedure;

- *grants* – to participate in the grants competitions (the municipalities, the state, the European Union or such) can take a period of 2-3 years as a whole. So, this approach should be planned long time in advance the period the tournament;

- *sponsorship* – the more visible you will become, the more attractive to the sponsors you will be. This is the direction to go – at least to get some prizes for the winners.

No matter which approach is chosen, <u>particular steps should be taken</u> for success:

1) Set up the aim of the event / tournament for make the fundraising targeted;
2) Set up the Time-line for the event / tournament like Activities should be done and the Time when the Activities should be done;
3) Create a clear budget showing how funds will be used (transparency builds trust);
4) Build a Fundraising strategy – where and when you will apply for the funds; what is your Code of Conduct for funraising (red-lines); who will be responsible for what; deadlines for the tasks that should be done; marketing plan (publicity on social media, posters, partnerships and such); how and when you will say Thanks to the supporters (it may need a particular budget line).

Remember that <u>the most important for the success</u> of fundraising are:

- Positive attitude (not all the fundraising initiatives are successful immediately);
- Good timing (enough time before the event / tournament, right time of the year, etc.);
- Person in charge of the Fundraising (which may cost you before any fundraising have been done).

The Story of Ghetto Football

During its 13 years of existence, Ghetto Football has been played by many existing and aspiring entrepreneurs who have developed physically and mentally on the pitch and believe in the importance of this project. One of them is the manager of www.lampa.lv. He started playing Ghetto Football when he was about 20 years old. At the same time, he started his own business. As the company grew and its financial capabilities expanded, he decided to support the development of Ghetto Football by becoming a sponsor and receiving advertising opportunities at Ghetto Football events in return.

Additional reading:
- YDF Manual for Sport Events Management, Deutsche Geselischaft Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), 2011
  https://www.saferspaces.org.za/uploads/files/YDF_Manual_for_Sports_Event_Management.pdf

2. Building trust and partnerships across the borders

2.1. Basics of Intercultural Communication

Communication loosely means "sharing and understanding meaning" or "making common" (Pearson & Nelson, 2000). Culture is a learned set of shared interpretations of beliefs, values, norms, and social practices that include the behaviors of a large group of people (Lustig & Koester, 2005). To combine both, technically we can say that - intercultural communication is the sending and receiving of messages across languages and cultures. It is also a negotiated understanding of meaning in human experiences across social systems and societies. It is essential to understand a cultural grid which is a framework of understanding for processing verbal and non-verbal cues specific to a particular culture. We are usually not aware of the many ways that culture can influence the way we listen to, speak to, and understand. "Intercultural communication occurs when large and important cultural differences create dissimilar interpretations and expectations about how to communicate competently" (Lusting & Koester, 2011).

The two most important things in intercultural communication (in communication in general) are: active listening and effective speaking.

Active listening - stays focused on the speaker's main points (more global than discrete); tunes out all potential distractions (or asks for time to remove them; offers the fullest possible attention (manages any emotional reactions, especially if a particular word or phrase hits a nerve or touches on a sensitive area); gives signals that he or she is listening as objectively as possible (uses eye contact or other non-verbal cues, or fillers, such as yeah, uh huh, ok, I know what you mean, or equivalent expressions in another language); is flexible and open-minded when new topics or ideas are raised (these concepts are culture specific in practice, but the general point remains that these traits have a positive impact on overall listening effectiveness); asks for clarification if anything is unclear (how that is done will depend on the language and culture involved; all languages have a way to ask questions and make clarification requests); validates the speaker's main points (conveying that they are received, considered, and under review; such validation may be verbal, non-verbal, or both).[22]

Effective speaking - use accurate speech (that is, it follows grammar rules correctly) and fluent (that is, it is delivered smoothly with appropriate pauses); match the speech to the specific audience and the purpose for communication. Speaking effectively is defined as speaking in such a way that your message is heard and, if possible, acted upon. There are two main elements to speaking effectively: WHAT you say, and HOW you say. Effective speaking means being able to say what you want to say in such a way that it is heard and acted upon.[23]

---

[22] 7 Active listening techniques for better communication, Verywell mind, viewed 10.04.2025.
https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-active-listening-3024343
[23] Effective speaking, SkillsYouNeed, viewed 10.04.2025. https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/effective-speaking.html

To develop cross-cultural collaboration, it is essential to develop intercultural competence which is working effectively and empathetically with people from different cultures. It is based on three main elements: *knowledge, attitude, and skills.* Knowledge of other cultures' values and behaviour patterns helps to understand differences and avoid misunderstandings or stereotypes. A positive attitude includes openness, respect, and a willingness to learn from others. Skills allow one to adapt to different cultural situations, use effective communication, and find solutions to conflicts.

One of the greatest and the most simple explanations of culture is given by the Dutch social psychologist Professor Geert Hofstede*:*

- *Individualism* is the extent to which people feel independent, as opposed to being interdependent as members of larger wholes. Individualism does not mean egoism. It means that individual choices and decisions are expected. Collectivism does not mean closeness. It means that one "knows one's place" in life, which is determined socially. With a metaphor from physics, people in an individualistic society are more like atoms flying around in a gas while those in collectivist societies are more like atoms fixed in a crystal.

- *Power Distance* is the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. This dimension is thought to date from the advent of agriculture, and with it, of large-scale societies. Until that time, a person would know their group members and leaders personally. This is not possible when tens of thousands and more have to coordinate their lives. Without acceptance of leadership by powerful entities, none of today's societies could run.

- *Masculinity* is the extent to which the use of force is endorsed socially. In a masculine society, men are supposed to be tough. Men are supposed to be from Mars, women from Venus. Winning is important for both genders. Quantity is important and big is beautiful. In a feminine society, the genders are emotionally closer. Competing is not so openly endorsed, and there is sympathy for the underdog. This is NOT about individuals but about expected emotional gender roles. Masculine societies are much more openly gendered than feminine societies.

- *Uncertainty avoidance* deals with a society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity. Uncertainty avoidance has nothing to do with risk avoidance, nor with following rules. It has to do with anxiety and distrust in the face of the unknown, and conversely, with a wish to have fixed habits and rituals, and to know the truth.

- *Long-term orientation* deals with change. In a long-time-oriented culture, the basic notion about the world is that it is in flux, and preparing for the future is always needed. In a short-time-oriented culture, the world is essentially as it was created, so that the past provides a

moral compass, and adhering to it is morally good. As you can imagine, this dimension predicts life philosophies, religiosity, and educational achievement.

- *Indulgence* is about the good things in life. In an indulgent culture, it is good to be free. Doing what your impulses want you to do, is good. Friends are important and life makes sense. In a restrained culture, the feeling is that life is hard, and duty, not freedom, is the normal state of being.
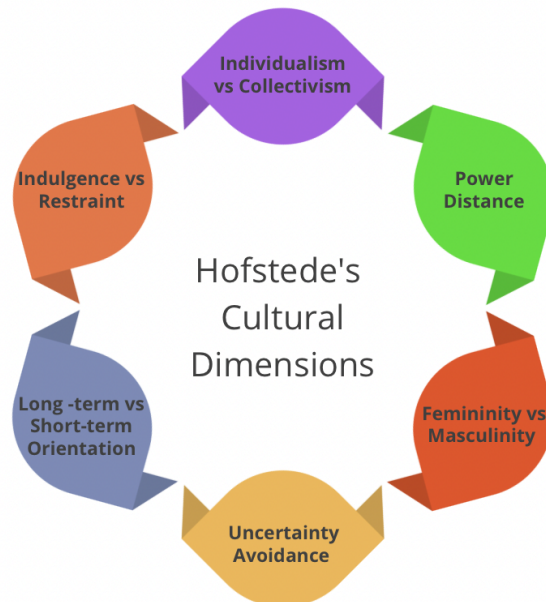
Source: Culture in the Workplace, https://cultureinworkplace.com/about-prof-geert-hofstede/

More to read and watch some videos at webpage dedicated to Geert Hofstede
https://geerthofstede.com/culture-geert-hofstede-gert-jan-hofstede/6d-model-of-national-culture/

Another approach to understanding intercultural communication better is *A CuPS approach* (Mendoza-Denton & Mischel, 2007; Mischel & Shoda, 1995; Triandis, 1994) which explains that any saying or doing of people is influenced by one of or mixed aspects: Culture the person belongs to; Person as personality; Situation where the communication is going on.

Another approach to understand better the intercultural approach is *Low-Context vs. High-Context Cultures* (Lustig & Koester, 2006) where:

- In a low-context culture, much of the meaning generated within an interaction comes from the verbal communication used rather than nonverbal or contextual cues. Communicators provide clear, explicit, and detailed messages.
- Conversely, much of the meaning generated in a high-context culture comes from nonverbal and contextual cues. Cultures with a high-context orientation generally use less or more

ambiguous verbal communication and require communicators to pay close attention to nonverbal signals and consider contextual influences on a message.

Nowadays the main documents that institutions and organizations are following internationally are the UN Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (adopted on November 2, 2001) and the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (adopted on October 20, 2005). Those documents are committed to the full implementation of human rights and fundamental freedoms and considering that the process of globalization, facilitated by the rapid development of new information and communication technologies, though representing a challenge for cultural diversity, creates the conditions for renewed dialogue among cultures and civilization. Those documents help to be aware that cultural diversity creates a rich and varied world, which increases the range of choices and nurtures human capacities and values, and therefore is a mainspring for sustainable development for communities, peoples and nations,

2.2. Effective cross-border collaboration

Effective cross-border collaboration is the process of working successfully across national, cultural, legal, and organizational boundaries to achieve shared goals. It's not just about working together — it's about doing so in a way that is trust-based, inclusive, productive, and sustainable, despite differences in context, systems, or communication norms.

2.2.1. Key Elements of Successful Cooperation

- *Trust and mutual respect between partners*

Building trust in international cooperation is essential — it lays the foundation for effective collaboration, long-term partnerships, and meaningful impact. Trust doesn't happen by chance; it needs to be strategically built and consistently nurtured.

Organizing a street sports event involves many moving parts and stakeholders, including organizers, local authorities, sponsors, media partners, and volunteers. Trust is the foundation that ensures everyone delivers on their responsibilities, from securing permits to providing funding and logistical support – trust is the cornerstones of any successful partnership. When partners trust each other, communication flows more effectively, reducing misunderstandings and delays. Trust is built over time through consistent actions, transparency, and reliability. Trust ensures that all parties feel secure in the relationship, enabling open communication and collaboration without fear of exploitation or betrayal.

Mutual respect involves valuing each partner's unique contributions, expertise, and perspectives. This fosters an environment where ideas can be shared freely, and conflicts are resolved constructively:

- *Building Trust*: Clearly define roles and responsibilities to avoid misunderstandings. Deliver commitments consistently and communicate promptly about any challenges or delays;

- *Cultivating Respect*: Acknowledge each partner's strengths and contributions. Encourage open dialogue where all voices are heard and treated equally. But also use language that reflects equality, dignity, and mutual respect.

- *Clear and transparent communication*

Effective communication is the backbone of collaboration. Effective communication is equal to clear and transparent communication. Clear communication ensures that everyone understands their roles, common goals, and expectations, while transparency builds trust by keeping all parties informed about developments, challenges, and opportunities:

- *Transparency* - share both successes and challenges openly to foster credibility; use tools like regular updates or shared platforms to ensure everyone has access to the same information; share information openly, regularly, and clearly; avoid jargon and ensure language accessibility (translations, plain English, etc.); keep all partners informed and involved in key decisions; transparency in finance and governance also is the part of work should be managed (like shared financial reports, budgets, and decisions, avoiding power imbalances in resource allocation).

- *Clarity* - use concise messaging to ensure that instructions, updates, or feedback are understood by all parties. Clarification and paraphrasing are not mistrust but indicate a willingness to eliminate any possible misunderstandings at the outset.

In international cooperation, communication isn't just about what you say, but how, when, and why you say it. Differences in language, culture, values, and organizational systems can make or break collaboration. That's why mastering certain communication techniques is key to success. Some **effective communication techniques** can be learned and used for the success:

1) *Feedback mechanisms* - establish channels and timelines for regular feedback to address concerns early and improve partnership by creating safe spaces for feedback (anonymous surveys, open forums, one-on-ones) and providing regular written summaries to all partners;

2) *Online communication / collaboration tools* – use team communication tools like *WhatsApp, Asana, Trello, Slack* and such and shared access to the documents (*Google Docs* as good option). Better is to have 10 news not related directly to you instead of missing any important;

3) *Common events* – these can be joint learning and capacity-building events or co-design and co-budgeting processes on-site or online.

- *Shared goals and vision*

A shared vision aligns all partners toward a common purpose, ensuring that efforts are coordinated rather than fragmented. Shared goals provide a clear direction for collaboration and help maintain motivation during challenges:

- o Defining Shared Goals: Collaboratively identify objectives that benefit all parties. For example, in event planning, this could mean increasing community engagement or achieving specific attendance targets;
- o Alignment: Regularly revisit goals to ensure alignment as circumstances evolve. This helps maintain focus on the partnership's overarching purpose;
- o Accountability: Assign specific responsibilities tied to these goals to ensure everyone contributes effectively.

- *Flexibility and adaptability*

In dynamic environments like event management, flexibility and adaptability are critical for handling unexpected changes or challenges.

Flexibility is equally essential because street sport events often face unpredictable challenges, such as weather changes, fluctuating participant numbers, or equipment malfunctions. The ability to adapt quickly and make collaborative decisions in real-time keeps the event on track and creates a positive experience for everyone involved. A balance of trust and adaptability ensures lasting relationships and successful future collaborations.

Flexibility involves being open to adjusting plans when needed, while adaptability ensures resilience in the face of evolving circumstances:

- o Proactive Planning: Anticipate potential issues by creating contingency plans;
- o Open-Mindedness: Be willing to consider new ideas or approaches that may arise during collaboration;
- o Continuous Learning: Learn from past experiences to improve future adaptability. For instance, analyze what worked well in previous events and what could be improved.

2.2.2. Benefits of Cross-Border Cooperation

- *Expands reach and impact*

Cross-border cooperation allows events to engage with a larger and more diverse audience, creating a wider platform for participation and visibility. This enhanced reach strengthens the event's reputation and influence, fostering a positive image for the host organization and attracting more athletes, spectators, and partners from different regions. Cross-border partnerships often involve pooling resources such as funding, expertise, or infrastructure. This enables projects to achieve greater scale and effectiveness than they could independently.

- *Promotes cultural exchange*

Bringing together participants from various countries enriches events with diverse traditions, values, and perspectives. This cultural interaction fosters mutual respect, understanding, and collaboration, creating a unique and inclusive experience that goes beyond sports, positively impacting community cohesion. Participants in cross-border initiatives often gain language skills and intercultural competencies that are valuable in an increasingly globalized world.

Sports can bridge cultural gaps. Street sports, by their very nature, break down social and cultural barriers by creating an open and inclusive environment where people from diverse backgrounds come together to play, compete, and connect. Unlike more formal sports environments, street sports often emphasize creativity, personal expression, and accessibility, making it easier for individuals to participate without the constraints of traditional rules or structures. The shared passion for sports transcends language differences, fostering mutual respect and understanding. Through friendly competition and teamwork, participants learn to appreciate different perspectives, leading to meaningful connections and friendships that contribute to stronger, more inclusive communities.

Participation in sports events / tournaments also promotes cultural sensitivity and awareness - Understand and respect cultural differences in **communication styles**, **decision-making**, and **social norms**. It also avoids assumptions but assumes to be curious and open-minded.

- *Builds stronger networks and partnerships*

Collaborating across borders strengthens relationships with international stakeholders, including sports organizations, sponsors, and government bodies. These partnerships can lead to resource sharing, co-hosted events, and knowledge exchange, ultimately increasing the quality and sustainability of future projects. Governments and institutions can learn from each other's best practices in areas like governance, education, or healthcare. Successful cross-border projects often lead to enduring partnerships that continue to yield benefits over time.

- *Drives innovation and creativity*

Exposure to different approaches and fresh ideas from international partners encourages event organizers to innovate and adopt creative solutions. This cross-pollination of concepts helps in enhancing event formats, incorporating new technologies, and delivering unique experiences that keep street sports events dynamic and engaging. By collaborating internationally, organizations can access specialized skills or technologies unavailable locally.

- *Youth empowerment is key to global unity*

Empowering young people plays a central role in fostering global unity because they are the leaders, innovators, and change-makers of tomorrow. By involving youth in street sports events—not just as participants but also as organizers, volunteers, and decision-makers—organizations help them develop

leadership, teamwork, and communication skills that transcend borders. Youth, when allowed to express themselves, take ownership, and lead initiatives, become active agents of positive change. In the context of global unity, these empowered individuals are more likely to promote inclusivity, social justice, and collaboration, strengthening international ties and addressing global challenges. Through shared experiences in sports, young people also learn to celebrate diversity and work together toward common goals, building a more united and peaceful world.

2.3. Potential barriers to collaboration

According to the practice of the organizations working in the field of sport and football as the tool in working with kids and young adults particularly, several barriers that should be taken into account:

- *Language barriers* - Language differences can lead to miscommunication, misunderstandings, and frustration among partners. This becomes particularly challenging when organizing international events where participants, partners, or sponsors speak different languages. Technical terms in event planning, legal agreements, and marketing communications may be difficult to translate accurately. To address this, organizations can use professional interpreters, create multilingual materials, or rely on translation tools to ensure everyone is on the same page. Encouraging simple, clear communication can also reduce misunderstandings;

- *Cultural differences* - Different cultures may have unique approaches to time management, decision-making, conflict resolution, and leadership styles. For instance, while some cultures value direct communication and punctuality, others might prioritize relationship-building over deadlines. Misalignment in expectations can create friction or delays during event planning. Understanding and respecting these differences through cultural training or dialogue fosters trust and enhances collaboration. Adapting event formats to respect cultural norms (e.g., dietary preferences, dress codes, or scheduling considerations) can also make events more inclusive;

- *Social media algorithm* - Social media platforms play a crucial role in event promotion, but their algorithms often favour specific types of content (like short videos or viral trends) and can limit the visibility of posts to certain geographic regions or demographics. This can be a challenge when trying to reach diverse audiences or generate engagement for niche events. To overcome this, event organizers need to create content optimized for specific algorithms, post consistently, engage with followers, and consider paid advertisements. Collaborating with influencers who already have a strong presence in the street sports community can also amplify visibility;

- *Slow response* - Timely communication is critical when planning events with multiple partners, vendors, or volunteers. However, delays can arise due to overloaded schedules, or

organizational bottlenecks. These delays can cause scheduling issues, missed opportunities, or inefficient decision-making. Setting clear communication protocols, including deadlines for responses, assigning dedicated communication roles, and using project management tools with built-in notification systems can help streamline communication and reduce response times. Establishing regular check-in meetings is also beneficial for keeping everyone aligned. Time is a crucial factor in the scope of communication. It is essential at the very beginning of the collaboration to agree on the rules of the communication among the partners – means of communication, max time for the response, content of communication, roles of the involved, etc.;

- *Technological barriers* - Connected to the previous especially – it is important to choose the tools of communication and collaboration that are available and acceptable to all the partners. For instance, to use *WhatsApp* it should be downloaded by all the involved people, or to use *GoogleDrive* as the share point should be available to all;

- *Disbelief and lack of trust* - Trust is a critical part of any relationship. Without trust, it is difficult to have a healthy, long-lasting collaboration. Being open about why you struggle with trust can help others understand you better and by communicating the partners can be more aware of how their actions might be interpreted. This means being open about your opinions, thoughts, and limits;

- *Psychological Barriers* - Psychological barriers are mental obstacles that prevent effective communication and understanding between individuals. These barriers can stem from various factors such as biases, preconceived notions, emotions, or stress that interfere with one's ability to listen or convey messages. Understanding these barriers is crucial for improving verbal communication and enhancing listening skills.

Verderber and MacGeorge (2016) give *six barriers of communication*[24] which are the cause of the barriers to collaboration and should be taken into account as much as many other aspects of communication and intercultural communication:

- *Anxiety:* While an intercultural situation will not necessarily result in culture shock, it is not unusual to experience some level of discomfort in such situations. The apprehension we feel can make the interaction awkward or can lead us to avoid situations that we deem too unfamiliar.

- *Assumed similarity or difference:* If we expect that restaurants will be the same in Asia as they are in the U.S., we are likely to be disappointed. Likewise, if we think no one in another country

---

24   Developing intercultural communication competence, Minnesota Libraries Publishing Project, viewed 10.04.2025. https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/interculturalcommunicationcompetence/chapter/terms/

will understand us, we might miss the opportunity to connect with others who share similar interests.

- *Ethnocentrism:* Assuming our culture is superior to or more important than all others will make it difficult to successfully engage with people from other cultures.

- *Stereotyping:* We can create stereotypes of people within our culture or of people from other cultures. Either way, it stops us from seeing people as individuals, and we instead see them as a certain age, race, gender, ability, or whatever. Stereotyping is a process of judging that we all need to work to avoid.

- *Incompatible communication code:* Even within our language, we may have trouble understanding the messages of others. When the languages are different, it may be more difficult. Non-verbal communication also varies between cultures, so it is not always a good substitute for verbal communication.

- *Incompatible norms and values:* People of one culture may be offended by the norms or values of another culture. For example, less significant differences in values, such as which foods are most desired, may be offensive. Or for example, in India, cows are considered sacred, yet in the U.S., beef is widely consumed. Different cultural values about practices can lead to international conflict.

3. Understanding minority experiences

3.1. Understanding the Social cohesion

Social cohesion is explained as the "quality of social cooperation and togetherness of a collective, defined in geopolitical terms, that is expressed in the attitudes and behaviors of its members. A cohesive society is characterized by resilient social relations, a positive emotional connectedness between its members and the community, and a pronounced focus on the common good."[25] In other words, social cohesion refers to the strength of relationships and the sense of solidarity among members of a community or society. It reflects how well individuals and groups within a society get along, cooperate, and work towards common goals while respecting diversity and addressing inequalities.

Key Components of Social Cohesion:

- *Inclusion:* Ensuring all members of society, regardless of background, feel valued and have equal access to opportunities and resources;
- *Trust:* Building mutual trust among individuals, communities, and institutions;
- *Participation:* Encouraging active engagement in social, political, and economic activities;
- *Sense of Belonging:* Fostering a shared identity or connection to the community;
- *Conflict Resolution:* Promoting peaceful and effective ways to resolve disputes and address differences.

Societies with strong cohesion are less likely to experience social unrest or conflict and cooperation and trust among members can lead to more effective teamwork and economic development. People in cohesive societies often enjoy better mental and physical health, feeling supported and connected and communities with strong bonds are better equipped to face challenges like natural disasters, economic downturns, or public health crises. Social cohesion thrives when people feel connected, respected, and invested in each other's well-being.

There are various divisions of society and it refers to the segmentation of a population into distinct groups based on various factors, such as socioeconomic status, ethnicity, religion, gender, age, or political affiliation.

In any community or society you can be faced with people from different backgrounds makes them the people with fewer opportunities (even vulnerable groups), both in terms of programming as well as physical means, where appropriate.

---

[25] Dragolov, G., Ignácz, Z.S., Lorenz, J., Delhey, J., Boehnke, K., Unzicker, K. Theoretical Framework of the Social Cohesion Radar. In Social Cohesion in the Western World, Springer International Publishing, Switzerland, 2016

While we are thinking about inclusion, trust, participation, a sense of belonging and conflict resolution to build a cohesive society, the following **groups with fewer opportunities** should be taken into account:

- *People with disabilities:* young people with developmental delays, mobility restrictions, sensory (hearing, vision) disorders and others;
- *Health conditions:* young people with chronic physical health problems, serious illnesses and/or mental health problems, etc.;
- *Education-related limitations:* young people with special educational needs, or are outside of compulsory education, or are at risk of being left outside of compulsory education, etc.;
- *Young people affected by the conflict:* young people living in villages near the occupation line; young people from internally displaced families;
- *Cultural factor:* immigrants or descendants of immigrant families, persons under international protection (refugees and persons with humanitarian status), asylum seekers, stateless persons and others;
- *Economic factor:* youth with a low standard of living, dependent on the social security system, youth in long-term unemployment or poverty, NEET youth (youth who are not employed, not attending an educational institution, not involved in non-formal educational activity), homeless youth and others;
- *Social factor:* young people who experience discrimination due to gender, age, sexual orientation, disabilities and other reasons; young people who are victims of violence and trafficking; young people with limited social skills, and antisocial or high-risk behaviour; young people in dangerous environments and situations; (former) convicts and prisoners; chemical and behavioral, including youth gambling addictions; minor and/or young single parents; orphans; young people in state care and those released from state care and others;
- *Geographical factors:* young people living in mountainous and hard-to-reach settlements; young people living in areas with less developed youth infrastructure (limited public transport, faulty youth infrastructure) and others.

3.2. Discrimination and Social exclusion in brief

Discrimination is treating a person or particular group of people differently, especially in a worse way than the way you treat other people because of their race, gender, sexuality, etc. (and background which makes them even more vulnerable). Discrimination is also prejudice against people and a refusal to give them their rights.[26]

---

[26]   Cambridge dictionary article https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/discrimination

Most often discrimination leads to social exclusion which generally means the inability to participate fully in the community and in particular – people exclude themselves from the communities. Social exclusion can have far-reaching consequences for individuals and wealthy communities:

- for individuals it leads to feelings of isolation, loneliness, and rejection which can lead to depression, anxiety, and stress; exclusion from job markets and education limits earning potential and perpetuates poverty; affected individuals may feel powerless to influence their circumstances, leading to a lack of motivation and disengagement; excluded groups often have limited access to quality education, perpetuating the disadvantage;
- the consequences for communities: exclusion erodes trust and cooperation, leading to divisions and weakened community bonds; marginalized groups may resort to crime out of desperation or as a response to perceived injustices; excluding groups from participation limits diverse perspectives and ideas that drive innovation.

Unfortunately, social exclusion often passes from one generation to the next, creating entrenched cycles of poverty and marginalization. Excluded groups may turn to radical ideologies or movements as a means of expressing their grievances and persistent exclusion weakens shared identity and collective responsibility, making societies less resilient to crises.

That's why it is important to foster participation and integration of all groups in societal activities on a community level with no discrimination as well as implement and enforce the rules to protect against prejudice and bias and raise awareness about the value of diversity and inclusion.

Addressing social exclusion is essential for creating fair, resilient, and thriving societies where everyone has the opportunity to contribute and succeed. It is essential in any community to realize an inclusive policy – mutual or written. Inclusion ensures everyone has equal access to opportunities, resources, and participation regardless of their background or characteristics to bring significant benefits to individuals and communities as a whole.

There are no wide studies on discrimination and exclusion in Latvia and Estonia, but some studies give us an insides to think about. According to the study "Intercultural stereotypes and prejudices in Latvian society"[27], where respondents were asked to evaluate thirteen groups within society, defined by ethnic, geographic, racial or religious characteristics, Latvian society is more likely to have negative prejudices against Roma people, Africans or Muslims than other groups.

A more wide picture we can see in the reports of the Council of Europe. According to "ECRI Report on Estonia"[28], in Estonia, the most excluded communities are Russian speaking population, migrants,

[27]   Study "Intercultural stereotypes and prejudices in Latvian society", University of Latvia, 2020
       https://www.dazadiba.lv/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/lu_petijums_sapc.pdf
[28]   Report " ECRI report on Estonia", Council of Europe, 2022 https://rm.coe.int/6th-ecri-report-on-estonia/1680a6d5e6

Roma people and LGBTI groups which is very similar to the data given in "ECRI Report on Latvia"[29] - non-citizens, refugees, LGBT and Roma people.

According to the data of the Human Rights Monitoring Institute (2022) – in Latvia " Hate speech most often targets visually different minorities, including dark-skinned persons, Roma, asylum seekers, refugees and migrants - especially from Middle East and African countries - Muslims, and LGBTQIA+."[30] and in Estonia "The most commonly reported grounds of hate speech are on xenophobia (including anti-migrant hatred) and sexual orientation."[31]

Additionally, individuals with disabilities in both Latvia and Estonia encounter discrimination and hate crimes.

3.3. The needs and perspectives of minority groups

The minority is any small group in society that is different from the rest because of their race, culture, religion, or political beliefs or a person who belongs to such a group, as well as a group of people who share some characteristic by birth that makes their group smaller than some other groups in a community and may cause others to treat them unfairly.[32]

Some of the core needs the minority groups are struggling with are:

- Access to public services free from bias or stigma;

- Protection against hate speech, harassment, and violence;

- Representation in public and political life;

- Culturally competent public administration and law enforcement;

- Bilingual/multilingual education or mother-tongue education options;

- Access to quality schooling and reduced dropout rates (especially for Roma children);

- Recognition of minority languages in media, signage, and official use;

- Equal access to employment, entrepreneurship, and vocational training;

- Programs to combat poverty and social exclusion (especially in rural or segregated communities);

---

[29] Report "ECRI report on Latvia", Council of Europe, 2019 https://rm.coe.int/fifth-report-on-latvia/1680934a9f

[30] Report "Hate speech, Euroscepticism, citizenship. Comparative research report on Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Croatia, Bulgaria and Romania", Human Rights Monitoring Institute, 2022 https://cilvektiesibas.org.lv/media/attachments/31/08/2022/Hate_speech_and_EuroscepticismLV.pdf or https://hrmi.lt/en/hate-speech-euroscepticism-citizenship-comparative-research-report-on-lithuania-latvia-estonia-croatia-bulgaria-and-romania/

[31] Report "Hate speech, Euroscepticism, citizenship. Comparative research report on Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Croatia, Bulgaria and Romania", Human Rights Monitoring Institute, 2022 https://cilvektiesibas.org.lv/media/attachments/31/08/2022/Hate_speech_and_EuroscepticismEE.pdf or https://hrmi.lt/en/hate-speech-euroscepticism-citizenship-comparative-research-report-on-lithuania-latvia-estonia-croatia-bulgaria-and-romania/

[32] Cambridge dictionary article, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/minority?q=Minority

- Access to housing and credit without discrimination;

- Affordable, culturally sensitive healthcare services;

- Health education tailored to community needs (e.g., reproductive health, mental health);

- Special attention to marginalized subgroups like Roma women or refugees;

- Strong implementation of anti-discrimination laws;

- Mechanisms to report and respond to rights violations;

- Opportunities for minorities to participate in civic dialogue and decision-making processes.

Street football is unique in its accessibility to everyone, and no expensive technical equipment is required to play it. That is why it is often played by young people and adults with low household incomes, from disadvantaged backgrounds, immigrants, etc.

Despite the challenges, many minority groups in Latvia and Estonia (the same as in many other countries across the world) express **clear goals and desires for**:

- *Empowerment*: Building their own community organizations, advocacy platforms, and media;

- *Recognition:* Validation of their history, culture, and identity by the majority population and state;

- *Integration without assimilation:* Participating fully in society while maintaining cultural uniqueness;

- *Youth engagement:* Youth in minority groups often seek modern, hybrid identities, and access to digital platforms to share their voice;

- *Transnational solidarity:* Minority groups often maintain ties across borders and benefit from international cooperation and European frameworks.

Some of the **examples** we can meet also in the street football and sports organizations, in general, can become a **strong voice** toward social cohesion, particularly working with minority groups, like:

- toward the language barriers, the organizations can organize the language classes and / or involve the translators, as well as include volunteers;

- the representatives of minority groups can become the ambassadors of street football in their communities to encourage others to take part in street sport in general and in street football particularly;

- the internal rules toward social cohesion, non-discrimination and social inclusion can be set and promoted among the participants;

- diversification of sponsors meanwhile to promote equality and spread the word among wider society;

- organizing local tournaments / small pitches in the areas where the minority groups are;

- dissemination of information among minority groups on participation and support can get, and such.

Some of the promising practices at the national level can become as good practice at the organization level as well, like inclusive education programs in Bulgaria and Hungary to support Roma children; community media projects in Ukraine and Lithuania amplifying minority voices; minority councils or advisory boards at local and national levels (e.g., in Latvia, Serbia and Croatia) and international funding and NGO networks supporting minority empowerment (e.g., Open Society Foundation, European Commission initiatives and much more).

Meanwhile, to meet the needs of minority groups it is essentially also to:

- Strengthen partnerships between governments, NGOs, and minority-led organizations;

- Invest in intercultural education to reduce prejudice;

- Collect dis-aggregated data (data that has been broken down by detailed sub-categories, for example by marginalized group, gender, region or level of education) to inform policy-makers;

- Promote inclusive narratives that value diversity as a strength.

3.4. Challenges faced by minority groups

Minority groups involved in street football around the world face several interrelated challenges, many of which reflect broader social, economic, and cultural inequalities. The breakdown of specific challenges faced by different marginalized groups in the context of street football, based on the categories of the minority groups:

- **People with disabilities** - mobility issues limit participation on uneven, unadapted playing surfaces (e.g., no ramps, poor terrain); lack of inclusive rules or adapted formats (e.g., for wheelchair users or blind football); stigma and underestimation of ability by peers or adults; limited access to specialized equipment, such as tactile balls or sign-language-capable referees; social exclusion due to communication or behavioural differences, particularly for youth with developmental delays;

- **Health conditions** - young people with chronic illnesses (e.g., asthma, diabetes) often face exclusion due to health fears or lack of medical support on-site; mental health challenges (e.g., anxiety, depression) may prevent them from engaging confidently in social sports environments; participants may self-isolate due to fear of stigma or not being able to keep up physically;

- **Education-related limitations** - youth outside of compulsory education may lack structured routines or peer support, making regular play difficult; special educational needs (e.g., ADHD, dyslexia) often go unaccommodated in informal play; they may be overlooked or misjudged by coaches/scouts who rely on school-based access to players;

- **Young people affected by conflict** - youth near conflict zones or occupation lines may have unsafe travel routes or restricted movement; internally displaced youth often face trauma, instability, and limited access to recreational spaces; tension or distrust between youth from different affected areas may cause exclusion or conflict on the field;

- **Cultural factor** - immigrant/refugee youth may experience language barriers and cultural misunderstandings; they may face xenophobia or rejection from local peer groups; lack of documents or unclear legal status can limit access to organised events and tournaments; girls from conservative backgrounds may face family or community resistance to participation;

- **Economic factor -** cannot afford gear (shoes, jerseys, shin guards) or transportation; youth in poverty or not in the education or training (NEET) status may feel alienated or stigmatized in mixed-income teams; homeless youth lack a stable base, making regular participation in teams or leagues difficult; malnutrition or poor health due to poverty can impair performance or lead to injury;

- **Social factor** - victims of violence or trafficking may have trust issues or fear public spaces; LGBTQ+ youth may be bullied or excluded by teammates; young people with antisocial behaviours may face disciplinary exclusion instead of supportive integration; former convicts or youth in state care often experience labelling and exclusion from community sports;

- **Geographical factors -** rural or mountainous areas may lack basic infrastructure (e.g., safe fields, coaches, balls); long travel distances and poor transport systems hinder consistent participation; youth may lack access to information about tournaments, clubs, or programs; weather conditions and topography limit year-round play.

There are also other challenges that street football faces:

- **Discrimination and racism** - verbal abuse or exclusion based on ethnicity, religion, or nationality; stereotyping about playing styles or perceived aggression; limited access to organised events or facilities due to racial or cultural biases;

- **Limited opportunities for advancement** - street football can be a talent incubator. However, scouting systems may overlook informal players from marginalised groups, and there may be a lack of connection to formal clubs or youth development systems due to institutional exclusion;
- **Gender inequality** - girls and women from minority groups face cultural restrictions and gender-based discrimination, making it harder to participate; fewer role models and safe environments for female players in street settings;
- **Underrepresentation in leadership -** few coaches, referees, or organisers from minority backgrounds means limited advocacy for inclusive policies or practices - few coaches, referees, or organisers from minority backgrounds means limited advocacy for inclusive policies or practices.

These challenges often overlap and reinforce each other—for example, LGBTQ+ young person with a disability living in a rural area faces more challenges than others.

4. Personal development through volunteering

4.1. Basics of Non-formal education

There are many definitions of non-formal education, and each of their authors has their convictions and truths. What all definitions have in common is that Non-formal education is a set of methods applied in the learning process.

As indicated in the final report of study of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia "Offer of non-formal education in the field of work with youth in Latvia" (2024) - Non-formal education can have different forms and types. According to UNESCO definition[33], non-formal education is institutionalized and consciously planned by the education provider and is a supplement or alternative to formal education in the lifelong learning process of individuals. Non-formal education guarantees the right of access to education for people of all ages. It is usually provided in the form of short courses, workshops or seminars. It is not recognized as a formal qualification by the relevant national educational institutions. Non-formal education can include programs that promote a wide range of skills and knowledge.

Non-formal education can be characterized by the following features:

- it is organized outside of formal education;
- is a form of education appropriate to the interests and needs of the participants to promote and support the development and growth of the participants;
- is voluntary and available to everyone, therefore the motivation to get involved is high and ensures active participation;
- opportunities to gain new experience, draw conclusions, participate, acquire knowledge, and develop attitudes or skills depend on each individual's motivation;
- ensures that acquired skills and abilities remain longer and allows using them in various life situations;
- the facilitator of the process takes into account the needs and wishes of the participants, follows them during the implementation and reacts according to the situation;
- there is a training program based on the needs of the participants, which ensures more effective training program implementation and achievement of goals;
- ensures that training goals are set by the participants themselves;
- discovers that mutual relations between process promoters and participants are based on the principles of equality, mutual understanding and support;

---

[33] UNESCO definition, viewed 10.04.2025. https://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/non-formal-education

- teaching leaders help participants find answers and form a personal attitude towards the world around them;

- the personality of the implementers, the way of presenting information, attitude and interaction with the participants have a great influence on the learning process and results of non-formal education;

- the environment is a determining factor that affects both the participants and the implementation of the program;

- the methods used, that is, how group members are worked with, approach and attitude, affect the effectiveness of learning;

- the process and manner in which the goal is achieved is as important as the learning goal itself. It is characterized by the ability to adapt, and flexibility about participants, process, methods, content, purpose and tasks - all of which can be changed depending on the needs, motivation and goals of the learners. In non-formal education, the process itself is important;

- is holistic, which means the need to involve the emotions, mind and body of the participants;

- there is no hierarchy between participants and trainers - there is a trainer, a trainer or a process leader - a person who helps to understand the information obtained, develop skills and learn new things;

- no one is graded and no state-approved certificates are issued. The main emphasis is placed directly on self-evaluation, which is organized as a continuous evaluation process, requiring feedback or reaction from the participants;

- very often tasks in informal education are performed in groups, which provides an opportunity to develop cooperation and communication skills, the ability to justify one's opinion, and also teaches to find compromises. In addition, no one is a genius and cannot know everything, so the collective knowledge of the group makes it possible to solve problems that would otherwise remain unsolved;

- there is no single right answer, there are different opinions that are heard and discussed in the group. The more creative solutions will be chosen, the greater the benefit will be for the participants themselves. The task is not to provide ready-made solutions but to create an opportunity to ask questions and find answers for the participant himself. In non-formal education, the participation of every participant is important. Every participant in the process is maximally involved in what is happening, including the decision-making about the idea, goal, content and process. Most of the insights come from experience itself, from experience and learning, working together, discussing each problem, expressing your thoughts and listening to others;

- is inclusive - all participants work together regardless of their nationality, race, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, faith and other factors;
- everyone is both a teacher and a student;
- a horizontal approach is implemented – when looking at a topic, the context is also taken into account;
- non-formal education increases our knowledge, develops skills and shapes attitudes.

The environment in which non-formal education is implemented plays an important role:

- *physical environment* - for example, the size of the room, the arrangement of furniture, buildings, forest, fields - everything that is "outside the formal education system". Often, formal educational resources such as facilities are used because of their easy accessibility. For instance, the school premises resemble the school environment and the order exists in it, which does not always contribute to the free, creative and relaxed atmosphere of informal education. By changing the environment and creating new conditions, it is achieved that everyone involved is in the same situation and everyone has the opportunity to take a different position than in the old environment, for example, to become a leader in the group;
- *emotional environment* - it is an intangible environment and difficult to control, but must be taken care of and maintained in a positive atmosphere. For example, in non-formal education events, the environment must be taken care of not only during the program but also during free time, during coffee breaks and at night, because then the participants usually get to know each other better, discuss both the event and other relevant topics, as well as share their experiences. These moments are of great importance and affect the program and the internal mood of the group in the following days.

Different methods are the backbone and strength of non-formal education. The diversity and flexibility provide the opportunity to learn using various senses and techniques, such as touch, or, conversely, isolating one of the perceptual modes. By diversifying the methods and choosing the most appropriate ones for a specific purpose, environment and participants, individual and collective learning approaches are implemented. The active activities, colours, materials, music, environmental interaction and other means form the learning process. It helps the participants to understand more deeply, become aware of values, form a certain attitude and discover the unconscious qualities and skills in themselves.

Evaluation plays a very important role in the self-growth of participants. It is a separate part of the non-formal education process that must be included in any non-formal education activity. Evaluation allows everyone to understand what they have gained, learned or felt, and to think about the next steps of growth. Evaluation is not simply handing out evaluation questionnaires, but receiving feedback from participants on achieved results, processes, activities, people and managers. Evaluation is a part

of non-formal education where young people can learn critical thinking skills and reflect on their future growth opportunities.

Non-formal education is based on the following basic **principles**:

- *learning by doing* - acquiring practical skills and abilities (for example, expressing one's opinion, sharing feelings, finding a solution to life situations and conflicts, leading a group, using one's own and others' resources effectively);
- *learning to learn* - acquire a certain amount of knowledge, learn to find information, analyse your experience and acquired knowledge and use it in new life situations;
- *learning to be* - understand your inner world and develop it, build a life according to yourself and your beliefs;
- *learning to be together* - understanding of the different, recognition and acceptance of the different (this principle also manifests itself in the ability to work in a group, live together, solve situations both with representatives of one's own culture and with representatives of other nations).

The main emphasis in non-formal education is on the principles of *learning by doing* and *learning to be together*. These are the most important points that ensure the effectiveness and success of non-formal education.
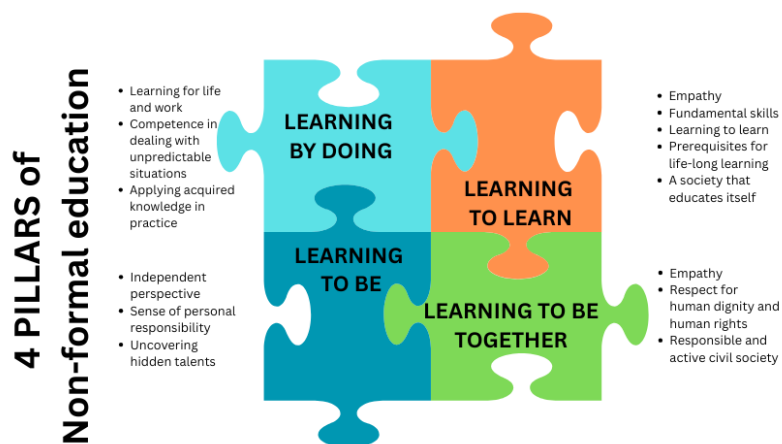
Source: Drop-in. Collection of non-formal education methods in learning activities, 2018
https://site-484428.mozfiles.com/files/484428/NFI_metodes_drop-in-io2-lv.pdf

4.2. Volunteering in the local community and internationally

Voluntary work (hereinafter - volunteering) is unpaid physical or intellectual work for the benefit of society, organized and carried out by an individual on a voluntary basis. Voluntary work shall not be

for profit.[34] Volunteering is one of the civic participation tools which is based on the principles of non-formal education (see Section 4.1.).

There is huge **diversification in volunteering to participate,** like:

- type of volunteering - environmental volunteering, community voluntary work, social volunteering, volunteering in public educational institutions, volunteering at cultural or sports events, digital volunteering, etc.;
- field of volunteering (by the direction - culture, education, sport, environment, etc. and by the target group – children, youth, seniors, people with disabilities, etc.);
- duration – once or regular, short-term or long-term;
- scale – local, regional, national or international;
- skills can be gained or shared – photo/video, events management, care, mentoring, fundraising, languages, etc.;
- organizer of volunteering - physical or legal entity, with exceptions (in different countries there is various legislation that should be followed at the national level).

To provide the most out of the volunteering, there are some well-known **volunteering principles** to apply as good practice. Volunteering:

- benefits the community and the volunteer;
- work is unpaid;
- is always a matter of choice;
- is a legitimate way in which youth can participate in the activities of their community;
- is a vehicle for individuals or groups to address human, environmental and social needs;
- is an activity performed in the not-for-profit sector only;
- is not a substitute for paid work nor constitutes a threat to the job security of paid workers;
- respects the rights, dignity and culture of others;
- promotes human rights and equality.

For the best results, the organizer of the volunteering:

- elicits the involvement of the entire community in identifying and addressing its problems;
- encourages and enables youth to make leadership through service;
- provides a voice for those who cannot speak for themselves;
- enables others to participate as volunteers;
- complements but does not substitute for responsible action by other sectors and the efforts of paid workers;

---

[34] Law on Voluntary Work, adopted on 18.06.2015. by Parliament of Latvia https://likumi.lv/ta/id/275061-brivpratiga-darba-likums

- enables people to acquire new knowledge and skills and to fully develop their potential, self-reliance and creativity;
- promotes family, community, national and global solidarity;
- create environments in which volunteers have meaningful work that helps to achieve agreed-upon results;
- define the criteria for volunteer participation, including the conditions under which the organization and the volunteer may end their commitment, and develop policies to guide volunteer activity;
- provide appropriate protections against risks for volunteers and those they serve;
- provide volunteers with appropriate training, regular evaluation, and recognition;
- ensure access for all by removing physical, economic, social, and cultural barriers to participation;
- appoint a person (paid or unpaid) to organize volunteer involvement;
- ensure that appropriate out-of-pocket expenses are negotiated for authorized tasks;
- provide adequate insurance cover for volunteers;
- provide opportunities for regular feedback and evaluation;
- plan the proper amount of activities according to the capacity of the service provider so as not to lose the quality of coordination of volunteering;
- value the voluntary work at any time is possible;
- offer diverse forms of involvement to ensure the voluntary work is enjoyable;
- backed up with the resources needed;
- transparently organize volunteering;
- support the volunteers on their way to:
  - recognize their motives for being a volunteer and ensure the organizer is aware of these;
  - seek work opportunities appropriate to the skills, interests and aspirations of the themselves;
  - be committed to giving high-quality service;
  - actively accept opportunities for training and personal development;
  - carry out all work the volunteer agrees to do, responsibly and ethically;
  - speak out about any concerns that might affect the work relationships or quality of service;
  - see the volunteer as a valued team member with the right to contribute to decisions which affect his/her work;
  - value and support other team members;
  - take reasonable care of their health and safety during the volunteering;

- take reasonable care to ensure the volunteer doesn't affect the health and safety of others;
- follow the reasonable work health and safety instructions given to the volunteer by the organization of voluntary work.

To ensure that everybody involved in volunteering within the organization is familiar with the framework of volunteering in the particular organization, it is very much suggested to have the **Concept paper of volunteering** including:

- Objectives and tasks;
- Target group (profile and size);
- Results will be achieved;
- Venues of volunteering;
- Dates / Total number of days (amount, lenght);
- Working methods;
- Requirements for volunteers;
- Costs are covered by the organizer;
- Costs should be covered by the volunteer;
- Organizers' contact person information;
- Specific rules at the venue and the possibilities provided;
- Specific equipment and materials should be managed by the volunteer;
- Specific equipment and materials will be managed by the organizer;
- Rules on Declaration of the legal representatives of the participant is under the age of 18;
- Communication tools during the volunteering;
- Medical protocol and Guidelines: First aid, emergencies, medical "on-call", information needs from the participants, appointed person responsible for monitoring and acting;
- Responsible person at the venue and their contact information;
- Drugs, alcohol and tobacco policy;
- Policies of violence or harassment and any illegal actions;
- Mandatory insurance policy;
- Safety rules for transportation during the volunteering;
- Official language of the volunteering and options to have the translation;
- The procedure for termination of the volunteering;
- Internal safety rules;
- Is the volunteering accessible to young people with special needs, both in terms of programming as well as physical means, and if partly accessible – information to whom it is or it is not accessible should be included.

Organizers of volunteering should issue the **recognition paper** (certificate, confirmation letter and such) upon the request of volunteers.

It is beneficial to the organizer, volunteers and wider society to have any **monitoring provision** which should be taken into account and data collected:

- the field of voluntary work: environmental volunteering, community voluntary work, social volunteering, volunteering in public educational institutions, volunteering at cultural or sports events, digital volunteering, animal welfare, health and welfare, disability services, recreation, arts, humanitarian aid, heritage, education and training, mentoring & tutoring, seniors & aged care, children and such;
- the length (in hours);
- period of volunteering - short-term or long-term;
- type of volunteering - individual, group.

No matter whether you are organizing the volunteering in one or another way, **the legal framework** of the country where you are implementing the volunteering should be taken into account. Like, in Latvia there is a "Law on Volunteering", adopted on June 18, 2015, which states that the volunteer is the persona age above 13; the written contract must signed in case the volunteer is under 16; the written contract must signed if any expenditures of volunteers is planned to cover or any of the parts request it; specific voluntary work conditions are mention when the accident insurance is mandatory to provide to the volunteer by the organizer of volunteering, and such.

Volunteering internationally involves contributing time and effort to help others, but they differ in context, impact, logistics, and personal growth opportunities:

Key aspects	Local volunteering	International volunteering
Location and cultural context	Happens in your city, town, or region You are usually familiar with the culture, language, and societal issues	Takes place in a foreign country, often in a vastly different cultural or socio-economic context Requires adaptation to new customs, languages, and environments
Type of work	Often focuses on ongoing community needs (e.g., food banks, youth mentoring, elder care) Long-term involvement is more feasible	Often project-based (e.g., disaster relief, education, health outreach) This can include short-term missions or placements
Language and communication	You likely speak the local language, making communication smooth	Language barriers can pose challenges May require translation or learning basic phrases
Cost and logistics	Low to no cost No need for visas, flights, or accommodation	Usually involves significant expenses (travel, insurance, accommodation) May require visas, vaccinations, or travel documentation
Learning and personal development	Deepens understanding of your community and how to enact change from within Builds local networks and civic engagement	Encourages global awareness, builds cross-cultural understanding, and adaptability Can broaden worldview and challenge assumptions
Community impact	Often results in sustained, long-term impact You can continue contributing or following up	Can be impactful if well-structured, but risks "voluntourism"—where volunteers benefit more than the community Sustainable impact requires cultural sensitivity and alignment with local needs

Table: Volunteering locally and internationally – the main aspects in short. Adapted by ©Subevica I., 2025

Some highlighting **key challenges and recommendations** of volunteering:

- A previous event faced issues because volunteers arrived unprepared and unknown, leading to organizational chaos. A lack of proper organization can result in a catastrophe. This is the responsibility of the volunteer coordinator;

- Proper training and clearly defined roles are crucial, especially for larger events with multiple tasks. Over-staffing can be problematic, causing distractions rather than productivity;

- It's essential to have structured leadership to guide volunteers effectively and efficiently, ensuring everyone knows their roles;

- Not all volunteers are suitable for available roles. Organizations should politely decline unsuitable volunteers, possibly suggesting future opportunities;

- Disabled volunteers (with mental health issues, not physical) might require simpler tasks. Managing these volunteers can be challenging, as organizers must balance efficiency with sensitivity;

- Clear distinctions between voluntary roles and paid positions are important to avoid exploitation. Transitioning from volunteer to paid roles must be managed carefully to maintain motivation and avoid entitlement;

- Motivation for volunteering differs significantly from motivation for paid work. Volunteers often perform better due to intrinsic motivations rather than minimal financial incentives;

- Recognition, unique experiences, and meaningful engagement are often more valued by volunteers than small monetary compensation;

- Studies show that introducing monetary rewards for initially voluntary activities can reduce intrinsic motivation and engagement;

- At the beginning of organizational journeys, it's often easier to attract volunteers due to fewer expectations and the intrinsic appeal of the organizers or activities;

- Clear communication regarding roles, tasks, and expectations is crucial, and volunteers should feel comfortable asking questions without fear of embarrassment;

- Organizations must understand that volunteers may decline tasks even at the last minute, and having alternative plans is necessary;

- There's a distinct shift in younger generations toward financial motivation over purely altruistic volunteering;

- Examples highlight that volunteering provides valuable skills and experiences, sometimes leading volunteers into professional, paid roles;

- It's essential to differentiate between tasks suited for volunteers and those requiring professionals, particularly for roles that directly impact event quality or safety;

- Maintaining motivation for volunteers involves offering meaningful experiences and community engagement rather than minor financial incentives;
- Organizations should balance volunteer contributions with appropriate recognition and compensation as volunteers transition into professional roles;
- The success of volunteer programs often depends on organizational effectiveness, clear management, and ongoing communication, particularly in regional or remote areas;
- Future goals include developing sustainable volunteer management systems, increasing digital engagement, improving regional volunteer integration, and ensuring volunteer opportunities remain meaningful and engaging.

Benefits of volunteering at the individual level

Personal experiences of a volunteer Emils Anskens illustrate the progression from local sports events volunteering during school to international championships. Emils emphasizes how volunteering has significantly boosted his confidence, developed organizational skills, and fostered lifelong friendships and networks. He believes volunteering is crucial for personal development, leadership skills, and community involvement, underscoring the importance of volunteering being voluntary, enjoyable, and fulfilling, rather than obligatory or mundane.

"My journey to sports volunteering started with being involved in sports - basketball, volleyball, beach volleyball, short-track and other sports. Years ago, it was close to the European event in short-track at my school, and one of the organisers asked my trainer to get some volunteers. Mostly this is how it happens - organisers talk to teachers, trainers or youth workers and ask to get volunteers. I said yes. We had a very good job there - to collect water and bring it to participants or to put up some signs, or organise where people go. And since we did a good job, they asked us back three times. So that was one of the first things that I did.

Back then, there was also the movement to create local and national youth Olympics. Ventspils was perfectly suited for this, because we have most of the facilities needed for all the sports, and even Riga doesn't have all these facilities, plus Riga is very big, and if you bring a lot of young people in there, it will be a mess on how to get around, etc. I think the first three Youth Olympic Games of Latvia happened in Ventspils. So I was a volunteer there as well – I was in 8th or 9th grade at that time. That time, it was my sports teacher who invited me to volunteer, and the sports teacher was asked by the municipality's sports department to get some volunteers. It was a much bigger event than before - a lot of delegations, everyone needed name tags, and all kinds of sports, and a lot of

facilities, a lot of places to sleep, and venues. Every delegation had its individual guide who was responsible for moving them around, so they knew where to go, where football was happening, where basketball was, where they had to go to eat, etc. I was assigned to one delegation that I had to follow around and just help them out with any kind of organisational duties. I just remember it as just **having fun** all the time. And of course, you don't have to work all the time.

So we had a lot of free time where we just had a lot of fun, and a lot of people that I met then are still my friends now, and we do stuff together. So I see **volunteering as a way to make new friends** and **get to know different tasks** of a big event coming together, because it was just a huge event of thousands of people coming in the city, and they all have to drink and eat, and live somewhere, and you understand that as one person in this big mechanism, you have to do your job good, otherwise someone will not get their food, for example. And that's how you, of course, **learn responsibilities**.

In the Youth Olympic, I met one of the organisers from an organisation in Riga associated with the National Olympic Committee in Latvia, and they invited me afterwards to help out in a European under-20 basketball championship, which was held in Riga in 2008. And I was already a step up in the game, because it was an international event with a lot of media, NBA scouts coming to see young players, etc. It's all happening in Riga, you have to move around buses, different hotels and different venues. I was assigned to the Slovenian national team. I couldn't help them win, and they were almost kicked out of the highest basketball league. But of course, I learned a lot about how they work and how they do their job. So it was a very nice **progression** from smaller local events to bigger events and international events. I had the opportunity to meet Boban Marjanovic, playing in the NBA. A lot of **memories**. So I see the volunteering as a way **to grow my confidence** - you start as a volunteer, and then you have bigger jobs and more opportunities.

During that time I understood that I wanted to work with young people, I wanted to work with different kinds of events and organisations. And **this led me** down the path of joining the NGO that I'm the head of right now. So I highly encourage everyone to do voluntary work, and I think **it's a great opportunity for everyone to learn**.

I was a volunteer when I was in high school, aged 13 to 18 years, which is a time when you are **learning**. You are learning in school, so you can also learn through volunteer work and gain **knowledge** there."

Story of Non-governmental youth organization "Time for Youth" (Latvia)

"The main direction of voluntary work in our organization is volunteering in the Football club "RFS" games. Over two years, 65 unique volunteers (ages 13-25) have participated, and approximately 2,500 volunteer work hours have been completed.

The main responsibilities of volunteers included guiding participants, checking tickets, providing support in the media zone, coordinating activities in the venue, and assisting with other tasks to facilitate the organization of local and international events.

The organization has established a volunteer work system, including time tracking, issuance of certificates, and coordination, to efficiently manage volunteer work within the organization. Additionally, a reward system has been created in collaboration with companies as part of a loyalty card program.

We include young people with fewer opportunities - youth from "disadvantaged families" and those at risk of social exclusion - in cooperation with social services and the State Probation Service."
www.laiksjauniesiem.lv

Foto: Sanita Ieva Sparāne/RFS

4.3. Organizing the volunteers

There are several steps we need to follow to make organising the volunteers as smooth as possible and as beneficial to all involved parties (volunteers, organisers of volunteering and beneficiaries) as possible:

- Step 1 - Define your needs and volunteer roles: identify where help is needed (e.g., registration, logistics, first aid, social media, audience management, etc.); estimate how many volunteers you need per role (including, the period, total amount of hours, previous experience or specific knowledge, if needed, etc.); create role descriptions with tasks, timing, and skills required;

assign a volunteer coordinator or team lead; set up the Concept paper of volunteering and the Voluntary work contract draft;

- Step 2 - Create a Volunteer recruitment plan: decide how you'll reach volunteers - youth organisations, local schools, sports clubs, social media, volunteer platforms, etc.; use a simple and clear call-to-action (who, how many, why, what, when, where, how much) with benefits for volunteers (e.g., certificate, free entry, networking); set up an easy registration form (Google Form, SurveyMonkey, etc.) and deadlines for the submission of the applications; screen & select volunteers (review applications and match people to suitable roles, if needed - conduct short interviews or info sessions, prioritise commitment, availability, and enthusiasm);

- Step 3 - Prepare & train volunteers: host a volunteer briefing or training (online or in person) with organisation and event overview, role-specific instructions, emergency procedures, Code of conduct, dresscode, and provide handbooks, schedules, and contact lists, accordingly; agree on extra training if there is a need for volunteers.

- Step 4 - Coordinate during the event: use the communication tool/-s as agreed (WhatsApp, radio, or so) to communicate quickly; provide identification equipment/materials (badges, T-shirts, bikes, or so); manage to offer transport, food, water, rest areas, and so;

- Step 5 - Recognise & Thank volunteers: give certificates, shoutouts on social media, or small gifts; thank them publicly during or after the event; share event photos and results with volunteers;

- Step 6 – Evaluation and Follow-Up: ask to participate in the evaluation, and self-evaluation and send short feedback afterwards to learn from the experience; keep good volunteers on a contact list for future events; keep the promises if you made any (providing the information on the next available positions, discounts at some events, etc.).

How is organized Ghetto Games Academy?

Ghetto Games Academy is an informal education program that provides an opportunity to acquire new knowledge in an exciting, adventurous, expressive and interesting way. Ghetto Games Academy nurtures socially responsible young people who want to make a positive difference in the world — to make themselves as the young people who are ambitious in pursuing their dreams and sincere in their expressions and attitudes towards themselves, others and society as a whole.

All interested parties have the opportunity to get involved in various areas:

• Ghetto Media House - video filming, editing; photography; participation in live broadcasts; development and processing of visual materials;

• Ghetto Social Media - social media management; creating and publishing stories and posts; selecting images; writing press releases;

• Ghetto Project Management – working with project leaders to demonstrate and teach the basics of event organization and management (Ghetto Floorball, Ghetto Football, Ghetto Basket);

• Ghetto Tech Crew - learning the basics of technical work in theory and everyday work; preparing the event venue before the event;

• Ghetto Branding and Support team - placing banners and flags; registering participants before the event; recording results during the event; awarding prizes to winners.

The application process for Ghetto Games Academy begins in March during the preparation phase for the Ghetto Games summer season. Interested parties can fill out an application form. The application form is distributed mainly through social media and mutual communication during the other Ghetto Games initiatives. After reviewing the applications, the most suitable young people are invited to the first meeting, which is also a volunteering day, to get an insight into what Ghetto Games does.

During the volunteering day, they learn about the responsibilities and opportunities for volunteers at Ghetto Games events, as well as the overall activities of Ghetto Games. In 2025, three additional information sessions were organized to help young people better understand the essence of Ghetto Games – event production, social media and cooperation partners.

Before each event, the number of volunteers needed and the positions in which they will be needed are determined and announced.

There is a motivation system for volunteers – the volunteer hours they have accumulated can be exchanged for Ghetto Merch. At the end of the season, a joint celebration event is held and voluntary work and non-formal education certificates are issued and awarded.

Throughout the season, individual communication takes place with volunteers to provide individual feedback, express gratitude and find out how they feel, what kind of support they need or what they have gained or learned.

The following checklist can be very supportive tool during the preparation stage (NGO Youth leaders coalition, 2021 https://site-484428.mozfiles.com/files/484428/BD_ZeltaFonds.pdf)

1.STEP Give&Get

□ Do I want to volunteer?

□ How often/how much time do I want to devote to volunteering?

□ Why do I want to volunteer?

2.STEP Decision-making

□ Who organizes the volunteer work? (mission, values of organization)

□ When should I participate in volunteering?

□ Where should I participate in volunteering?

□ What is the purpose of the event, the target audience?

□ Who supports the event?

□ What people/organizations participate in the event?

□ What are the overall responsibilities of volunteers?

3. STEP Practical preparation

□ Do I have the contact details of the volunteer coordinator/contact person (phone number, email)?

□ How will communication be organized before/during/after the event?

□ How will volunteer training be organized (format, duration, content)?

□ What should I do if I cannot attend the training?

□ When and where should I arrive to start my volunteer work?

□ Will transport to/from the event venue be provided?

□ Will accommodation be provided during the event?

□ Will meals be provided during the event, and if so, what kind?

□ Will the event organizers provide insurance?

□ What other costs are reimbursed/provided for volunteers (special parking for cars, admission to related

paid events, access to water and/or snacks, etc.)?

□ At what times, where, for how long and what duties must be performed during the event?

□ Can I refuse to perform certain duties/arbitrarily leave my work duties?

□ What is the volunteer program during the event? (special meetings, evaluation, thank-you event, etc.)

□ What are the volunteer's powers during the event (access, communication with visitors, internal communication,

accidents, disputes)?

□ Where will the volunteer room/area be located (for rest, storage of belongings, changing clothes, etc. personal needs)?

□ What is the organizers' policy on the use of addictive substances during the event (smoking, alcohol, drugs)?

□ What documents must volunteers complete when starting their volunteer work (certificate, contract, permit, insurance policy, health certificate/statement, criminal record certificate, etc.)?

□ What is the policy on publishing photos/videos during the event (rules, hashtag)?

□ What is the dress code to be observed during the event?

□ Will a professional medic be available at the event (if so, where)?

□ How is communication between volunteers/between volunteers and coordinators organized (mobile phone, walkies-talkies) and what are the communication rules?

□ What must be brought along (tableware, specific electronics/materials)?

□ What are the rules for using special protective equipment during events indoors/outdoors?

□ Do I have to keep track of my volunteer work/plan time for other types of reporting, and if so, how and what kind?

□ Can I refuse to appear in photos/videos of the event?

□ Have I disclosed my personal data unnecessarily anywhere?

□ When should I inform the volunteer work organizers about changes to my plans/availability?

□ Do I need to inform the volunteer work organizers about any special requirements on my part (disability, allergies, diet, accessibility, financial situation, etc.)?

4.STEP Evaluation

□ Will I receive confirmation of my participation in volunteer work?

□ Do I have to participate in volunteer work evaluation activities?

□ What are the benefits of participating in volunteer work?

□ What are my prospects after completing this volunteer work?

5. Football for kids

Street football is one of the most accessible and engaging sports for kids. It provides structured fun while teaching valuable life lessons - on and off the pitch. When a child join a football game, they're not just playing - they're growing, connecting, and becoming part of something bigger.

There are different **benefits** of involving kids in street football:

- **for Kids** - physical health & fitness (improves strength, coordination, agility, and endurance; encourages a healthy, active lifestyle from a young age); mental & emotional well-being (reduces stress and anxiety through play and movement, builds confidence, self-esteem, and emotional resilience); social skills & teamwork (teaches cooperation, fair play, communication, and respect; helps kids make friends and feel part of a group); discipline & responsibility (introduces structure, routine, and rules, encourages accountability (showing up on time, helping the team); personal growth (helps kids handle wins and losses and sparks passion, ambition, and a sense of purpose);

- **for Parents** - positive engagement (offers a safe and structured environment for children after school or on weekends, keeps children away from risky or harmful behaviours); improved family bonding (parents often become fans, volunteers, or coaches - creating shared experiences, developmental support and helps parents see their child's strengths, growth areas, and social skills in action);

- **for the Community** - social inclusion & integration (brings together kids from diverse backgrounds (ethnic, economic, religious, etc. and encourages tolerance, unity, and mutual understanding); community pride (local tournaments and football events build shared identity and excitement); youth empowerment (keeps young people engaged, focused, and hopeful - especially in underserved or conflict-affected areas); crime & risk prevention (street football gives young people a positive outlet, reducing vulnerability to crime, gangs, or substance abuse); leadership & volunteering (encourages community members (especially youth) to take leadership roles as referees, organizers, or peer mentors).

5.1. Age specifics in football

Understanding age specifics in football for participants under 18 is important for tailoring training, communication, and competition levels appropriately.

The key age groups, their developmental characteristics, and what to focus on at each age:

- **Under the age of 5 (age 3-4)** – is the period for introduction to football through play; this age is so-called "early learners" or "toddler kickers."; this age has a very short attention span (5–10 minutes max); the program includes just beginning to understand basic instructions and the tournaments are organized of the football elements, not the game itself; this age is highly active,

but not yet coordinated or controlled; very egocentric thinking - focused on self, not yet on team play and enjoy repetition and familiar routines; the activities include very basic movement skills: running, hopping, kicking a stationary ball, activities like - obstacle courses with cones, chasing games with or without the ball, balloon or softball kicking, "Freeze" games or animal walks to build control. Parent/coach-child interaction is often necessary. For this age group safety and inclusion are essential to pay attention to - use soft balls and foam equipment; keep groups small and well-supervised; focus on encouragement, not correction; always end with a celebration (high-fives, stickers, fun chants). For those under the age of 5, football is not about skills - it's about smiles, movement, and social beginnings;

- **Under the age of 8 (age 5-7)** – so-called "mini kickers", "early childhood"; short attention span; basic coordination still developing; play-focused, not yet competitive; football focus should be on fun and simple games; developing the basic motor skills (running, jumping, kicking); focus on introducing the ball and personal space and encouraging enjoyment, not results;

- **Under the age of 11 (age 8-10)** – so-called "foundation stage"; this is the age to start to think about the tournaments; begin to understand rules; better balance and coordination; very coachable and eager to learn; developing the basic techniques: passing, dribbling, kicking; small-sided games (e.g. 5v5, 7v7) appropriate; emphasize teamwork, communication, and fair play and start simple positions and structure;

- **Under the age of 14 (age 11-13)** – so-called "development stage"; rapid physical and emotional changes (puberty); more competitive drive begins to show; increased ability to understand tactics; focus on skill refinement and tactical awareness; introduction to physical training (without overload); understanding team formations, roles, and responsibilities and managing to win and to lose respectfully;

- **Under the age of 16 (age 14-15)** – so-called "youth performance stage"; stronger physical capabilities; developing identity, confidence, and peer influence; more emotional intensity and pressure awareness; focus on advanced techniques and game strategies, fitness, strength, and conditioning, positional specialization and mental resilience and decision-making under pressure;

- **Under the age of 18 (age of 16-17)** – so-called "transition to adult level"; near full physical development; preparing for the transition to adult or semi-professional football; clear competitive mindset; focus on tactical mastery and leadership, exposure to adult match conditions, individual development plans take place and the stage of preparing for next steps (clubs, trials, scholarships).

It is important to adapt the offer based on individual readiness - chronological age is not developmental age; balance competition and enjoyment to keep youth motivated and emphasize safety, inclusivity, and long-term development over early success.

5.2. Different formats of sport and playful events for kids

There are different formats of sports and playful events for kids, ranging from informal fun to more organized competitions. These formats are ideal for engaging children of various ages and skill levels - especially in settings like schools, youth centres, and community street football events. You can focus on one format or combine them throughout the year:

- *Fun games and movement sessions* - ideal for ages 3–8; focus on basic motor skills (running, jumping, coordination); use imagination-based games like: *Animal races* ("run like a cheetah"), *Traffic light games* (red = stop, green = go), *Balloon football* or *bean bag throwing;* no winners or losers—just movement and joy;

- *Mini football festivals* - ideal for ages 6–12; short, non-competitive football sessions (3v3, 4v4); rotating stations: passing, dribbling, kicking, mini-matches; include music, face painting, snacks, and playful awards like "Best Smile", "Team Spirit", "Creative Goal" and other; focus on participation, not scores;

- *Skill Challenges & Obstacle Courses* - ideal for ages 5–14; time-based or creative activities like dribbling and kicking tournaments, Hula hoop stations, Football bowling, Speed ladder relays and others; great for engaging large groups and encouraging practice;

- *Sports & Art Mix Events* - ideal for ages 6–14; blend physical games with creativity: decorate team flags or T-shirts, make "cheer posters" or chants, end with a dance or music circle; perfect for kids who are not sport-focused but love to join group activities;

- *Theme-Based Sports Days* - ideal for ages 5–12; themes like *Pirate Adventure*: football treasure hunt, *World Cup Day*: teams represent countries with fun facts, *Superhero Sports Day*: dress-up and complete fun missions;

- *Friendly Competitions* - ideal for ages 10–17; 5v5, 6v6, or 7v7 short matches with simple rules; use round-robin format so every team plays multiple times; focus on fair play, teamwork awards, encouraging feedback; great to teach structure while keeping the vibe light;

- *Family & mixed-ability games* - ideal for all ages; kids play with parents, coaches, or volunteers; encourage fun and fairness: e.g., one adult per team, walking-only rules; good

formats: 3-generation teams (child, teen, adult), inclusive games with children with disabilities; builds community and reduces pressure.

Building Social Connections through Football

Leadership
1
Taking initiative and guiding teammates

Communication
2
Verbal and non-verbal team interaction

Cooperation
3
Working together toward shared goals

Respect
4
Appreciating teammates, opponents and coaches

Our tournaments create a festival atmosphere. Parents become active participants rather than sideline spectators.

Source: Workshop "Football for kids" 18.03.2025., Cēsis, Latvia, ©Semenaks, A.

3pret3 Reinventing the game, Latvia

Photo: Alex Puskins (https://www.ghetto.lv/lv/foto/3pret3--28.01.2024--alex-puskins/1167/)

We're re-imagining youth football through small-sided games. Our *3pret3* project blends skill development with fun and teamwork. Drawing inspiration globally, we're creating a new pathway for Latvian children to fall in love with football again.

The *3pret3* Format:

- A Game-Changer - Small-Sided Play. Our *3pret3* format maximizes touches for every player. Smaller teams mean more action and engagement on the pitch;
- Creative Freedom: Players make quick decisions without rigid positions. This builds confidence and problem-solving skills;
- Everyone Plays: We welcome all skill levels. Our format ensures every child gets meaningful playing time and experiences success.

Skill Development through *3pret3:*

- 6x more Touches - Players contact the ball far more frequently than in traditional formats;
- 90% Active Time - Children remain engaged throughout the tournament with minimal waiting;
- 4x Decision Making - Players make more tactical decisions per minute in small-sided games.

Our dynamic drills follow UEFA guidelines for youth development. We prioritize technical skills in game-realistic scenarios.

There are some more Innovative Practices from Around the World:

- Santander 3v3 ligaen (Norway) – The World's largest youth tournament emphasizes community over competition. Their festival model inspires our approach;
- 3v3 Deuthsland (Germany) - Academies integrate small-sided games for tactical learning;
- 3v3 UK - The English Football Association has recently announced that 3v3 will be the format that U7 play from the 2026/2027 season.

3pret3 fully aligns with UEFA's vision for grassroots football development across Europe (UEFA Guidelines: Elevating Grassroots Football):

- Player-Centered Approach - Activities designed around children's needs rather than adult expectations;
- "Play Equal" Principles - Equal playing time regardless of ability. Every child deserves meaningful participation;
- Small-Sided Format - UEFA endorses localized games with fewer players for maximum development impact.

Our metrics show dramatic improvement across all key development areas. Children report higher enjoyment and engagement.
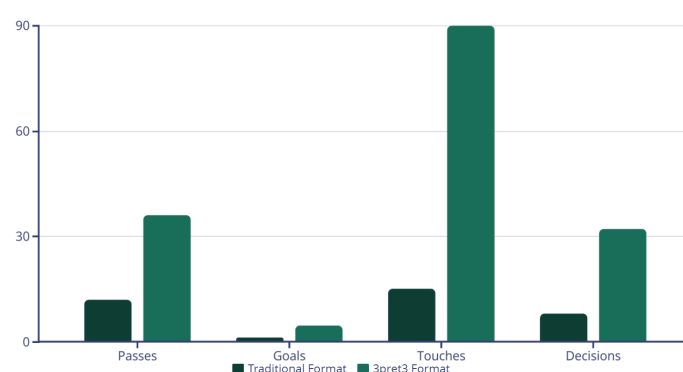
Source: Antons Semeņaks, Workshop "Football for kids" 18.03.2025., Cēsis, Latvia

The future of *3pret3* in Latvia:

- Nationwide Expansion - Growing from 40 to 80 teams by 2026. Regional tournaments in all Latvian districts;
- International Partnerships - Collaborations with Scandinavian and Central European coaching academies for knowledge exchange;
- Innovation Hub - Positioning Latvia as a center for grassroots football development across the Baltic region.

5.3. Creating an environment for kids football development

To create the environment for kids' football development, there are some crucial answers to be answered:

- **Infrastructure & Facilities**
  - What is the perfect amount of football fields and training spaces in the territory?
  - How can municipalities improve or expand facilities?
  - How can we make fields available and affordable for all kids?

An example is provided for a population of 6,000, with 1,000 kids (assuming 15% of the population is under 15).

Necessary:

- ✓ A main grass stadium (3,000–5,000 seats);
- ✓ An artificial stadium with stands for winter use;
- ✓ Additional artificial training fields (small and full-sized);

- ✓ An indoor hall with artificial turf;
- ✓ Gyms and fitness clubs near stadiums;
- ✓ Football fields and street courts for accessibility.

Most cities lack enough facilities, and strategic planning is necessary. The municipalities are playing an important role in improving and expanding the facilities appropriate for the kids football, like:

- ✓ Land allocation: Municipalities provide unused land to private organizations or clubs for football development;
- ✓ Family support: Supporting families (especially large ones) help increase youth sports participation;
- ✓ Tax allocation model: Inspired by Lithuania, where taxpayers can direct a portion of their taxes to specific sports clubs;
- ✓ Training camps & hotels: Cities should invest in facilities to attract training camps instead of sending local players elsewhere'
- ✓ Grants for sports organizations: Structured funding to ensure long-term development and accessibility;
- ✓ Support for minorities: Encouraging integration through sports (e.g., programs for Ukrainian immigrants).

Digital integration:

- ✓ A booking system/app to check field availability and reserve spots;
- ✓ A smart equipment-sharing system (lockable boxes with balls, nets, and gear that can be accessed via an app).

- **Funding & Support**

  - ° Who has to pay for kids' football?

  - ° What financial support do clubs need?

  - ° How can sponsors, grants, and subsidies help?

  - ° How to reduce the cost of 'football (e.g. for the club, for the municipality, for kids' parents)?

There are many differences between Latvia and Estonia in terms of financing. In Latvia, local governments are much more involved in financing sports. Professional clubs sometimes face financial difficulties, but youth programs often receive funding from local governments. There are various models for financing football, for example:

- Estonia offers free access to sports equipment using local government funding. Losses from free equipment have been minimal, making this model suitable for other cities as well;

- Public funding (40%), sponsors (30%) and parental contributions (30%);

- Free stadiums for sports activities for users or a parental contribution of no more than 40%;

- Reduced tax rates for non-profit organizations;

- Municipalities own the equipment, but the rights of use are transferred to users – children and young people use the equipment free of charge, while professionals pay a participation fee.

> The importance of smart planning, public-private cooperation, and digital solutions to improve football infrastructure and accessibility is essential.

- **Kids attraction and involvement**

  ° How to attract and retain kids in football?

Marketing in social media (Instagram, Facebook, TikTok…) is one of the approaches, as well as the posters in public places. The message should emphasize the benefits for kids (health, equipment, popularity, free insurance, highlighting friendship, becoming a part of the community, and skill development).

  ° How to promote football in schools and local communities?

There are various approaches that can be used – free training sessions (including - with the popular people in the society like sportists, bloggers, musicians, etc.), local tournaments making them available for a wider audience and simply the dissemination of the information on the possibilities to join the street football activities.

  ° How to include kids with diverse backgrounds and skill levels?

One of the aspects is economic issues. There can be discounts applied, sponsorship for concrete kids (equipment, covering the travel costs, etc.) and collaboration with the institutions as some of the kids have limited economical resources to attend the football clubs.

  ° What is the NGO's role in kids' attraction?

NGOs can become the partners of the organizers to promote the initiatives and possibilities for kids or by doing fundraising by volunteering.

At the national-wide events, there is also the possibility of hiring star players like Messi or Ronaldo type of stars, with an example of Saudi Arabia signing Ronaldo. However, the star players alone don't

guarantee full stadiums - money does not solve all problems. Community engagement efforts, such as visiting schools and kindergartens to introduce kids to football, offering free training sessions, and fostering a football culture a very available and impactful tools at the local level.

- **Collaboration & Long-term Development**

  - ° What is the best practice for long-term collaboration between clubs and the municipality?

  - ° What could be and how to develop a communication channel for ongoing dialogue?

  - ° What other partners could help to develop kids' football?

6. Leveraging football as a bridge

Key Success Stories

- *Collaboration between youth from different countries*

Football is a universal language that transcends cultural and linguistic barriers, making it an ideal tool to foster connections between young people from diverse backgrounds. Through our experience with **Ghetto Football Euroleague**, we have seen how bringing together youth teams from 11 European countries creates not only competitive sports moments but also opportunities for cross-cultural learning and friendships. These events encourage mutual respect, teamwork, and social integration. To maximize collaboration, we recommend organizing pre- and post-tournament activities such as cultural exchange workshops, friendly matches, and social events that allow participants to bond off the field.

- *Organizing international tournaments*

Ghetto Football based on its many years of experience has organized events both locally with participations of international players and in other countries.

Latvia has become a central hub for street football excellence through the hosting of prestigious master tournaments. These events attract top teams from across Europe, offering high-level competition and exposure. Ensuring professional infrastructure and competitive game formats elevates the player experience. Community activities and local partnerships create a festive atmosphere beyond just the matches.

Hosting the world's first Street Football World Cup in Latvia was a groundbreaking milestone for the street sports movement. Teams from different continents gathered to compete and celebrate their shared passion for football. By inviting teams from multiple continents, the event highlighted football's role as a universal language. Residents engaged with international teams, fostering meaningful connections and long-term interest in street sports.

- *Media recognition*

Ghetto Games has proactively worked with television, radio, online media, and press to gain visibility and inspire audiences:

- National broadcasters like *Latvian Television*, TV3, and Riga24 have covered key Ghetto Games events, highlighting their social impact and large participant base. Ghetto Games provides media with dynamic event visuals, interviews with participants and organizers, and compelling narratives about youth empowerment;

- Ghetto Games has used radio stations, such as Pieci.lv (targeting youth), SWH (one of the most popular radio stations in Latvia), and EHR (focused on music and culture), to promote events, engage listeners, and share success stories. Live interviews and discussions before and during tournaments generate excitement and engagement;

- Major online platforms like Delfi and TVNET frequently publish articles and features about Ghetto Games. These platforms reach diverse audiences, including sports enthusiasts and the general public. Sportacentrs, a dedicated sports news site, has provided detailed event coverage, including match highlights and player profiles;

- Strong media presence promoted Latvia as a premier destination for street sports events. Through strategic media engagement and leveraging football as a bridge, Ghetto Games has become a leading example of how street sports can inspire communities and gain recognition on a national and international level.

Ghetto Games achievements

- *Hosted more than 20 events in multiple countries*

The Ghetto Football Euroleague is a highly innovative and inspiring best practice for using football as a bridge to connect communities across Europe. The first season of this 3x3 football format took place in 11 European countries, with the final held in Grīziņkalns in early June. This successful example only further strengthened the desire to establish an international street football association that unites all active countries. ISFA was established in 2020, and thanks to this tournaments are held in different countries of the world.

- *Engaged thousands of youth*

For 16 years, Ghetto Games has been increasing the number of young people participating in tournaments every year. Ghetto Games has established a loyal base of participants who participate in tournaments not only in Riga but also in other cities. With its unique approach of speaking to young people in a simple language they can understand, Ghetto Games has become a youth lifestyle.

Previously mentioned events and activities attract top teams from across Europe and beyond, offering youth players opportunities to compete on a global stage. The tournaments are complemented by

community activities and partnerships that create a vibrant, inclusive atmosphere, inspiring young athletes and strengthening the street sports movement.

- *Promoted unity through sports*

Unity through sports is at the core of Ghetto Games, where the focus is on bringing young people together from different backgrounds and cultures through the universal language of football. Ghetto Games is a lifestyle and its values are instilled in young people from a young age. The games are played without referees and thus teach respectable communication.

Moreover, Ghetto Games promotes unity by hosting prestigious international tournaments like the Street Football World Cup, where teams from multiple continents compete and celebrate their love for football. These events highlight the global nature of street sports and bring together young athletes from all over the world in a spirit of friendly competition. By providing a platform for youth from diverse backgrounds to showcase their skills and celebrate their shared passion, Ghetto Games creates an environment where unity, teamwork, and social integration thrive.

Future Vision for Ghetto Games

- *Expand to new regions and countries*

Building on the rich history and extensive experience in organizing successful street sports events, Ghetto Games aims to significantly increase the volume of international tournaments in the coming years. By leveraging the strong infrastructure in Latvia, including state-of-the-art facilities, professional event management systems, and a vibrant street sports community, Ghetto Games is well-positioned to expand its reach. This growth will further strengthen Ghetto Games' role as a leader in the global street sports movement, creating more opportunities for youth worldwide to come together, compete, and build lasting connections across cultures.

Ghetto Games is working to develop a digital tool specifically designed for organizing and managing international tournaments. This platform will serve as a centralized hub where players can easily register for events, access game schedules, and track results in real time. By creating this digital tool, Ghetto Games aims to streamline the tournament process, making it more efficient and accessible to players and organizers alike. The platform will also allow participants to stay updated with tournament progress, view rankings, and celebrate victories by seeing the names of the winners instantly. Furthermore, this tool will enhance communication across borders, promoting a seamless experience for international participants. With the integration of this digital solution, Ghetto Games plans to improve the overall tournament experience, increase engagement, and expand its reach to even more global participants.

- *Increase the diversity of participants*

At Ghetto Games, we recognize the importance of inclusion and equal opportunities in sports. One of 3 key future initiatives is to establish a dedicated Women's League, aimed at increasing female participation in street sports tournaments and mass events. Our goal is to create a platform where women can compete, develop their skills, and become more actively involved in the street sports community. Through tailored events, mentorship programs, and community outreach, we aim to break barriers and inspire more women to engage in sports. By fostering a supportive and competitive environment, we believe this initiative will not only empower female athletes but also contribute to the overall growth and diversity of the street sports movement worldwide.

As Latvia faces demographic challenges one of our key plans is to attract athletes from different nationalities and ethnic minorities living in Latvia, as well as participants from other countries. By fostering a more diverse and inclusive sports environment, we aim to create a truly international community within our tournaments. This will not only enrich the competitive experience but also promote cultural exchange, social integration, and a stronger sense of unity through sports. To achieve this, we plan to strengthen partnerships with international sports communities, actively engage with minority groups in Latvia, and implement outreach programs that encourage wider participation. Our vision is to make Ghetto Games a hub for street sports where people from all backgrounds feel welcome and represented.

- *Further build cross-border partnerships*

The collaboration is key to the growth and development of street sports. One of Ghetto Games key future initiatives is to strengthen cross-border partnerships by increasing Ghetto Games participation in the International Street Football Association (ISFA) and expanding our network of international tournaments. Through these partnerships, Ghetto Games aim to create more opportunities for athletes, organizers, and communities to connect, compete, and share knowledge. By organizing joint tournaments, exchanging best practices, and fostering a culture of cooperation, Ghetto Games want to elevate the global street sports scene and support the development of like-minded organizations. Ghetto Games goal is to build a strong, interconnected sports community that thrives on shared experiences, innovation, and exclusivity, ensuring the long-term impact and sustainability of street sports worldwide.

Ghetto Games proves that cross-border cooperation is possible and future global efforts will continue to build on the success have been achieved.

Nõmme Kalju FC "MINORITY PROJECTS, THEIR SUCCESSES AND LESSONS LEARNED"

It all began unexpectedly, on February 24, 2022, as a very emotional story which led to the idea to offer help but quickly turned into something much bigger.

Ukrainian war refugees arrived to Estonia, mothers, and grandmothers with their children and grandchildren. To provide a sense of security, personal conversations, and offering comprehensive assistance became part of everyday life!

Nõmme Kalju FC took Ukrainian children to football training sessions free of charge. *Nõmme Kalju FC* involved all the Nõmme Kalju FC community, accepting donations from families (football training clothes for Ukrainian children).

This simple gesture proved to be very necessary and quickly received positive feedback. The initiative was widely covered in the media and inspired other sports clubs to offer similar opportunities. Over 40 children participated in the training sessions.

We also started organising football training for Ukrainian children on the Tallink Isabel ferry - the place of residence for Ukrainian refugees at that time. In cooperation with the Tallink Isabel team football fields were prepared from the conference rooms. Training sessions began to take place twice a week. Over 900 people lived on the ferry at that time and more than half of them were children. We brought immense joy to the children.

The biggest lesson we learned – Don't just talk, take Action!

Experience has shown how a small initiative can lead to lasting change.