

# Sport as a Human Right?



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Millions of people all over the world are affected by forced displacement due to conflicts, human rights violations, harassment, national disasters, and climate change. Official statistics generally differentiate between two groups of forcibly displaced persons:

- a) refugees and asylum seekers who have crossed international borders; and
- b) internally displaced persons who are displaced within their own country.

Refugees are persons who have fled their country because of a well-documented fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion and crossed an international border to seek safety.

Internally displaced persons have not crossed the borders of their country, but may still find themselves in a vulnerable situation, residing in other regions of their own country.

According to UNHCR, there are now more than 84 million refugees and displaced people around the world. The total has doubled in the past decade, resulting in more than 1% of the world's population being displaced. Based on UNHCR reports, at the end of 2020, all around the world there were:

- 26.4 million refugees and
- 48.0 million internally displaced persons

At this point, the share of refugees in the European Union is 0.6% compared to its total population. In the context of Europe, international protection encompasses refugee status and subsidiary protection status.



Vulnerable asylum applicants in 2020: 485.000



About 14,200 applications for international protection were lodged by unaccompanied minors in EU+ countries representing 3% of the total 485,000 asylum applications in 2020



Almost 9 out of 10 unaccompanied minors applying for international protection were boys.

The European Union through its Institutions, bodies and mechanisms, establishes itself as a leading international donor and cooperation partner in crisis and force majeure situations in terms of forced displacement and asylum. In 2020, the European Commission allocated most of its humanitarian budget of more than €900 million to projects that address the needs of forcibly displaced people and local hosting communities.

Under the aegis of Erasmus+ programme, European Solidarity Corps programme, and/or Council of Europe funds via European Youth Foundation, a great number of organisations across Europe use sport as a tool of protection, well-being and social inclusion of refugees, thus upholding and strengthening the full essence of key European values such as respect for Human Rights, solidarity, equality, non-discrimination, intercultural dialogue and tolerance.



**"Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does." Mandela, Nelson**

Sport provides people from all ages and backgrounds – including the most marginalised – with the opportunity to develop their physical abilities and health, to socialise, to strengthen their education, develop crucial skills, foster lifelong learning and intergenerational dialogue. Sport's social and cultural dimensions allow people to learn and have fun, while engaging in social dialogue, reinforcing mutual understanding and promoting their general well-being.

Sport and physical activity have long been used as a tool to improve mental, physical and social well-being. Physical inactivity is a major risk factor associated with a large number of chronic diseases such as cancer, diabetes and obesity.

Sport breaks down barriers and builds bridges where boundaries usually exist. Sport has the power to promote and strengthen inclusion in our democratic societies, no matter the age, sexual orientation, gender expression, whether one's able-bodied or disabled, religion, ethnicity or socio-economic status.

Sport can improve refugees' well-being, empower them with crucial skills, create opportunities for education and socialisation, and improve relations between refugees and their host communities. For children forced from their home countries due to war, persecution, natural disasters or other reasons, finding a way to be free of the strain in refugee camps helps their healing and integration processes. Sport provides that way, building the bridge to their host communities.

Initiatives which promote physical and mental well-being allied with positive community integration are particularly important for refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons. In this sense, sport programmes have the potential to greatly benefit the refugee and hosting communities alike, and should therefore benefit from adequate political, financial and administrative support.

For all the above-mentioned, Sport and the social, educational and cultural dimensions it espouses, guides and allows the human being the realisation of several rights and liberties while working to build cohesive societies. As such, Sport should be considered a Human Right on its own.

**Not only on paper, but also in our everyday life. Join ENGSO Youth in Action.**

Check [#RISE](#) ERASMUS+ funded Youth exchange for awareness raising; Council of Europe via European Youth foundation funded [#SPIDI](#) video training for the easy sport activities with refugees; and upcoming Human Rights education through Sport manual for further advocacy!

Further resources:

[Amnesty International](#) (Universal Declaration of Human Rights)

[Council of Europe](#) (Manuals)

[European Commission](#) (Data)

[European Convention on Human Rights](#)

[European Youth Portal](#) (Review of the situation)

[International Olympic Committee](#) (Strategic Framework on Human Rights)

[The UN Refugee Agency](#) (Statistics)