

## Project description: Zagreb 041: Football for All



Zagreb 041 is a non-profit, amateur football team that actively stands against racism, xenophobia and homophobia and works on social inclusion and integration of migrants and refugees through sport. It was formally registered as a citizens' association on February 19, 2015. At the moment the Club has a senior male team, senior woman team and a children team. In only 3 years of work, the club has 200 members and about 80 direct beneficiaries (30 seniors, 30 women and 20 children). The great advantage of football is that one doesn't need to know language to enjoy, make friendships and feel welcome as player or supporter.

The work of the teams is interconnected, but **with this project we will like to emphasize activities with children and their parents.**

Although similar activities exist in EU and worldwide, for Croatia this approach is an innovation on different levels: at the level of the whole club's approach and organization, work with women and at the level of integration with children, too.

General objective of the project is to enhance the level of inclusion, solidarity and feeling of security of refugees in order to achieve integration as two fold process, to promote and use positive values of sport, especially football (as team sport which has great potential to involve community).

The long-term goal of our work is to continue and improve the use of nonprofit, amateur football as a tool to facilitate inclusion of refugees in society as well as to encourage communities and society to build mutual trust and dialogue. Therefore, the objective of different activities we organized is to enhance the level of inclusion, solidarity and feeling of security of groups vulnerable to low level of tolerance and to promote positive values in sports, especially football.

The idea of forming a club emerged early in 2014. Disappointed with the situation in their football club Zagreb, questionable competition in the First division, and the general state of Croatian football, a part of supporters, White Angels decided to register a new, nonhierarchical football club rooted in direct democratic approach. The aim was to bring football back to common people, bring supporters back to football, and become one of the few genuine local community football club in Croatia, governed through direct democratic approach by supporters and sympathizers with a clear stance against modern football. The club will fight corruption and clientelism on all levels, as well as all kinds of discrimination. Our message is that **football is a sport of solidarity, sound competition, respect for the opponent, a sport we love because of its simplicity and beauty.**

Zagreb 041 has been working and integrating migrants and refugees through sport activities, promoting the values of anti-racism and antifascism.

### **Organization, Finances, Capacities**

The club is organized on the values of cooperation and direct-democracy. All members are members of the Assembly with the principle *one member – one vote*. Depending on the activity plan, members organize through smaller working groups, e.g: community work, marketing, senior team support, women team support, tribune – club the supporters.

Each team (children, women, man) has a person responsible for the coordination of activities, a trainer and trainer – assistant.

The club finance itself through membership fees, benefit activities, crowdfunding campaigning, by selling supporters equipment, partnership non-profit projects for community development, participation for the football school for children and trainings for women. All activities for refugees are free of charge.

We are open to share and be positive example for all who shares our values. In last three years organized numerous activities related to integration of migrants and refugees in Croatian society. We consider sport and especially football one of the areas of social life where racism and xenophobia are manifested often. At the same time it can be a good means for fighting racism and xenophobia and increase level of inclusion and tolerance towards diversities.

We organized series of football tournaments against racism and xenophobia - through which we have examined, exchanged and promoted good experiences of using football as a tool for prevention and combating racism and xenophobia in local communities. We organized workshops for local community on how to deal with differences, racism, inclusion and refugees issues.

In cooperation with local elementary school Fran Galović from Dugave (the municipality near the Refugees Center in Zagreb) in 2017 and 2018 we organized workshops for teachers and involved children into club's activities. Since the beginning we cooperate with Centre for Peace Studies, The Jesuit Refugee Service, Are you Syrious, Green Action and many others civil society and non-profit organizations that work for social change.

The annually budget of the club is 15.000 EUR.

**Helenna Hercigonja-Moulton, trainer of children and women team** attended the University of Zagreb and studied Journalism with a double-major in Public Relations and minor in New Media at the Faculty of Political Science. Meanwhile attaining a degree, she is also a professional athlete. She was playing soccer for 10 years before retaining a professional status in 2014 and she was also a member of the Croatian Women's National team. In 2014 she participated in a FIFA coaching course lead by Beatrice Seidenthal in Zagreb and in 2016 she completed an UEFA B coaching course awarded with a coaching license. Her coaching experience includes summer camps with children from the ages of 4-7 in Miami, Florida in 2012 and 2013 and volunteering with women's junior cadets at ZNK Dinamo-Maksimir and younger age groups between ages 6-10 at Dinamo Zagreb's Boy's Academy in 2015-2016. In November 2016 she started working with the founders of Coerver Academy in Croatia. Soon after attaining her Uefa B coaching licence plans to open a girl's academy, yet non-existent in Croatia.

**Branimir Šloser, coordinator of children and women team** – member and volunteer of Zagreb 041. Experienced trainer and educator in non-formal education, in the area of active citizenship. He has been cooperating with different civic initiatives and NGOs and coordinated several researches in the field of migration and labour. IT expert by profession, working in the Cooperative Free Domain.

**The specific objectives of the project are:** to mainstream and affirm sports and football as tool for inclusion of refugees in Croatian society and prevent and contribute on combating racism, xenophobia, gender based prejudices and related intolerance; to examine, build new and continue improving existing models of the usage of football in integration and inclusion of third country nationals; to create good practices of integration in direct work with children and youth; to promote an inclusive model that integrate work with children, women and youth through sports

The priority to be addressed with this project is promoting the direct engagement of refugees (children) and host communities in order to achieve two ways integration, which begins from the day a refugee arrives within the new host society. The intercultural dialogue developed from the early age can be the solid base for an intercultural society. Our work with children and their parents show us that and empower to continue.

A research conducted in Croatia in 2013. has shown that approximately 40 per cent of respondents have a fear that Roma pose a threat to their security, while 30 per cent think this is the case with refugees and asylum seekers. However, promoting integration is often neglected by the local and regional authorities, as this is not one of their core mandates.

Most countries in Europe are facing the growing challenge of international migration and it falls primarily to the Cities to design and implement integration policies that foster community cohesion and turn migration into a factor of development rather than a threat. In Croatia we identified lack of awareness of relevant institutions of possibilities to use sport as a tool for refugees' integration. Building mutual understanding and respect must become one of the key functions of public authorities as well as sports associations not only because exclusion, xenophobia and hate crime are unacceptable violations of human rights and dignity, but also because sound integration practices lead to communities more resilient to migrant-natives and migrant-state conflicts (Rafaela M. Dancygier, *Immigration and Conflict in Europe*, Cambridge University Press). To achieve this, it is essential to **promote best practices of usage football as toll for integration as well as promote interculturalism, inclusion, diversity and the need to combat racism and xenophobia**. At the moment the Club has three teams: male, female and children. It is one of just few clubs in Croatia having woman team very active. Also, coach is a women which contributes to promotion of diversity and inclusion and debunks myths that football is just for men.

While **we are engaged with partners in campaigns and policy processes** which tries to find long-term capacities and resources, at the same time **we rely on ours, citizens self-organization in creation of good practices and direct work (with children, women, men)**.

This project is a continuation and could be and improvement of ongoing activities what guarantees sustainability on long-term.

There is a scale of positive benefits regarding reduction of prejudices and contribution to integration for all target groups included (seniors, women, community) but we want to emphasize the benefit for refugees children and domicile children and their parents in this process, as a long term contribution on building intercultural societies. All members of target groups (with the exception of children) are involved in the management of the club through the mechanisms of direct democracy.

**Main activities included in the project will be:**

1. **Trainings for children and adults** - organized on weekly basis. Three times per week for seniors, and twice a week for children and woman. Through this activities we will enable both newcomers and Croatia citizens to meet, play football, exchange experiences and build friendships.
2. **Parents meetings and** – will take place once a month and will engage parent of domestic children and refugees parents with the aim to meet, acquaint, reduce prejudices and create space for common life and friendships.
3. **2 Tournaments** – for children and women – that engage other teams and community
4. **Football matches for senior team in 3<sup>rd</sup> County League**
5. **"The club birthday"** – annual benefit party
6. **Production of club's sport equipment**

**The resources from the Sozial Maria Award will be used for the work with children on integration and basic needs of the club such as trainers and facilities.**