



## RESEARCH

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SOCIAL INCLUSION  
THROUGH FOOTBALL  
GREECE 2020-2021

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[WWW.FOOTBALL-BLM.ORG.GR](http://WWW.FOOTBALL-BLM.ORG.GR)



# 1 who we are

SCI Hellas is the Greek section of SCI International and we identify ourselves as “an independent international sociopolitical organization working to defend human rights through international volunteering cooperation and solidarity projects aimed at establishing a culture of peace”.

The association had always been interested in sports as part of a peaceful process for the development of mutual understanding and acceptance and since starting working with refugees, migrants and asylum seekers in 2017 more closely we have been looking into ways that sports are conducive to the social inclusion of people from vulnerable groups.

In 2019 the initiative of setting up the Umoja-Enosi (meaning union in Swahili and Greek) football club was inspired and the team became the first Panafrican football team in the county, comprising 20 players from 10 different countries, led by Omari Milala, our coach from Tanzania, who has taken the team in the high ranks of the Independent Championship in Greece.

Through our work with Umoja-Enosi fc, SCI Hellas has been in contact with a realm of footballers, coaches, trainers, supporters and wannabes with whom various partnerships, understandings, projects and friendships have been shaped.

The research we undertook within the frame of the FARE Network aimed at “looking into the athletes who live and play football in Greece. Refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers find with us a place to tell their story and make visible the ways the most popular sport in the world helps them in their social inclusion process by finding themselves, exploring their skills, fulfilling their dreams, living their purpose and giving meaning to their lives.

Their motivation towards social inclusion in the Greek-European society is key in playing football and visibility of the importance of these people’s own capacity is key to living a quality life wherever they are”.



# 2 methods

- participatory observations,
- interviews,
- a focus group



# 3 sources



1. Personal encounters with migrants, refugees, asylum seekers who play football in Umoja-Enosi,
2. Contacts within the Independent Championship of Greece, which is the championship where people who cannot for a number of reasons compete in the professional championships participate,
3. The project Bala-Patisia, an action which is part of the co-Athens implemented by the European pilot program of the Municipality of Athens Curing the Limbo, through the Athens Development and Destination Management Agency. The program is co-financed by the ERDF, under the UIA program and aims to create a meeting and interaction place of the diverse groups of people in Kato Patisia in Athens, one of the most multicultural neighbourhoods of the city ([www.football-blm.org.gr/bala\\_patisia](http://www.football-blm.org.gr/bala_patisia)).
4. The website <https://football-blm.org.gr> and social media.
5. The FARENWORK project on BLM in Greece.
6. Events that we have hosted regarding football played by migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

More specifically,

- Football Unites, October 24, 2020
- Football Unites-Το Ποδόσφαιρο Ενώνει!, January 21, 2021
- FFFfootball Online, May 14-16, 2021
- Just the Beginning, June 16 & 17, 2021

7. Our research into cataloguing the operating football teams in Greece set up or/and consisting by migrants, refugees or asylum seekers (male / female fc).
8. The numerous interviews, calls and requests we have answered regarding

- participation in a team,
- being involved in football activities as a coach, player, practitioner or volunteer,
- helping out with documents.

Due to the covid 19 pandemic and the subsequent measures taken to ensure people's safety and the containment of the disease, certain limitations were encountered, as follows:

- all sports grounds closed in February 2020 only to reopen in June 2021, beginning of the summer, when most migrants, refugees and asylum seekers have been looking / have found seasonal work that has led them away from the urban areas,
- strict circulation checks have been imposed of long duration particularly in the centre of Athens where most migrants, refugees and asylum seekers reside

Coupled with the fact that most people from these vulnerable groups do not have access on the internet other than data to ensure family contacts up to date, live interviews and narrations taken on the spot were made extremely difficult.

**VISIT  
THE WEBSITE FOR VIDEOS**



***HTTPS://  
FOOTBALL-BLM.ORG.GR/RESEARCH***

# 4 findings



•Football is seen as means of social inclusion throughout the spectrum of vulnerable groups. Sports break down barriers and build bridges where boundaries usually exist. ... Sport can create a feeling of inclusion in society, no matter what age, sexual orientation, gender expression, whether you are able-bodied or disabled, religion, ethnicity or socio-economic status you are or hold.

•**Sport can be understood across cultures, languages and religions.**

•Football can be played without the prior knowledge of a particular language.

•**People who participate in local teams see this also as a way into professional football.**

•Scouters are interested in people playing in refugee/migrant football teams.

•**The lack of particular documents costs the loss of great potential finding its way into professional football.**

•More research and evaluation of football ()-based social inclusion projects (and other popular team sports) is needed.

•**Social policies should take into account the findings of the above research.**

# more findings...

- Communities are served by the activities where discrimination is tackled through football activities. These foster the settling down of newcomers by providing an opportunity for friendships to be forged, understanding to be made possible and connections to be shaped.

- Organised and well-structured football activities offer the chance to children (unaccompanied minors and children from refugee / migrant families) to be active in a safe and secure environment in troubled neighbourhoods.**

- Football activities offer protection from discrimination away from fear.

- Talent is nurtured, spotted and acknowledged in areas where vulnerable people are at a high risk of low self-esteem, well-being and poor (mental) health.**

- Learning the mentality, culture and habits of the diverse groups forming our multicultural societies is better nurtured through football.

- Playing football shapes personality and role models can stem from the various communities for the youngsters of the group.**

- Football builds trust in oneself, a sense of belonging and solidarity with others and a routine that fosters empowerment and positive change.



# ...even more findings.

- **Steady and effective networks of partners, more spaces, better access to the existing football grounds and accessibility that is not subject to conditions are needed.**
- Football provides vulnerable people with an action to be performed improving mental health and physical agility.
- **Playing football is NOT enough its own; social policies that involve the protection of the international human rights of refugees, the inclusion rights of migrants and the ascertainment of legal procedures to be followed for the asylum seekers precede any attempt for social inclusion.**

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The findings of our research so far show that a safe football environment may very well serve as a means for engaging vulnerable groups. It enhances socially vulnerable people's sense connecting and, if fostered properly, can lead to opportunities for the improvement of life and transferrable employment skills.

This is an ongoing research project for SCI Hellas. More results will be made readily available on the website [www.football-blm.org.gr](http://www.football-blm.org.gr)



# 5

## list of football teams

Part of the research has been the cataloguing of the existing football teams that are set up by or include refugee players.

| List of refugee football teams in Greece |                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | research                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| no                                       | name                                                                                                                     | contact details                                                                                                                                                                                                      | more...                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 1                                        | Umoja-Enosi fc                                                                                                           | Gravias 9-13, Athens 106 78, 2114055585                                                                                                                                                                              | First Panafrican football team in Greece                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 2                                        | Network of Volunteers and Refugees                                                                                       | <a href="http://www.athensfootballnetwork.gr/">http://www.athensfootballnetwork.gr/</a><br><a href="https://www.facebook.com/diktyo.prosfyfes.ethelontes/">https://www.facebook.com/diktyo.prosfyfes.ethelontes/</a> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 3                                        | Greek Forum of Refugees                                                                                                  | Navarchou Notara 12, Athina 106 83, 213028 2976                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 4                                        | (national) football team for Migrants and Refugees – SOS Villages Greece and Pyrros Dimas International Sports Institute | Λ. ΣΥΓΓΡΟΥ 262 ΑΘΗΝΑ Τ.Κ. 17672<br><a href="tel:2111883711">211 1883711</a> , <a href="mailto:info@oym.gr">info@oym.gr</a>                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 5                                        | Hestia fc                                                                                                                | <a href="https://www.facebook.com/HestiaFC/">https://www.facebook.com/HestiaFC/</a><br>by Katerina Salta <a href="mailto:katerina@olympictruce.org">katerina@olympictruce.org</a>                                    | Hestia FC the first refugee and migrant women football club in Greece in the Athens urban area.                                                                                                                         |
| 6                                        | Hope fc refugee team Organization Earth                                                                                  | <a href="https://www.hopesports.eu/">https://www.hopesports.eu/</a><br><a href="https://www.facebook.com/HopeSportsEU">https://www.facebook.com/HopeSportsEU</a><br>21 0232 5380, by Petros Kokkalis                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 7                                        | ARSIS fc Thessaloniki                                                                                                    | 2310 227311 & 6976 440804 by Dimitris Tzouvaras                                                                                                                                                                      | <a href="https://www.arsis.gr/deltio-typoy-enas-chronos-arsis-football-club-omada-podosfairoy-ki-allileggyis/">https://www.arsis.gr/deltio-typoy-enas-chronos-arsis-football-club-omada-podosfairoy-ki-allileggyis/</a> |
| 8                                        | Cosmos fc Λέσβος                                                                                                         | <a href="https://www.facebook.com/COSMOS-FC-LESVOS-457771717931977/">https://www.facebook.com/COSMOS-FC-LESVOS-457771717931977/</a><br>697 026 1291 by Giorgos Patlakas                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 9                                        | Derveni Alexyl hotspot fc, Thessaloniki                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 10                                       | Apollonia Team of Albanian Migrants                                                                                      | Ipponikou 5, Athina 117 43, <a href="tel:6988248841">698 824 8841</a><br>By anexartito.com / Independent Championship                                                                                                | Merge with Peloponissiakos fc                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 11+                                      | Refugee and migrant Communities in Greece                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | The communities of refugees and migrants residing in Greece set up temporary teams that play against each other.                                                                                                        |

### Note:

Due to covid 19 and the restrictions this has imposed most teams were unable to practice let alone compete. Some have even dissolved. For more details one needs to contact them personally.

# 6 thanks to

It has been made possible to start  
this research with the support of  
the FARENETWORK and  
the #FootballPeople WEEKS

