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Webinar: Integration of young immigrants

Finnish Table Tennis Association and Estonian Table Tennis Association are working together in an EU-Erasmus project and one theme of project is the integration of immigrants through sport.

Finnish TTA organized as part of project webinar 23.2.2023 in Helsinki. Webinar was open for everyone. Webinar was held via Teams and link was shared in both associations website. Also personal invitations were shared to both table tennis communities.

In beginning of webinar Executive Director of Finnish TTA, Mika Räsänen, made presentation of project, which includes two parts:

Integration of immigrants and gender equality in table tennis through comprehensive inclusion

Taneli Keinonen, Field Manager of Finnish TTA, presented results of workshop that was done in Autumn in Vantaa. Results of the survey are also reported in our EU-Erasmus project. In workshop the voice of immigrant youth was sought. This was done by meeting the young people in the table tennis hall in Hakunila, which is neighborhood in Vantaa. The day was implemented together with the City of Vantaa, Lehtikuusi School and Table Tennis Club TIP-70. From survey were found that participants with immigrant background had significantly less hobbies than rest of population. Only 46 % had hobbies, rest of population according to Finnish Olympic committee about 90 %. This difference means, that there is a really big possibility for sports clubs or different organizations to have new members in action. The importance of having friends in hobbies was clearly emphasized. Importance of language was the matter that did not come up in the discussions or answers. Cost of hobby is always big question but as long as cost is less than 50 €/month, it was seen somehow reasonable price.

After presentation, webinar continued with expert speeches. First speaker was Eva Rönkkö, who works in Kisakeskus Sports institute and has made recent dissertation at the University of Jyväskylä:

"Being Along but Excluded – an Ethnographic Study of Supervised Group Exercise with Foreign Born Women."

Rönkkö agreed that survey that was made by Finnish TTA had many similarities as what she has received during her project. Rönkkö showed in her presentation biggest points that were received during her survey:

- What do we have to understand when we work with immigrants:
 - Myths in exercise
 - How to come part of sport community?
 - Why to stay?
 - What is the goal of the activity

When the immigrant is no more an immigrant in the group

Biggest points from survey are, that immigrants come in to hobby or in this case in sports for same reasons as everybody: Self-esteem - because of pleasure and competition. There is no need to act or work differently to make integration, just treat people as they are and make them feel comfortable. The importance of the first meeting and the instructor are important in this.

Second speaker was Jasmiina Gharieb, Executive Director of "Sports for everyone"- association. Jasmiina Gharieb made presentation of association. "Sports for everyone" was in beginning project that started from needs of city of Vantaa. Our table tennis club TIP-70 has been involved with this project from beginning. "Sports for everyone" is helping clubs to organize low threshold sports in Vantaa and gives small financial support for instructors/coaches of clubs or small help in the costs of sports facilities. This way participants can come in to sports even in situation where their financial situation is difficult. Association has big influence in city of Vantaa as contact and in moving people of immigrant background. In Vantaa city – approx. 250 000 inhabitants – the share of people speaking Finnish as a second language, is specially high, in some areas even over 40%.

In end of webinar we had three speeches of our immigrant athletes:

Ildiko Kadar came to Finland from Romania in 2007. Huy Chau came to Finland beginning of 2000 from Vietnam and Lauri Laane 2009 from Estonia. All athletes told importance of sports, how they have met new people and how important it was for them to become members of Finnish table tennis community. All three had small difficulties in beginning to find proper club, where they can play and develop their playing. Clubs work in different levels and all clubs are not able to take new members. All speakers told how important it was for them to have positive first meeting with the clubmembers and feeling that they really are welcome. They also agreed that their background didn't mean anything in this matter. All speakers felt, that sport is "universal language" which helps people to communicate and to become members of the community..

Webinar got positive feedback and participants agreed that it was eye-opening and we received good new information. The goals of people with a foreign background are the same as the native population, the joy of exercise and working with nice people in a positive environment. Integration happens best when you focus on these things and don't try to invent something new or different.



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Invitation

Sport and integration webinar

23.2.2023

Finnish and Estonian Table Tennis Associations are working together in an EU-Erasmus project and one theme of project is the integration of immigrants through exercise.

As part of project, we are organizing a webinar, which is open to everyone.

Time: 23.2.2023 from 18:00 to 21:00

Teams-meeting

The webinar will be held in English.

Contents of webinar:

1. Presentation of the project

2. Experts speeches

Eva Rönkkö

A recent dissertation at the University of Jyväskylä, "Being Along but Excluded – an Ethnographic Study of Supervised Group Exercise with Foreign Born Women."

Eva Rönkkö works at Kisakeskus sports institution.

Jasmiina Gharieb

Executive Director of Sporttia Kaikille - association.

3. Speeches by immigrant athletes

4. Open discussion

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