

## The Importance of Sport In Integrating Refugees Into Germany

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### ABSTRACT

Germany hosts about 7.4 million immigrants, the largest ethnic group (26.6%) is Turkish. In recent times, due to Iraq War in the 1990's and the start of the war in Syria in 2012, people fled from their homelands to Turkey. Some of them stayed, while others travelled to Greece in order to ask asylum in Europe. Nowadays, about 5 million Syrians live in Syrian neighbour countries; 3.4 million Syrians are settled in Turkey, 1 million in Lebanon, more than half a million in Jordan and a quarter of a million in Iraq. It has been reported that 150.000 Syrians settled in Northern African countries. The number of Syrians living in neighbouring countries is estimated to be about 41% of the original population. About 1 million of the Syrian population has been living in Europe, about a half of are settled in Germany, which means that Germany hosts in absolute numbers the highest number of Syrians refugees amongst all European countries. The high and sudden rise of the number of refugees in Germany caused some serious social problems and tensions in the society. Integration of migrants in German culture and society started to become an important issue of (local) authorities and institutions. In this context sport can be considered as an important instrument as sport generally does not seem to suffer from prejudices in the context of race, colour and language. In 1989 The Deutsche Associations of Olympic Sports with the initiative of the Federal Government started the so called 'Concretion and Integration through Sport' programme. This project aimed to inspire members of sports clubs and volunteers to encourage minority ethnic groups' participation in sport activities. Due to this increasing participation in multi ethnic groups, the community's social cohesion improved. The participation of sport members in multi ethnic groups encouraged and developed open mindedness to other cultures, intercultural awareness and mutual respect.

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Immigrants of Germany with numbers

Since 1953, The numbers of the Asylum requests in Germany, the conditions for the adoption of those who are subject to political persecution and seeking protection are regulated in accordance with Article 16 of the Constitution, in the Asylum Act and Article 60 of the Residence Act. The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees is the most competent institute to decide on asylum applications. The arrangements for residence during and after the asylum procedure are left to the responsibility of the federal foreigner central authorities.

Between 1953-2018 years; the total number of the acceptance was 5.7 million.

Between 1953-1989 0, 9 million people (16% of the whole asylum)

Between 1990 and 2018: approximately 4.8 million (84% of the asylum) were accepted.

In Germany, there were over 7.4 million immigrants with various nationalities who had not yet acquired German citizenship until 2003. According to statistical information; the largest group of these migrants was the Turks (26.6%). Turkish immigrants were followed by former Yugoslavians (14%) and Italians (8.4%).

With the effect of economic conjunctivitis, the need for an external labor force in order to turn the wheels in the factories and rebuilding of the destroyed Germany especially since the 1950s was the reason of such a high rate of migration after the Second World War. This force primarily being the Mediterranean countries of Italy, Greece and Turkey have been the reason of the choice of the German Labor Ministry. These were just considered as individuals who were supposed to work here for a certain period of time and then return their home, not as immigrants. This situation was adopted as a rotation model between Germany and the immigrant sending countries. However, it is seen that those who were in the position of guest workers preferred to stay in Germany and also took the family members living in Türkiye with them after the enactment of the family Reunion law and continued their lives in this country. Migrants who chose to live in familiar places or where their relatives live continued with the lifestyle of ghettoization, and observed to bring some problems related to adaptation. (Türkische Kultur Verein El Ele dergisi 2003 Neustadt- Alanya).

These days, the situation has reached to a very different size. As a result of the first Iraq war and then, especially the war that broke out in Syria, Iraqis and Syrians who left their countries tried to migrate first to Türkiye and then they scattered to different European countries via Greece. (Yılmaz, A. 2014).

Syrian civil war caused 13 million people to leave their homes. Half of the Syrians who left their homes migrated within the country and the other half migrated to neighbouring countries, Europe and North America. As of the end of 2017, Syrian refugees were mostly in Middle East countries and 1 million Syrians were in Europe. According to a comprehensive study by the PEW Research Company (PEW Research Center), 13 million Syrians left their homes as a result of the seven-year lasting Syrian civil war. This is the largest migration movement in recent decades. It is stated that 6 million of the displaced Syrians that is nearly the half of them are moved within their countries. Whereas; It is stated that 5 million Syrians live in neighbouring countries; 3 million 400 thousand in Turkey, 1 million in Lebanon, 660 thousand in Jordan and 250 thousand are living in Iraq. Syrian refugees migrated to neighbouring countries constitute the 41% of the displaced population. It is also reported that more than 150 thousand Syrian refugees have gone to North African countries.

In 2017 (according to information from the European Bureau of Statistics) about 704,600 people have applied for asylum to the 28 Member States of the European Union which is seen to be more than half of the asylum applications submitted in the same period in 2016. Most of them are from Syria (105,000), Iraq (51,700), Afghanistan (47,800) and Nigeria (41,000). Meanwhile, in 2017 (according to information from the European Bureau of Statistics) approximately 704,600 people have applied for asylum to the 28 European Union Member States which is slightly more than half of the asylum applications submitted in the same period in 2016. Most of the applicants came from Syria (105,000), Iraq (51,700), Afghanistan (47,800) and Nigeria (41,000) ([www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org)).

One million Syrian refugees settled in Europe are scattered as ; 530 thousand in Germany, 110 thousand in Sweden, 68 thousand in the Netherlands (Butter, 2018) and 50 thousand refugees in Austria. Asylum applications for almost all Syrians who applied for asylum in Europe in 2015 and 2016 are either accepted or results are expected. There are 100 thousand Syrian refugees in North America. In the US, 8 thousand and in Canada 52



thousand Syrians have temporary protection status (Refugee Rights Association). This route of migration and asylum is not only for Syrians. It has also been the case for a mass of refugees from Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan. Except for the refugees in Turkey that has reached to 3.5 million, quite a large number of people find opportunities outside of Turkey and threw themselves to the European adventure first from Greece to Balkan countries and then via Hungary, Slovakia and Austria they finally reach to Germany.

Between 1953 and 2018, 5.5 million people have been accepted in total. Of these, between 1953 and 1989: 0.9 million (16% of the total number of asylum seekers); between 1990 and 2018: about 4.8 million (84%) were accepted. As it is seen, 1.337.175 people in the period of 1990/94 during and after Iraq war and 2.180.587 people after the civil war which broke out in Syria between 2013/18 applied for asylum. According to the Federal Foreigners Centre (FYM), on June 30, 2018, approximately 1.1 million asylum seekers were living in Germany under different circumstances. This means a 22% of increase since the end of 2017. One in five people lives in Germany for at least six years. This is 631,000 refugees in accordance with the Geneva Refugee Convention. 476,649 refugees in 2015; 745,545 in 2016; 222,683 in 2017 and 185,853 in 2018 and a total of 1,630,853 people as of 2018 have entered Germany. (Kaynak. www.bamf.de). These refugees were registered in the digital environment when they entered into the country and then they were distributed to all Germany under the supervision of refugee reception centres in 16 states. Here, it is significant that the distribution of refugees from the same nationality is regulated as much as possible not to the same points. Meanwhile; considering the family union, the unification of core families (mother, father and children as a human right) was enhanced as much as possible.

## 2. The Contribution of Social-Cultural Projects to the Integration Of Migrants

The fact that Germany was a country of immigrants in Europe brought with it the difficulty of coexistence of different cultures and some problems of adjustment. These problems can be counted as language, religion, color of the skin, culture and so on. In order to overcome all these problems and keep them at the lowest level as much as possible, hundreds of projects have been applied throughout the country. It was not only Germany struggling with integration problems.

In the Netherlands, where immigrants began to be adopted in the 1960s, issues such as participation in the community (unemployment), ghettoization which hinders integration by living no space to intercultural communication and failure in education were reached to the highest level in 2000 and the arguments expanded to a national character with the Paul Scheffer's article titled 'Multicultural Drama', published in the national NRC newspaper, resulted in the adoption of the law on citizenship. (Scheffer, 2000). While strengthening the individual skills of migrants, project financing provides the opportunity to respond to specific challenges in the local environment through targeted measures. Here, the aim is to promote mutual acceptance between the migrants and the host community by actively supporting intercultural interaction, and to focus on the equal participation of newcomers to the society.

The projects focus on strengthening social competences, intercultural competence, civic engagement, parenting skills, violence and addiction, prevention of crime and better evaluation of leisure time through activities such as theater, music, dance and sport. Model projects were also developed to test appropriate procedures and concepts in integration studies.

### 2.1. A Brief History of Integration / Adaptation of Migrants Through Sports

Sports and integration are the duties of the society as a whole as it can make a significant contribution to people who have a migration background. Sport activities enhance opportunities more than any other field in the interaction, encountering and mutual understanding between the immigrant population and the host community. It prevents language and culture being an obstacle and brings people together for the same goal and strengthens



community sense. Sports Integration program was started in 1989 by the Federal Government to support the integration of migrants with organized sports.

The start of the "sports integration" program dates back about 30 years to the summer of 1989 when the program was first implemented in four federal states in Lower Saxony, Berlin, North Rhine-Westphalia and Hesse. Project name was "Sports for All - Migrants and Sports". One year later, in 1990, this program was extended to all ages in the states mentioned and in 1991 to new federal states. The integration with sport was integrated into the structures of the regional sports federations in 1993 and DOSB took over the project coordination at the federal level. Currently, the program is still under the leadership of DOSB.

The program was extended to target groups of migrants in 2001 to cope with the current situation of immigration, and the "Sport for All - Migrants and Sports" project became the "Sport Integration" program. The program was initially developed as a model project in a small number of states, then transferred to other federal states and improved there each time. In the national implementation of the program, the previously developed concept has been adapted to the existing formal structures and context-related aspects of the 16 autonomous regional sports federations and state sports youth. With the connection of the program to the national sports youth or national sport federation, it has already been observed to be the best method for adaptation to sport.

## 2.2. Integration/ Adaptation of migrants through sports and its Aim as of 2019

Since 2015, sport programs in Germany are open to all refugees and the aim of these projects is to motivate immigrant citizens to participate sports clubs and do regular sports, to introduce all possible sport activities as well as to motivate them to actively participate in club life. Sports activities have a significant mission to form the basis of integration and to enhance intercultural interaction of refugees so as not to be seen as an environmental and social problem in a controlled manner. The project that is called 'adaptation through sport' is supported with more than 2,100 sports clubs throughout Germany, especially focusing on the integration of immigrant citizens. The aim is to provide qualified sports activities on a regular basis and support the target groups in order to cope with their daily lives (home care, orientation in the neighborhood, or language consolidation measures) so as to reach the aim. This integration work is supported by intercultural competence measures such as 'Suitable for Diversity' for exercise teams and volunteers of clubs. The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees has promoted this program in 2017 with € 11.4 million (**Deutsche Olympische SportBund website [www.dosb.de](http://www.dosb.de)**). In the Netherlands, it is concluded that the contribution of sports events to integration is significant and studies in this area are also increased in terms of diversity (**Vluchtelingen en Asielzoekers in Nederland 2016**).

The Olympic Sports Association of Germany, Deutsche Olympische SportBund (DOSB), as stated earlier, decided to initiate "Adaptation and Integration with Sports" program with the attempt of the Federal Government in 1989. The aim is to active participation of all club management as active members as volunteers in order to attract migrants into the project. Doing sports together encourages mutual respect and love, adaptation and integration in time as well as aim to enhance awareness of open contact with people from other cultures through sports clubs and develop a healthy intercultural communication.

The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees has also decided to cooperate with sports clubs in Germany to create inclusive offers for people with an immigrant background and support the clubs. These projects are funded by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees and carried out by the German Olympic Sports Association (DOSB), the State Sports Association (Landessportbinden) and local sports clubs coordinately. These include a wide range such as about 500 sports clubs, courses, tournaments, holiday camps and other sports and leisure time activities. In addition to popular sports such as volleyball, handball, basketball or gymnastics, special course opportunities such as samba, boxing or wrestling has also been offered ([www.dosb.de](http://www.dosb.de)).



A scientific evaluation conducted between 2007 and 2009 showed that the program organized by associations is very successful with the inclusion of 38,000 migrants to the 'integration with sports program' in a year. More clearly; It was observed that the foreigners engaged in sports together with the Germans in the German Sport Clubs were more easily integrated. According to the scientific evaluation, each year, approximately 38,000 participants are attended to approximately 2,000 integrative sports groups. These studies were not sufficient, in spite of these data. In addition to the common language of the sport, it was inevitable and necessary to carry out promotional activities related to adaptation and integration accompanying sports.

Most of the sports clubs participating in these projects offer special integration services in addition to sports. These services included support for children's school homework and school communication, and different social and cultural areas. In short, it also solved intercultural communication problems at different levels of society.

The program of 'Integration with sports' has been continuously developed depending on the situation of individuals in Germany. In the following years, It has also been aimed to reach different audiences such as (migrant, muslim) women, the elderly and girls that sports associations are not so active currently. This program will also increase the willingness of migrants to carry out voluntary tasks and the willingness of the clubs to further expand the intercultural opening as well as the goals that are set. Training courses were organized for volunteers selected from immigrants and expert trainer documents were given to them so that they can educate the newly arrived migrants in their own language.

### 2.3. Sustainability of the Contribution of Sports in the Adaptation/ Integration of Migrants

The Integration with Sports program will be referred as the (IDS) Integration DurchSport program from now on. It is important in many aspects; It has been extended in DOSB management, in the sport associations of the states (Landessportbünden) and in the Landes-Sportjugenden (State Youth Associations) and in their coordination. Within the scope of IDS, a multicultural organization, half of which consisted of migrants, was formed with more than 1,100 trainers, with around 40,000 participants working together and approximately 500 base clubs in Germany were taken to this event. As a result, approximately 2,000 integrative sport groups have been established and audited throughout Germany. The content of the program is broad and includes a number of different program elements (as modules): In addition to the adaptation studies of the mentioned main clubs, the establishment of new integrative sport groups has been started.

Finally, as the integration with sports program is largely financed by sport organizations (clubs), the State also provides over 5.4 million Euros of money a year through federal funding.

Studies of sport federations and sport clubs on integration and the kind of studies that they will carry out based on the association and the club are specified in preliminary analysis and studies will be audited in this manner.

A basic organizational and structural difference is that adaptation (integration) study is to be at the level of association within an independent working department and to work in this way. This "Field Coordination" is especially established for association integration studies and is a full-time staff. The National and Regional Coordinators working there have to primarily deal with conceptual and coordination functions and give support by providing consultancy services in clubs. Professional staff built into association structures in this way characterize the integration work at the association level. As a result of this method, immigrants who grow in a multicultural society will grow by learning to live with a sense of mutual respect and equality, thus; communication will be more healthy, prejudices will disappear and integration will take place (Hofstede, 2015). Sport activities will be a nice investment for the future. It will contribute to integration of society being as strong as the ground of a building.

### 3. Results





As stated in the organization model in paragraph 2.3, the participation of migrants is guaranteed by the accessibility of the sporting activities. Pecuniary and manpower investment in sport activities is returning back to society exceedingly. While sport activities keep away the immigrants participating in them from the activities which will harm the public welfare, they decrease the expenditures to be made for security and the measures to be taken against the criminal activities as well as contributing to the peace of the society. Moreover; sport activities contribute to the strengthening of intercultural communication which can be seen as the cement of the society and to the development of interpersonal trust. The utilization of sports as a tool in order for migrants who have enforcedly left their own countries and live in a foreign country with fear and anxiety to have a normal life, will help immigrant participants to increase their self-confidence, reveal their quality and find ways to live in harmony with different groups. The results of all these projects being arguable and understanding the results of these successful projects that are held in the countries who make successful projects will be a good example and shed light for the new projects in this area. As a result; by making use of the examples in those countries that implement these practices, it is possible in Türkiye to organize such practices and provide the prevention of unnecessary violence, pushing away of some migrants from society and their radicalization. With sport projects, immigrants' adaptation to society will be encouraged which we can shed light on their chance to live in a social environment.

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