

2011 Sports Wrap-up

Perhaps many of the Center's friends and followers sometimes wonder how our team and the children they work with through the Alternative Education Club (AEC) from school 136 in Ferentari have managed to orchestrate so many activities this past year. The answer is simple. Policy Center remains engaged through its various sports-related projects which go a long way to aide in the process of education, instilling important values into the lives of many. The following report provides the reader with a concise overview of the Center's sports activities throughout 2011.

To encourage a year full of exciting sports activities, the Policy Center, in collaboration with the Romanian Basketball Federation, organised the FIBA-Europe Cup U15 in Bucharest between December 21st and 23rd 2010. The FIBA-accredited tournament gathered 136 children on the court and nearly 1000 people in the stands throughout the three days of competition. Some twenty children hailing from the ghetto of Ferentari in Bucharest attended the games. The tournament was covered by eight major publications and five television stations.



Little basketball players from six countries along with Virgil Stanescu saying no to racism

March 20, 2011 - Policy Center and its partners organized a friendly football match celebrating the International Day for Eliminating Racial Discrimination. The match took place at the Romanian national team's training center in Mogoșoaia and was organized by the Center, the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Romanian Football Federation, the National Council for Combating Discrimination (NCCD) and the Embassy of the Netherlands in Bucharest. The event was attended by over fifty representatives of Romanian civil society, the central administration, foreign diplomatic representatives, the media, key political figures

as well as the Romanian Football Federation. Representatives of the media were present at the match in large numbers, with four national television stations, six newspapers and three influential bloggers.



Romanian football, music and media stars playing football with children from Ferentari.

April 3, 2011 – Policy Center for Roma and Minorities joined UISP to organise Vivicitta - Europe’s largest simultaneous cross in 35 cities around the continent. Nearly 700 people attended the cross in Bucharest, running 3.6 km for anti-discrimination and equal rights. The event was covered by three TV stations, eight newspapers and more than 10 bloggers.



Active citizens of Bucharest lined up and ready to run down racism

May 11, 2011 - Policy Center’s football team, consisting of children aged 10 to 14 and led by their coach, Laurentiu Gheorghe – a former Roma footballer living in Ferentari, left for Budapest, Hungary to take part in the “Football for Opportunities Workshop” organized by the Polgar Foundation in a summer camp just outside the Hungarian capital. While children played football and trained under the supervision of Hungarian ex-international István Pisont, the conference participants assessed the activities of European organizations that utilise sports as a tool against discrimination, enhancing integration, or facilitating the advancement of socially disadvantaged groups. Hungarian media covered both the conference and the football workshop.



Children from Ferentari in a football camp near Budapest

Later that month, Valeriu Nicolae, President of Policy Center for Roma and Minorities and Carmen Tocala, President of the Romanian Basketball Federation signed an official partnership to codify their common activities, objectives and long term aspirations.

May 25-26, 2011 - The Policy Center and the Romanian Football Federation organized the “Grassroots Football Cup”, a perfect opportunity for the two football teams of the Alternative Education Club from the Elementary School no. 136 in Ferentari to show what they have learned during their weekly soccer practice. Policy Center for Roma and Minorities serves as a social platform that allows children to express their passion and dedication for sports. The Center used the opportunity to promote the message that racism and discrimination do not belong on the pitch. The tournament made the evening news at two national televisions and the sports pages of three central newspapers.



Children from Ferentari at Dinamo Football Camp – after 2nd place in “Grassroots Football Cup”

May 28, 2011 – Two of Policy Center’s basketball players teamed up with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ (MFA) basketball team for the 9th edition of the MFA Cup. More than 450 Romanian and foreign diplomats competed throughout three consecutive weekends in five sports, including football, basketball, badminton, tennis and ping-pong. All competitions took place at the Diplomats Club in Bucharest, where the Policy Center displayed anti-discrimination banners and distributed activity brochures. Cheered by a team of children from the AEC, the MFA and Policy Center’s team lost a dramatic final against the strong Serbian team and had to settle for second place this time. Nevertheless, the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Teodor Baconschi, congratulated his team and donated 500 RON for Policy Center’s sports activities. During the closing ceremony, the MFA also donated all the sports equipment used in the competition for use by the children involved in our projects. The sports events were covered by eight national televisions and more than twelve printed and online newspapers.



MFA & Policy Center’s team playing MFA Cup Final against Serbia

May 29, 2011 – Over 400 children, parents and volunteers took part in the International Children’s Day event organized by Policy Center for Roma and Minorities in collaboration with the office of Bucharest’s district five mayor, in the ghetto area on Livezilor Street in Bucharest. The event was dedicated to the children of Ferentari. Whether it was football, basketball, street dance, games along with the youth group “Jos Palaria”, face-painting or street drawings, the children showed those who were present that alternative education and sports are valuable and important for their current and future development.



Children dancing on the streets of Ferentari. Changing their environment and their destinies

June 20th, 2011 – Policy Center teamed up with the Romanian Basketball Federation to organise the National Mini-basketball League 2011 in Brasov. More than 100 teams and 1000 children aged from 7 to 15 years old played in the competition and around 6000 people attended the games in the tournament that lasted a month. The start of the event was covered by three television stations, seven newspapers and two sports-related newspapers.



Toddlers at National Minibasketball League in Brasov

In the first week of July, the Beyond Sports international organization announced that Policy Center for Roma and Minorities was shortlisted for the 2011 Beyond Sport Awards' "Best New Project" category, in recognition of its efforts to use sports as a social inclusion tool and for combating racism and discrimination. Across the list, 35 projects have been nominated covering 18 countries, from Afghanistan and Nepal to Sierra Leone and the West Bank, and using 22 different sports. These projects were chosen from close to 400 submissions from more than 125 countries that submitted applications to this year's awards ceremony. Policy Center for Roma and Minorities is the only non-profit that works in Europe that was nominated for the prestigious awards. For more info please visit: <http://www.beyondsport.org/the-awards/awards2011/entries/view.php?id=1251>



Policy Center spread the word about the children of school 136 at Beyond Sports Awards in Cape Town.

June 28, 2011 – Policy Center for Roma and Minorities and the foundation Unione Italiana Sport per Tutti (UISP) organized in Rome the conference, “Piloting Innovative Methods for Social Inclusion Through Sports”. The conference was moderated by Valeriu Nicolae, President of Policy Center for Roma and Minorities, and focused on issues such as Roma social inclusion and limiting racism through sport. Event guests included Mr. Jan Jarab (Regional Representative of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights - UN Human Rights Office in the European Union), Mr. Piara Powar (Executive Director of the FARE network – Football Against Racism in Europe) and representatives of the Italian Football Federation and the National Office for Anti-discrimination in Italy (UNAR).



Valeriu Nicolae (PCRM), Piara Powar (FARE), Jan Jarab (UN) and Michele Uva (FIGC) at Mondiali Antirazzisti opening conference in Rome.

On July 5th - Policy Center’s team and twenty children from the Ferentari ghetto travelled to Castelfranco Emilia in Italy to take part in UISP’s project – Mondiali Antirazzisti (Anti-Racist

World Cup). Again, it was all about sport, with Policy's teams playing volleyball, football and basketball 8-10 hours per day for a period of five days. The project was a great opportunity for the children to play with other children and adults from around the world, as no less than 60 countries were represented at the Mondiali Antirazzisti. For Policy Center's team members, the project was also an opportunity for networking, showing the world what we do and find out what others do, to learn and exchange experiences.

More info here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PVFTJJFzHiU>



Children from Ferentari attending Mondiali Antirazzisti in Bosco Albergati (Italy)

July 27, 2011 – Policy Center for Roma and Minorities and the British Embassy staff in Bucharest chose to celebrate “One Year To Go” to the London Olympics with the Roma community in Ferentari by organizing a street party where Romania’s Olympic medallists and sports champions took part in demonstrations and competitions with local children. There could not have been a better demonstration of the London 2012 motto that ‘Sport Is For All’. Musician Damian Drăghici, Grammy award winner in 2006, Marian Simion, former boxing world champion, Ionela Țârlea and Violeta Beclea, Olympic medallists, Virgil Stănescu, captain of the basketball national team and the street-dance band, Trouble Crew, were among the participants at the event.

See for yourself at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qARkb07U9jM&feature=related>.



Martin Harris – UK’s ambassador in Romania – tackling Laurentiu Gheorghe – football coach working with Policy Center – on the streets of Ferentari

As a result of the event in Ferentari and feedback from one of the most important sports figures in Romania, two children from the AEC were invited to participate, free of charge, at Virgil Stanescu’s basketball camp – Basquareball. The week of hard practice didn’t scare them, and now they are players of Artesania Basketball Club in Bucharest, playing in the city’s mini-basketball competition every week.



Claudiu and Nicoleta from Ferentari got along well with the other children as they all learned from the best – Virgil Stanescu

The partnership between Policy Center and the Romanian Basketball Federation took two steps further when the Federation organised two European Basketball Championships for Women U18 and U16 in Arad and Oradea, Romania. Throughout these events, held between August 4th and August 21st, anti-discrimination, anti-racism and anti-violence messages were on display in the gyms hosting the competition and on the player’s t-shirts, reminding all those involved that sports are about inclusion, about “togetherness”. The

European Championships were covered European-wide by more than ten televisions and twelve newspapers.



U18 Romanian Basketball National Team in Oradea, before the European Championship

The second week of August was a time for fun and education for twenty children from the AEC at School no 136 in Ferentari. Between August 7th and August 12th the children studied and played sports in a summer camp at Naparis Guesthouse in Moroieni (Dâmbovița County). By involving them in sports activities (archery, darts, bowling), recreational activities (educational puzzles, building and creativity games) and school lessons (rotating participation to Romanian classes, mathematics, geography, etc.), the purpose of the camp was to develop children's social abilities. Also, by choosing precision sports, we aimed at enhancing their capacity for concentration and making them understand how important concentration is in everything they do.



Children from Ferentari at summer camp in Moroieni

All through the summer, the Center collaborated closely with Sport Arena, the organizers of Sport Arena Streetball , in order to bring anti-racism and anti-discrimination messages closer to streetball fans in Romania. The competition of this year was organised in five tournaments starting in May and ending in September and it brought 4000 players on the streetball courts and 20.000 people in the stands. The competition was called “Sport Arena Streetball Challenge NO RACISM! NO VIOLENCE!” and banners with anti-discrimination messages were displayed on every court. All participants received t-shirts with anti-racism and anti-violence messages and Policy Center’s brochures calling to action all active citizens. The five events of 2011 were covered by ten television stations and more than thirteen printed and online newspapers.



Players and fans on the courts of Sport Arena Streetball Challenge

October 1, 2011 – Policy Center entered on the volleyball court through a partnership with the professional volleyball team Dinamo-Bucharest. A group of twenty children from the AEC has a special place in the stands of Dinamo’s gym at every game they played in Bucharest. Anti-racist and anti-violence banners are displayed and the players’ t-shirts wear Policy Center’s logo and anti-discrimination messages. A special connection has been made between the children and Dinamo’s players as the young fans cheered for their favorite players and sometimes received presents from players at the end of the games. Some of the children will start volleyball practice with the club’s cadets teams in 2012.



Dinamo's volleyball players in action in the CEV Cup.

On October 31st - The Center's partnership with the Romanian Football Federation went further by involving all eighteen teams playing in the Romanian 1st League Championship in a simultaneous denouncement of racism and violence on the stadiums. At the start of every match of Day 12 in the Romanian League I, both the players and the referees wore t-shirts and held banners with Policy Center's logo "No Racism! No Violence!" in front of 85.000 people in the stands and close to one million in front of their TV sets.



The players and the referees wearing anti-discrimination messages at U Cluj – Dinamo match on November 30.

Following up on the friendly match with public figures in March, which was an awareness-raising and media success, Policy Center, the RFF and the MFA organized a second event of its kind on October 30, 2011 at the same location as the first - the Romanian National Team training center in Mogosoia, Bucharest. Among those who came to Mogosoia were famous Romanian ex-football players Daniel Prodan, Jean Vlădoiu, Adrian Bumbescu, Gheorge Muțescu, Florentin Petre and Ionel Ganea, as well as personalities from sports and entertainment, famous TV presenter Dani Oțil, musician Damian Drăghici, singer Bodo, director Cătălin Mitulescu, ex-world boxing champion Marian Simion. The match was also attended by influential bloggers Marius Matache and Cezare Vasile, our staff, volunteers and the children playing in the football team at the Alternative Education Club. The friendly

match was news for three national television stations and seven printed and online newspapers.



Romanian football, music and TV stars playing football with children from Ferentari.

The month of November brought two new and important opportunities to enhance the Center's sports activities. Both Mr. Mircea Sandu, the President of the Romanian Football Federation and Ms. Elisabeta Lipa, the President of CS Dinamo signed official partnerships to host and encourage the good practices developed together by their organizations and Policy Center for Roma and Minorities.

We believe these events have major importance in both motivating the children and raising awareness about the problems they are facing in their communities. But our projects don't stop here. Every week, Policy Center for Roma and Minorities organizes trainings that are meant to keep the children off the streets and offer them a sense of discipline. Also, we try to get the big names of Romanian sports to become actively involved in the children's education and to become their mentors and role models, a very important alternative to the negative role models children look up to in the ghetto. Each week, Marian Simion, boxing ex-world champion and a Roma ethnic, trains a group of ten children eager to be the next boxing stars. Laurentiu Gheorghe, former professional football player and also a Roma ethnic, trains two teams of fifteen children to make them the best football players they can be. Every Saturday, Valeriu Nicolae and Alexandru Balaci, two staff members of Policy Center welcome 30 to 40 children to basketball trainings and Paul Gheorghe and the Trouble Dance Crew train a group of twelve to become street-dance champions. The little dancers go by the name of Born for Trouble (B4T) and have already put on great shows but, since dancing is only half sport and the other half - art, you can find more info on this topic at Dancing Report 2011.

Sports related activities in 2011 were numerous. However, research work conducted through the MIMoSA project (Migrants' Inclusion Model through Sport for All) sought to build and strengthen a trans-European network between three different levels of actors involved in

the field of sports (sport associations, national and local authorities, universities – a total of 14 partners across Europe), with the purpose of sharing a methodology as a common basis for the future work of the network. Another objective of the project is to elaborate, following a process of in-depth exchange of experiences and assessment of best practices, a model of social inclusion and empowerment for migrants and other groups (refugees, asylum seekers, Roma, women refugees), based on sports related initiatives, both mainstream and marginal.

PCRM attended two meetings, in Copenhagen and Bucharest respectively, where it contributed to the development of guidelines on how sports can facilitate the social inclusion of migrants and Roma.

The project aims to use sport as a tool for greater social integration of foreign communities in Europe and also to study and develop new practices to be proposed to the European Commission as models of integration.

