

Sport as a tool in socialization and skills development of people with autism

April 8, 2020 - By Nikola Tadić

At the beginning of 2020, the Croatian Union of Association for Autism started a project funded by the Erasums + program at the European Union level. The project entitled "Sport as a tool in the socialization and skills development of people with autism" is run by the project coordinator Federazione Trentina della Cooperazione from northern Italy. The project was applied in the area: Erasums +: Sport, Small Collaborative Partnerships.

In addition to the applicant and project manager, the organization Asociacion Autismo Sevilla, Fundacion Escuela Andaluza de Economia Social, Associazione di promozione sociale e sportive-dilettantistica NuoveRotte and our Croatian Union of Association for Autism are also participating in the project as partners.

The aim of the program is to exchange knowledge between partners from Spain, Italy and Croatia on the topic of including people with autism in sporting activities, the benefits of such activities, sharing examples of good practice and finally, compiling a brief analysis of available services and their impact on people with autism .

Our project, which officially started on 01.01.2020., was set off by serious planning in a virtual form. The multinational team started the project with a series of online meetings, exchanging ideas, defining meeting dates and creating a common project logo. Each of the organizations presented some of their good practices to share and test during the first meeting planned in June 2020 in Zagreb. In March, the Croatian Union of Association for Autism prepared a tour schedule for colleagues from Spain and Italy, which included a trip to Nedelišće, to our member association "Pogled", with the aim of presenting their exceptional "Socialization and sports-recreational program". In addition, a meeting was planned with representatives of Zagreb tennis club Travnjak, which has been implementing a tennis program for children with autism spectrum disorders for many years.

Our latest online meeting, that held place on March 26, was in a slightly different atmosphere. The meeting began with a question addressed to the representative of our Association, yet not related to the organization of events, but "Are you all ok after the earthquake we read about in our media?". In addition, the current pandemic has forced the team to postpone the first meeting of project participants planned for June 2020 in Zagreb, to a still undefined date later this year.

Yet, despite this unpredictable and misfortunate situation, which we, naturally, couldn't have counted on when drawing up project implementation in June last year, work on this project will continue. Until the first meeting, Croatian Union of Associations for Autism will present the award-winning program of our member association "Pogled" from Nedelišće and the exceptional work of Tennis club "Travnjak" through its website and Facebook page. We hope this crisis will pass quickly so that face-to-face meetings can replace our current virtual gatherings.