



INTERVIEW WITH SASKA BENEDICIC TOMAT, HEAD OF PROJECTS ISCA, ABOUT GRASSROOTS SPORT DIPLOMACY

IRIS: First of all, can you explain how did you have this idea to work on this very new concept ? Where did that come from ?

SASKA BENEDICIC TOMAT (HEAD OF PROJECTS, ISCA): In ISCA, we see it as our role to inform ourselves and identify the broader societal trends of relevance to the physical activity and grassroots sport agenda. And then to transform that insight into meaningful insights, opportunities and tools for our members and the wider sector. The Grassroots Sport Diplomacy is no exception : We have seen how diplomacy has been shifting towards public and cultural diplomacy, and most recently sport diplomacy. And we were seeing how sport diplomacy in some circles was interpreted to mean something of less value to our sector, the grassroots. And so we decided to work on defining and developing concepts of sport diplomacy that is of direct relevance – we dubbed that Grassroots Sport Diplomacy »

What does this concept mean for you ?

It means a new perspective on the societal value of grassroots sport, and therefore an opportunity for grassroots sport to demonstrate value, engage in new partnerships, and reach wider objectives.

Why is it important for ISCA but also for everyone to work and to explore this way ?

It is important because grassroots sport trends are international, not national or local. As a consequence, we should use the power of citizens' engagement in physical activity and grassroots sport as a door opener, and driver for international collaboration, to break down barriers between nations and citizens.

According to you, what are the next steps in the GSD process ?

We want to deploy the concept with more stakeholders, test it, refine it and continue to make the definitions and tools more precise and valuable in an ongoing, iterative process. GSD is now standing on its own feet. It is time to walk, and to run with it !