



INTERVIEW WITH TONI LLOP, PARTNER DIRECTOR OF EUROFITNESS, ABOUT GRASSROOTS SPORT DIPLOMACY

IRIS - Can you present your organisation and why did you decide to get involved in Grassroots sport diplomacy?

TONI LLOP (PARTNER DIRECTOR OF EUROFITNESS) - UBAE (with the brand name Eurofitness) is a leading promoter and provider of sport and fitness in Catalonia and beyond, implementing physical activity programmes both in the rest of Spain and in other European countries. It is a non-governmental and non-profit organisation established in the 1980s to address the lack of resources and activities provided at that time by the Municipality of Barcelona to encourage people to take up sport and physical activity. In the beginning, the activities organised were focused on primary schools where no sporting activities were offered after the lessons. Groups of families in different districts of the City of Barcelona took the initiative to organise these after school activities themselves. Finally, in the late 1980s the leaders of these initiatives decided to join forces in a common movement. It was called UBAE. By this time, the target group was not only children and youth, but adults and elderly people as well. In the late 1990s, UBAE took on the challenge to manage a public sport facility with the aim to promote and develop the activities which had been developed in the schools, and open the activities up to other citizens. UBAE was recognised by the Municipality of Barcelona for being the first private entity managing a public sport facility (built by the Municipality) in the city. Nowadays, UBAE is an umbrella organisation with 21 members and 400 employees, most of them youth leaders. It has also created a brand called Eurofitness. UBAE currently operates 13 facilities that are used for sport and physical activity, including UBAE clubs.

UBAE has been a regular and active participant in more than 10 European projects with its partners, including ISCA. UBAE also runs its own training centre where official studies related to sports and physical activity are provided for young people. The studies are called "High degree -EQF 4th- in physical training and fitness", "High degree -EQF 4th- Socio-sports education and animation" and "Degree -EQF 3rd- in Physical Activities in the natural environment". This model has now been deployed with organisations in Colombia and Mexico. UBAE has worked with several other Latin American countries on the EU-funded project "Youth on the MOVE", enhancing volunteering and youth capacities in Europe and Latin America. Since 2017, UBAE owns a Business School which provides between others a University -EQF 5th- degree based on Sport and fitness Sciences and Technologies.



Can you describe your pilot action? How did you decide to work on this specific matter?

The Associació Esportiva Ciutat Vella (AECV) is an active member of the UBAE Foundation. Its main goal is combating social exclusion through sport activities. The promotion of an active life aimed at the youngest population as well as the elderly is one of the main pillars on which the AECV focus its social, cultural and educational work.

The AECV promotes the sports practice and physical activity as an educational means to offer comprehensive education for children and young people. It tries to ensure that all children and young people enjoy sports activities that are appropriate to the needs of these groups, at the same time as AECV tries to solve the problems that could prevent and limit the access to physical activity practice due to the social and economic features of their neighborhood.

Through the culture of effort as an educational and social cohesion tool, the entire team of educators, instructors and managers work together in the transmission of principles and values such as effort, respect, cooperation, fair play and teamwork.

The entity works in a special environment in the city of Barcelona, the district of Ciutat Vella. In the area of El Raval 50% of its 102,000 inhabitants were born out of Spain. From these, 18.9% are from Pakistan, 16.9% are from Philippines and 12.2% are from Bangladesh. At the end, 128 nationalities live together in this part of the city.

In this matter, sport diplomacy plays a very important role in the implementation of the programs and specially the training of the instructors and leaders, who will probably will develop their professional career in other countries or in a multicultural environments.

What are the main results?

Our project has contributed to the development of policy by creating a teaching course for multicultural groups who don't usually have the opportunity or means, offering them the chance to study and further their education in sport. What we offered was not just the chance to practice sport every week but to give them the opportunity to improve their life by studying something that will help their future. The course included different aspects including how to teach and communicate with youngsters in a diplomatic way. This project can hopefully be used in other multicultural areas over a widespread of cities.

The achieved results have been very good. Thanks to the implementation of the project, youth from different communities have been trained and empowered as physical activity leaders. As a key topic of the project, the training has been implemented as a tool, to integrate different origin communities through physical activity. Trained leaders are the



key actors of future dissemination, thanks to their prescription and recommendations, not only by engaging potential participants in sport activities but encouraging community leaders in getting know how for implementing sport activities and physical activity promotion campaigns. The implementation of the project has increased the social and community recognition of the Associació Esportiva Ciutat in the area where it is based and has shown the competences and capabilities of the entity in front of local and regional authorities.

What will be the next steps?

Due to the need of trained instructors and sports leaders and thanks to the provided certifications, the local sports associations will be able to employ and involve youth leaders as basic level trainers, specially focused on reaching and engaging members from different communities.

The design of the content and curricula of the course will allow to repeat it the next years, thanks to the commitment and trust of the Municipality of Barcelona.

How can this project inspire other ideas, project, stakeholders not only in Barcelona or Spain, but also abroad?

Our project is a good example because we have reached out to multicultural groups in a different way, giving them the chance to complete a course free of charge, providing them a better future in sport and the opportunity to further their prospects. At the same time, we aimed at teaching them how to use diplomacy while teaching and practicing sport. It is a way of helping these youngsters to communicate effectively amongst themselves.

We involved stakeholders like the Department of sports of the Government of Catalonia the expert teacher of the training center Eurofitness Edu, the professional staff of the Associació Esportiva Ciutat Vella and the Eurofitness Perill Sport Center which has offered its training areas for hosting some of the practical lessons and the Municipality of Barcelona

In the end, we created a training tool and a training methodology for young trainers and local sport organizations. This tool can be exported and implemented around the world.