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EPMIMT Project: Fundación Del Fútbol Profesional, Spain - Street League Evaluation

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Brief

EPMIMT Project

Fundacion Del Futbol Voetbal, Spain – Street League Evaluation

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1.0 Introduction and Project Background

Fundación Del Fútbol Profesional is responsible for monitoring the effects of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives of the public limited sports companies and football clubs in the First and Second Division of Spanish professional football;

The prime objective of the Foundation is the promotion, advancement and development of, and research into, activities relating to leisure and the sport of football.

While the typical local football grassroots offer in Spain does include elements of developing personal and social skills, it was acknowledged that there is a particularly strong focus on preparing the young people in a more technical (football development) manner;

Community football is not a term we use in Spain. We talk about grassroots football clubs, these work with kids in the more technical way. They offer soccer so they can play in the leagues. There are thousands of grassroots football clubs in Spain, but they are quite technically oriented, offering specific leagues to prepare themselves. They don't introduce social issues to develop social responsibility. [Elena Montoro]

There are 42 professional clubs in Spain, 30 of which have foundations attached and the Fundación Del Fútbol Profesional coordinate and work with the foundations. The foundations deliver youth, sport and play programmes and work across a spectrum of CSR budgets, “*Barcelona has a huge budget compared to the smaller clubs, but they all are trying to improve the social responsibility*”. [Elena Montoro] There is a real desire for the foundations to promote this area of their work.

As such there is great interest in the concept of the Street League in Spain. There is an increasing desire for the club foundations to move away from trying to develop young people into professional players and to create a more stable programme of sport for development. Across the individual club foundations there are few stable, reliable sport for development programmes, with specific targeted programmes being prevalent. These programmes have very defined goals such as “*a league or a programme for disabled young people*”. Nevertheless, several of the clubs do have specific targeted programmes aimed at engaging young people at risk of social exclusion. As such, our Spanish partners were particularly interested in learning and developing good practice from their involvement across this collaborative European partnership:

“We found it interesting to get together with other European leagues to find a project to help us better understand different models for social football, best practice and measurements.” [Elena Montoro].

The team already understood football's power as a motivational tool for young people and this made the project attractive to them and their delivery partners. Across Spain there are identified communities with social inclusion problems and the team acknowledge that there are huge gaps between the socially oriented NGOs (including the youth and education departments of the local councils) and the professional football clubs. They see this programme as instrumental at bringing these two sectors together:

“They are two very separate worlds and this type of project can bring them together as they have the methodology, beneficiaries, experience and know-how and to work

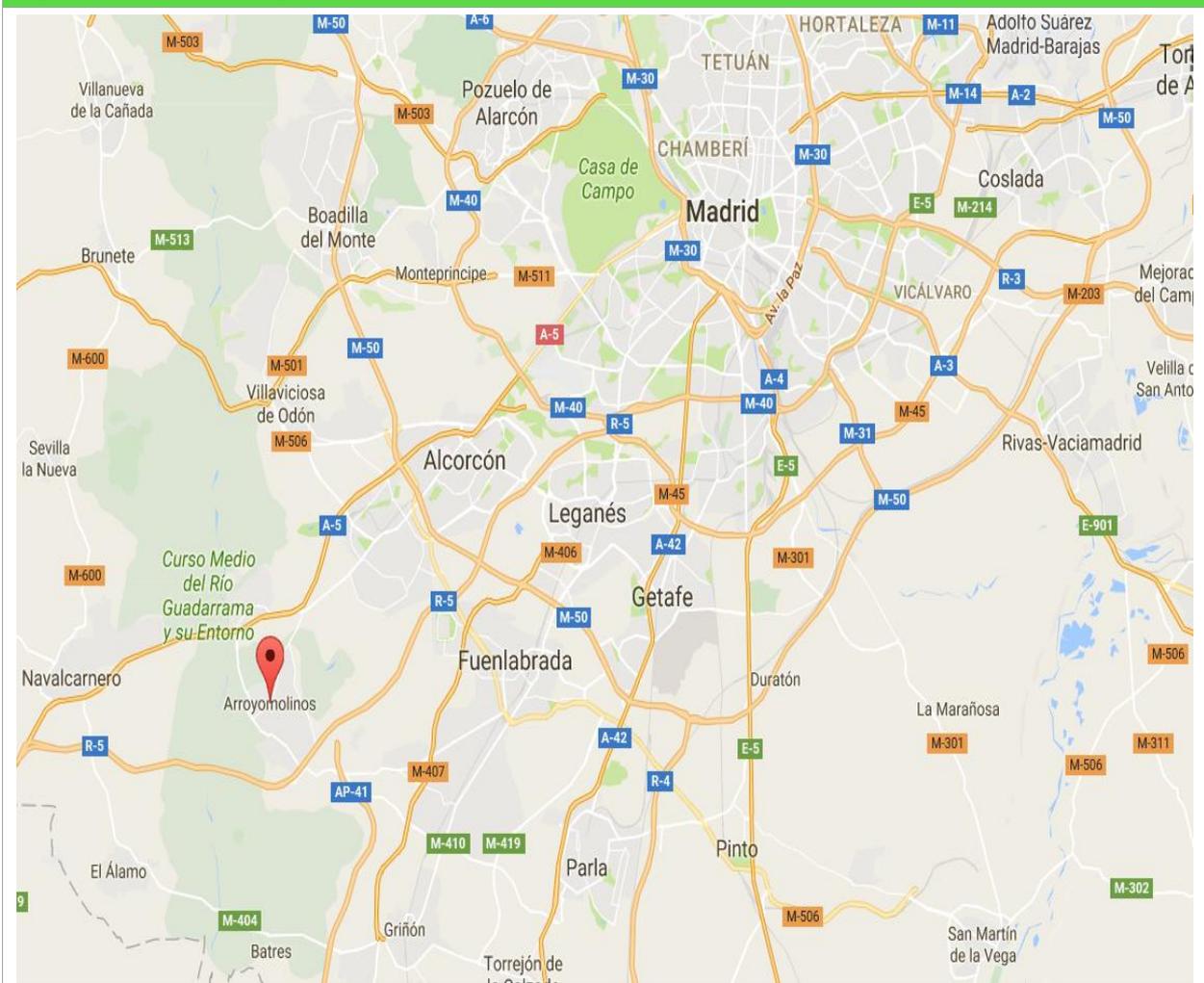
with people with social inclusion and we have the power of football as a tool”[Elena Montoro].

2.0 Overview of the Street League Programme

2.1 Partnerships, Recruitment and Referrals

A decision was taken to focus delivery on the municipality named Arroyomolinos which has the lowest mean age in Spain. Set 45km South-West of Madrid, it is a relatively new town.

Figure 1: Location of Arroyomolinos



Over a ten year period the population has grown from 7,000 inhabitants to almost 30,000. Many young families have been rehoused in the area and due to the large proportion of young people there is a lack of educational services and a desperate need for an increase in school places. Official data illustrates that in total 5.16% of the under 16 population of Arroyomolinos were described as foreign (extranjera)¹. The Foundation do not record ethnicity data, which appears to reflect a wider sensitivity felt in Spain around the issue of ethnic origin which appears to be subsumed by a notion of racial appearance:

¹ www.ine.es

“We can’t ask ‘ethnicity’ we don’t have it in passport or ID. We guess because of surnames or we can ‘see’ but we cannot ask about religion or ethnicity. It’s not very usual.” [Elena Montoro].

Two methods of identifying participants were adopted including direct referrals from Social Services and self-referral through schools. With the referrals, the Foundation asked Social Services to identify the young people at risk of social exclusion. Following their identification Foundation staff contacted the parents directly and presented the programme to them. The self-referrals came following presentations made at the local high schools, specifically to pupils across the 2nd to 4th grade years (13-15 years olds).

Following this process of recruitment 6 teams were created, spread across the town of Arroyomolinos. The areas they represented were identified following discussions with Social Services specifically to identify areas where there were high youth populations, little youth delivery and young people at risk of exclusion.

A total of 79 participants were registered, 14 of whom were female and 65 male. The age breakdown was as shown in Table 1, with 13 and 14 year olds making up almost half of the total group.

Table 1: Age of Participants		
Age	Number	Percentage
Unknown	6	7.6
3	1	1.3
10	3	3.8
11	7	8.8
12	13	16.5
13	18	22.8
14	20	25.3
15	8	10.1
16	3	3.8
Total	79	100

All participants live in area code 38939, around the area of Arroyomolinos.

2.2 Fixtures, Training and Delivery Profile

The Foundation organised a kick off meeting with young people and families at the Teatro Auditorio CIAJ at 6pm on the 23rd February 2017. Around one hundred people attended the town hall presentation, with Views monitoring data illustrating that 43 young people were in attendance. At this stage, the project was already established so there were some promotional pictures available to present to the community in order to generate interest.

Following on from the kick-off event, the first workshop took place. It was at this workshop where ice breaker games were introduced to allow the young people and coaches to get to know one another and form the six teams.

Since the kick-off event there have been 33 distinct sessions delivered between 7th March 2017 and 9th May 2017.

The team developed a blog to communicate and promote the league with the young people [#StreetLeague] and the league was promoted through the LaLiga website;

<http://www.laliga.es/fundacion/noticias/la-fundacion-de-laliga-lanza-el-proyecto-streetleague-en-arroyomolinos>

<http://www.laliga.es/fundacion/noticias/la-fundacion-de-laliga-clausuro-el-proyecto-street-league-en-arroyomolinos>

Table 2 shows the activities and participant attendances recorded in Views.

Table 2: Delivery Profile		
Session Type	Number of Sessions Delivered	Total Participant Attendances
Training	12	35
Match	15	186
Workshop	6	86
Total	33	307

The teams trained in three open public spaces, referred to as ‘town hall square’; ‘playing court’ and ‘Carrefour’, a playing area next to the central supermarket. The young people selected these areas during a ‘walk through town’ with their coaches.

Figure 2: Participants training at Town Hall Square



The six teams trained across the three sites on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. The teams were mixed in ethnicity and gender across the 11-15 age groups. However, some gender considerations emerged with coaches explaining that: *“Some couldn’t have mixed gender due to cultural issues.”* One father of Moroccan decent had expressed concerns that his daughter was playing football with boys. As such the Foundation invited other girls to be part of the team.

2.3 Fair Paly Points System and Community Captains

At the time of our visit the project had not implemented the Community Captain element of the programme as they had reservations due to the newness of the relationships across the teams and the potential effect it may have had on team dynamics:

“Difficult to find the balance between competitiveness and the necessary cooperation. So if we introduce captain to introduce competitiveness amongst the teams..... Think this could bring a bit of tension.” [Elena Montoro].

Whilst they hadn’t ruled the idea out, they were looking at a balanced way to introduce the idea to the teams.

Data captured in Views illustrates that the Fair Play concept worked well in Spain. The team reported that no red or yellow cards were issued at any of the matches.

Table 3: Fair Play Scores		
Fair Play Area	Yes	No
Home Venue Clean	15	0
Away Team on Time	15	0
In Kit	14	1
Respect for other Team	14	1
Drinks for Away Team	4	11
Home Violent Conduct Count	No data	No data
Away Violent Conduct Count	No data	No data

2.4 Educational Workshops

The key programme partner was the Department of Youth and Education of the municipality of Arroyomolinos who helped with the referral of young people. Whilst all football coaching was delivered by Foundation coaches, specialised youth work trainers were hired to deliver the educational workshops as the Foundation do not employ specific youth work trainers.

All of the educational sessions were held in the Youth and Education Department of the local Council. The main group composed of ‘migrants’ and the group felt that inter-cultural learning was an ideal subject to focus on. The general concept emerged from the idea that these young people experience similar issues associated with a lack of community cohesion and social inclusion. The teams discussed subjects such as ‘how I build my identity’, ‘how we can live together (make the teams come together)’ and ‘my added value in the world’.

The workshop topics were pre-determined by the Foundation and the specialists as delays in commencing the project and associated time constraints on the pilot had

prohibited any consultation with the young people around the subject areas.

The educational workshops focused upon 'intercultural advantage' and the participants completed exercises on the following issues:

- Risks and opportunities of living together in a diverse world (construction of individual and collective identities)
- The impact of one's actions: the value of myself in society
- Basic tools to take advantage of diversity (build an idea around social action)

The workshops were delivered collectively to the teams, with the idea is to get the teams together and allow them to feel they have participated in a wider common programme.

2.5 Social Action Projects

At the time of the case-study visit the project had not engaged with the social action element of the programme although they had introduced the general concept to the teams:

"Trying to give the participants the idea that they can do something else other than playing football so they will have to do volunteering and social action to gain some points for the league. Have the impression that they haven't 'got the idea yet. They are quite young, not got the skills and attitudes. They are not engaged in volunteering, so don't understand the concept." [Elena Montoro].

As such, the team saw the educational workshops as a tool to motivate the young people to develop their social action. Ultimately one social action project was developed, which linked directly to the topics covered in their educational workshop. Titled 'Graffiti Painting for Diversity' the project involved the young people designing and spray painting six graffiti messages onto the ground of the community space, Town Hall Square, where they played. The messages read:

- El juego en EQUIPO aporta más (TEAM play brings added value)
- En el deporte, siempre RESPETO (At Sport, allways RESPECT)
- Con JUEGO LIMPIO ganamos todos (with FAIR PLAY we all win)
- En el juego todos somos IGUALES (in the playground, we are all EQUAL)
- No importa de dónde vienes, sin o a dónde vamos (It does not matter where do you come from, but where we all go together)
- Tu fortaleza es tu mente, no tus músculos (the strength is in your mind, not in your muscles).

The Foundation team viewed this as a successful element of the project:

"The social action has been a very well valued element of the project by participants, as they feel they have left their own footprint in different places."

Figure 3: Social Action



Since completing the Street League delivery, local townhall representatives have demonstrated a desire to develop further social action programmes based on the Street League model. The Foundation are keen to explore this idea.

3.0 Conclusions and Reflections

3.1 What Worked

3.1.1 The Football Matches and Fair Play System

The football matches worked well as the young people were motivated to play football, the sessions were well attended across all of the teams which was seen as an indicator of success. More importantly the delivery coaches reported that the Fair Play scheme “*keeps them motivated to help each other to gain points*” [Felipe. Football Coach]. The Fair Play element introduced the concept of sharing as well as an appreciation that success could only be achieved through a balanced approach to playing the game, characterized by respect and fair play.

As we found in Ireland, this development is consistent with the wider interest in behaviour change models or ‘nudge’ theory, which suggests that positive reinforcement and indirect suggestions can achieve voluntary acceptance of societal norms or new policy directions by otherwise non compliant individuals and groups.²

Telling them that the team leading the classification is not the one winning the matches is important. [Elena Montoro]

² Thaler, R. & Sunstein, C. (2008) *Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth and Happiness*

3.1.2 Inclusion and Acceptance

In Spain, possibly due to the cultural importance of football ability and skill, it was noted that the league offered many young people a unique opportunity to be involved in football in a non-intimidating, overtly competitive arena. The fair play system acted as a leveller and as such the young people, regardless of their ability level, were not only given an opportunity but were very keen to practice and gain valuable football skills.

The community coach pointed out that many of the players on the street league teams were not deemed good enough to play in other local leagues and were therefore personally motivated to use the training sessions to gain skills, have the opportunity to play and have fun. One young participant we spoke to at the town hall training session, reiterated this;

“I’m not a member of any other football club. My main interest is to get to know different people and know what others can do.” [Young Male. 15. Mixed Ethnicity]

The delivery coaches identified two central outcomes from the model. First, the programme reintroduced the concept of fun and allowed the young people to play on the street without having being overly-competitive or focused on technique or ability;

“They rediscover the joy of playing, as there is a lack of play in childrens lives now.” [Felipe. Football Coach]

Another young person we spoke with corroborated this view:

“My main issue is fun. There is no pressure of being watched or winning matches but just going on the street and having fun.” [Young Male. 14. White]

The second, was the development of social skills which have the potential to be embedded in the young people’s lives beyond the lifetime of the project:

“Mid-term they may be more aware and conscience of sharing and the positive values of sport.” [Felipe. Football Coach]

The central team also reported the positive impact the programme had upon their participants, particularly around relationship development, with a hope that there would be a longer term effect upon academic performance;

Feedback from families is that participants have improved their relationships with peers at schools. This improvement may help them to better integrate at school live and eventually motivate them for a better school performance. [Adriana Orbea]

3.1.3 Merchandise and Branding

In Spain, football and La Liga has major currency with young people. As such the provision of branded kits for players, along with training from coaches wearing official shirts and using official balls and equipment, were all contributing factors to the initial and sustained engagement of the players, as one of the organisers commented:

The LaLiga kits! The kids love the football and want the kits. This motivated them to be involved. [Elena Montoro]

3.1.4 Educational Workshops

In Spain, the educational workshops centred around the issues of intercultural ties and community cohesion in the surrounding neighbourhoods. These workshops prompted the young people to design their social action art project around the issues of diversity and discrimination in their area. One of the young people we spoke with was clearly affected by the workshops and had a shift in his outlook on cultural difference:

"I liked the workshops and enjoyed it. I'm conscious of how differences are constructed but how everyone is equal." [Young Male Participant. Age 14]

It was encouraging to note that this young person admitted that while he 'knew' half of the team previously, he did not class them as friends and had no real relationship with them. He saw the outcomes of his involvement as being the enjoyment of playing and getting to know the people in his community.

3.2 Potential Modifications / Barriers to Success

3.2.1 Community Captains

The Community Captain element of the programme was not implemented at the time of our visit as the team struggled with the idea of selecting young people to be authoritarian in this context. The team struggled to define the criteria for selection of a captain to the young people.

"Not sure about the competitive element [to elect one captain]. Why you and not you..... This could bring tension in the team." [Elena Montoro]

In this context there was a reluctance to adopt the community captain element.

3.2.2 Social Action

The team acknowledged that the young people initially struggled with the concept of social action. It was thought that the young people were too young to grasp the concept from the start and as such the social action element was only discussed once the educational workshops were completed.

At this stage a graffiti art project was initiated but other than the positive messages being visible to the community who use the space, it is unclear how the wider community would benefit from this graffiti project or how the messages were received by local residents. Follow up enquiries will be needed to assess whether they had any lasting impact. However, as earlier mentioned, townhall representatives are keen to develop further social action centered around the Street League model.

3.2.3 Age Group Span

The coaches initially struggled with the delivery of football coaching across a broad age group, that being 12 to 15. However, as the teams bonded it was encouraging to observe that the older players took on a more supportive role, looking out for the

younger ones which improved the team dynamic. As such it would be sensible to be aware of the potential for age related cliques to develop from the start so that these can be managed and teams well integrated.

