

## SPORT & MINOR MIGRANTS AN INCLUSIVE AND SUPPORTIVE SPORT FOR THE WELL-BEING OF ALL

**Lausanne, 20 June 2019** – On World Refugee Day, a group of professionals and sports enthusiasts are launching "Sport and Minor Migrants" (SMM). The project aims to offer initiations and training to young migrants in different sports, including winter sports such as curling or cross-country skiing. This citizen-led project, inspired by the values conveyed by the Youth Olympic Games (YOG), is one of the first to claim to be part of the "Spirit of Lausanne 2020", a new YOG sub-brand which connects "youth initiatives" that are in line with the vision of this event.

Elisabeth Alli, herself a daughter of refugees fleeing the Biafra war, has long recognized the major role that sport has played in her personal development and integration in Switzerland. It was by talking with her husband, sports psychologist Mattia Piffaretti, that the first steps of the project were taken. Quickly joined by Geert Hendriks, Philippe Furrer and Anne-Sophie Thilo, they launched the SMM project, with the aim of introducing young migrants to sports typically practised in winter and often difficult for this population to access. Deborah Rochat, intern and student in health psychology at the University of Fribourg, has completed the team. SMM focuses mainly on unaccompanied minor migrants (MNAs) residing in the Vaud region, but also opens up to other young migrants for whom the practice of sport can represent a formidable tool for integration and well-being.

After two pilot activities organized last winter in cross-country skiing and curling, the collective decided to move forward and offer other opportunities to discover sports, also summer sports, and to create links with these young people and their educators. Organized outside of school time, activities such as archery, judo and breaking are just a few examples planned for this summer. Next winter, the young participants will find snow and ice again. *"In order to welcome the largest number of young people, we collaborate with the Etablissement Vaudois d'Accueil des Migrants (EVAM), the Bureau Lausannois pour les Immigrés (BLI), the Bureau cantonal pour l'intégration des étrangers et la prévention du racisme (BCI), as well as with the sports federations based in the region and the sports clubs that can welcome us and share their passion. Social workers and home educators are also valuable relays in order to ensure the sustainability of our project,"* explains Mattia Piffaretti, project manager and coordinator.

The physical, psychological and social benefits of sport are well established, especially in the heart of the Olympic capital. Sport is a universal language and builds bridges, regardless of the culture, religion, skin colour, gender or beliefs of the young participants. The philosophy of the project is to allow a moment of exchange and discovery for these young migrants. *"Getting them out of their daily lives but also connecting them with other young people of their age is very important to us,"* add the other members of the SMM collective Anne-Sophie Thilo, Olympian, Geert Hendriks and Philippe Furrer, all sports experts involved in promoting such "school of life". *"In the long term, our wish is that they can continue to practice in clubs and why not get involved as volunteers in their turn".*

Supported by the Panathlon Club Lausanne, which shares its focus on sporting values and fair play, and breathing the "Spirit of Lausanne 2020", the SMM initiative illustrates how these Youth Olympic Games can represent an accelerator of added-value projects for sport and youth. However, SMM also aims to stay after the Games and thus leave a "sport & integration" legacy beyond January 2020.

A few days before Olympic Day and on this World Refugee Day, let us bet that the "Sport and Minor Migrants" project will contribute to shaping a better world through sport, making the Olympic values of friendship, respect and excellence very concrete for all its young participants.

**Video:** You can watch a [short video](#) presenting the curling and cross-country skiing activities.

**SMM team members:**

Mattia Piffaretti: PhD, Psychologist specializing in sports psychology FSP

A sports enthusiast and former basketball player, Mattia Piffaretti has been working as a sports psychologist for 21 years. Through his professional experience, he is convinced that, as man can transform his own sporting practice through his mental approach, so sport has the power to shape humanity and integrate people from diverse cultural universes, languages, beliefs and social backgrounds.

Geert Hendriks: Founder and Executive Director, Sport and Sustainability International (SandSI)

Geert Hendriks is a strong believer in the use of sport for a better world. He is the initiator of innovative projects in the integration of migrants through sport (5 years with EVAM and three International Federations). Originally from Holland, Geert has been living in Switzerland since 2008 and is an expert in sustainability applied to sports organisations. He is passionate about many sports and represents Switzerland in korfbal (ball in basket).

Philippe Furrer: Founder of insPoweredBy Sàrl and President of the COOKIE association

Philippe Furrer has spent most of his professional career with the IOC, helping to organise five editions of the Olympic Games and three editions of the Youth Olympic Games. A former athlete and coach, he has always kept in touch with young athletes, notably by founding the COOKIE association in 2011, which supports 10 young elite athletes in French-speaking Switzerland. In 2018, Ibra, a young Afghan refugee and swimming champion, was added. He is also the instigator of the Shoot to the Moon campaign, which explores new transdisciplinary territories to fight sedentary lifestyles.

Anne-Sophie Thilo: Olympian and founder of EKKUT Communication, PR & Engagement

Communicator and navigator - European runner-up in 2008 in series 470, participation in the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008 - holder of a Master's degree in Media and Communications from the University of Geneva and a MAS in Sport Administration and Technology. Today, she is the founder of EKKUT, a company specialising in communication support and advice, particularly in the world of sport, whether through elite sport or sport as a means of promoting well-being and health or social inclusion. It cannot help but embark on projects in which sport contributes to a healthier, more inclusive and equitable society... especially for young people!

**This project is made possible thanks to:**



**Contact projet :** @ [sportmigrantsmineurs@gmail.com](mailto:sportmigrantsmineurs@gmail.com)

**Contact média :** Anne-Sophie Thilo, T [+41 79 771 87 23](tel:+41797718723) @ [anne-sophie.thilo@ekkut.com](mailto:anne-sophie.thilo@ekkut.com)