



Visit of Darko Athletics Team to Martigues



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April 14 to 19, 2025

Part of the Erasmus+ project “Social Integration of Youth via Sport”

Darko Athletics Team Delegation:

Milena Mitkova – Project Manager

Dimitar Tasev – President

Kristian Kostadinov – Coach

Objectives of the Visit:

This visit was part of the Erasmus+ project “Social Integration of Youth via Sport.” The main objectives were:

- To observe and participate in MSA’s inclusive activities with children from disadvantaged neighborhoods.
- To exchange knowledge and coaching practices between MSA and Darko, with a focus on social integration through sport.
- To attend seminars on health, environment, and social aspects of sport.
- To understand the structure and functioning of MSA, including their cooperation with local authorities.
- To strengthen our strategic partnership and prepare for future cooperation.

Tuesday, April 15

Welcome Meeting at MSA Office:

We were warmly welcomed by MSA’s President Thierry Daurelle, General Manager Remi De Rossi, and Coach Pierre Joseph-Parfaite. The program was presented and expectations were aligned.

Neighborhood Actions with Pierre:

All three members of the Darko delegation – Milena, Dimitar, and Kristian – participated in two field sessions in disadvantaged neighborhoods, led by Pierre. These practical activities provided insight into how MSA uses athletics to engage children. We were impressed by Pierre’s approach, particularly his attention to each child and his determination to create a safe and motivating environment.

Seminar – Sport, Health, and Environment:

The first seminar explored how sport can help tackle issues like obesity, sedentary lifestyles, and overuse of screens. It was both educational and inspiring. We gained new knowledge and were able to ask questions and reflect on how to apply these ideas in Bulgaria.

Dinner with the MSA Executive Team:

A shared meal gave us the chance to further discuss our common goals in a friendly and open setting.

Wednesday, April 16

JO des Quartiers at Julien Olive Stadium:

We attended MSA’s major event gathering children from different neighborhoods for an inclusive athletics competition. The organization was excellent, and we were particularly impressed by the large number of volunteers involved and the clarity of the event structure.

A highlight was the presence of child-oriented athletic events, with explanatory signs placed all over the track. This made the competition accessible and educational for both children and parents.

Debriefing:

A meeting followed to reflect on the day. We exchanged views on the event’s impact and shared our impressions with Thierry, Remi, and the team.

Thursday, April 17

Third Neighborhood Action:

In the afternoon, we took part in another community-based training session with Pierre. We learned new games and exercises that we plan to introduce in our own sessions in Sofia.

Evening Cultural Activity:

We enjoyed a walking tour of Martigues, which helped us understand the local context and strengthened the bond between our teams.

Friday, April 18

Morning Meeting & Seminar – Sport and Social Integration:

The second seminar addressed the role of sport in promoting the integration of youth and their families. We appreciated the quality of the presentations and discussions, and gained ideas for expanding our own work with parents.

Final Neighborhood Action:

The Darko team participated in a final inclusive training session, continuing the mutual exchange of methods and approaches.

Final Debriefing & Closing Dinner:

During the final meeting, we shared our impressions and expressed our gratitude for the excellent organization and warm hospitality. A special mention goes to the translator who supported us throughout the visit – her work allowed us to fully understand the seminars, the training sessions, and the discussions with MSA staff.

Key Takeaways / Lessons to Retain

- **Seminars:** Provided valuable insight on the link between sport, health, and social integration.
- **Coaching Practices:** We discovered new games and methods to engage children more effectively.
- **Partnership with Local Government:** We learned how MSA collaborates with public institutions to support long-term inclusion.
- **Volunteer Engagement:** The JO des Quartiers demonstrated a well-structured event with strong volunteer support.
- **Event Accessibility:** The use of signs and visual tools made the athletics event child-friendly and inclusive.

- **Team Environment:** At every step, MSA made sure we felt welcome and supported, creating an atmosphere of friendship and cooperation.

Next Steps

- Continued implementation of our joint Erasmus+ project activities.
- Application for a new project on adaptive sports training, to be submitted in October.
- Preparation of a broader social integration initiative with MSA, Valencia (to be confirmed), and a fourth partner from Greece or Slovenia (to be identified).
- Integration of newly learned methods into our training programs and events in Sofia.



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