



Anti-racism

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Ethnoleague echoes diversity and respect message

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The FARE Eastern European Development Project is paving the way for a celebration of diversity and respect in 2012, and Warsaw's Ethnoleague is heralding this multicultural message.

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The Ethnoleague runs until December in the Polish capital Warsaw

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UEFA EURO 2012 in Poland and Ukraine plans to be a joyful multicultural tournament. With this objective in mind, UEFA has funded the Football Against Racism in Europe (FARE) network's East European Development Project in the run-up to 2012.

Within the framework of the project, FARE's partner, the Never Again Association, has set up the Warsaw-based East Europe Monitoring Centre which documents incidences of racism and xenophobia. In addition, Never Again has organised a series of events in Poland and Ukraine promoting diversity, respect and the multicultural dimensions of football.

"The FARE Eastern European Development Project paves the way for the celebration of diversity and respect at UEFA EURO 2012. Anti-racism is at the heart of our shared values," said UEFA first vice-president Şenes Erzik. The latest initiative coorganised by FARE and the Foundation for Freedom, the Ethnoleague, started in Warsaw last week. Twelve multicultural teams participated in the football competition, including Africans, Vietnamese, Chechens and other nationalities living in the Polish capital, as well as a female team, a Never Again team and a side composed of Legia Warszawa fans.

The goal of the Ethnoleague is the integration of Warsaw's inhabitants of different backgrounds. The scheme involves a futsal league and a series of cultural events with the participation of migrants and refugees, fans and journalists. Each side hosts a week's round. They prepare a short presentation about themselves, complete with music and food. The football games are accompanied by integration meetings, discussions on anti-racism in football, anti-discrimination education sessions and the 'Let's kick racism out of the stadiums' exhibition created by Never Again.

"We aim to fight racism through the promotion of multiculturalism in sport," said Krzysztof Jarymowicz and Jacek Purski, the Ethnoleague organisers. "We want a friendly atmosphere, which should also accompany the forthcoming UEFA EURO 2012."

Piara Powar, executive director of the FARE network, met with the Ethnoleague participants and organisers in Warsaw this week. "It is a fantastic initiative that can be a model for many other countries," he said.

The weekly Ethnoleague activities continue until 4 December. Participants have received football kits and prizes funded by UEFA. The tournament has been officially endorsed by the mayor of Warsaw and the Polish government's Plenipotentiary for Equal Status. The project is co-funded by the Civic Initiatives' Fund and the Stefan Batory Foundation, with Poland's Office for Foreigners another partner.

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