

„Kick-it! – international women’s soccer camp 2008“



During the World Soccer Championship of 2006 in Germany, the association *eurient e.V.* planned and designed for the first time a project called “Kick it!” with the idea of bringing together soccer-enthusiastic women from European countries and the Mediterranean region. The aim was to make possible a “dialogue of cultures” against the background of actual discourses on “Islam” and “Gender”, because: “Kick It! Women don’t play offside!”

Finally, the project was realized this year: From August 4th until 16th 2008, 30 young women from Algeria, Jordan, Turkey, Serbia, Norway and Germany met for a soccer camp in Leipzig, the city where the German Soccer Federation was founded and that also held the World Soccer Championship in 2006. In cooperation with the LFC 07, the soccer initiative “Bunte Kurve” and the *iaf e.V.* Leipzig, the *eurient e.V.* created and organized this ambitious program.

Concerning the sportive aspect of the project, the *eurient e. V.* was supported by the LFC 07, Saxony’s football centre for talented girls. The LFC did not only supply the soccer fields and sports equipment, but was also responsible for organizing and carrying out the technical trainings. These sports units took place every day and focused on intensifying internal dynamics and getting to know each other, and also offered room to learn about different training techniques. To achieve the latter, the accompanying trainers designed and took over parts of the training schedule.

In addition to the sports part, there were intercultural training units that were realized by *eurient e.V.* in cooperation with *iaf e. V.* (association for binational partnerships and families). In units like “perception”, the participants learned to question own images and convictions. The aim was to sensitize the participants for things considered strange and to motivate them to think about what makes something familiar or unfamiliar.

30 young female soccer players from six countries were invited to participate in the “Kick it!” project, their ages ranging from 16 to 25 yrs (as it was difficult to find enough young participants from some of the Arab states, Algeria in particular, who were of a level good enough to meet our standards and at the same time able to travel alone, we decided to accept some players of a higher age than the rest of the group). One of the requirements for participation was that the girls and young women were to play regularly in their home countries and to be active in the field of promotion of women’s sports in general and soccer in particular. So now on this basis of a common interest – soccer (and a really strong interest that was) – they had the opportunity to meet and exchange. From time to time, this proved to be not as easy as expected, cultural differences and prejudices being often stronger than good will, but all in all the participants managed very well, overcoming language and cultural

barriers with surprising skills. They also assisted – in advance together with their local organizations, during the project and in the follow up with suggestions and evaluations – in organizational matters, thus helping us making this year’s “Kick it!” a success and providing us a sound basis for upcoming “Kick it!” projects.

Aims

The aims of the project are the following:

- Exchange and education
- Networking
- Strengthening



Women playing soccer are considered unfeminine in many countries all over the world. Even in countries with good women soccer promotion facilities and organizations girls playing soccer often have to cope with comments by friends, family or others, calling them tomboys or worse and suggesting ballet and the like as more suitable for a girl. Having the opportunity to meet other players from all over the world living through – more or less – the same obstacles, can broaden the participants’ horizons, make them feel not so alone anymore and thus developing stronger personalities.

A second but related problem concerning women’s soccer is that of media attention. In many countries, men’s soccer tournaments gain huge media attention, championships creating exceptional circumstances in the participation countries. The players earn huge amounts of money, not only through their work contracts with clubs, but also through well paying advertising contracts. In women’s soccer, the situation is different. As soccer often is not recognized as adequate sports for women, there’s no big public attention and thus only little media coverage, big companies are not interested in signing advertising contracts and women players often have to work to earn their living while playing high league at the same time. (Of course this is changing currently, there actually are some women players around earning enough money through playing football to pay their living. Also, there is increasing support and enhancement of girls’ and women’s soccer opportunities coming from high up institutions like FIFA.) So by organizing projects like “Kick it!” we reached media inside Germany, and in the partner countries, thus creating a bigger public attention. In addition, a network of women’s soccer clubs and organizations was founded to give the participating players a chance to work together in the future and outside of “Kick it!”

Sustainability

Through successful networking, the project helps strengthening women’s sports here in Germany, but also in the involved partners’ countries, and creates growing public attention.

A second edition of “Kick it!” in the following year is intended and the *eurient e. V.* is already working on it.

The association

The eurient e. V. was founded in 2004 by students and alumni of the Oriental Institute at the University of Leipzig. Its focus is on the promotion and support of the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue. Beyond common clichés and media images, pictures of “the other” are offered with the aim to start thought processes and question own attitudes.

This is realized through smaller projects like the monthly film presentation “Musalsal”, or the annual Arab Film Week, lectures and discussions on subjects like “Anti-Semitism in the Arab World” or exhibitions like the just finished “Roadmap Palestine”. The association also organizes larger and longer-running projects like “Hiwar Fanni”, a cooperation project between German and Arab Universities’ art departments in collaboration with the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service), the arts project “Dialogue Tools” or “Kick it!”, mostly funded by EU’s “Youth In Action” program. All projects are realized through voluntary work.