



# FOOTBALL WORKS

## PRACTITIONER'S GUIDE

Coordinated by:



Dienst Justitiële Inrichtingen  
*Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid*



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Dienst Justitiële Inrichtingen  
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# PREFACE

This guide was collectively developed as part of the ERASMUS Sport project “Football Works” including the project partners: Dienst Justitiële Inrichtingen (DJI), Administration for the Execution of Criminal Sanctions (Sremska Mitrovica), Stiftelsen Vålerenga Fotball Samfunn (VIF), Stichting FC Emmen Naoberschap (FC Emmen), Bohemian Football Club CLG An Cummann Peile Boithemeimeach Cuideachta Faoitheorainin Rathaiochta (Bohemian FC), Southampton FC, and Bayer 04 Leverkusen Fußball GmbH (Bayer04).

Hence, this guide comprises input from all project partners to best show the Football Works project.

The project will be introduced, its methodology explained and shown and project partners are detailing their experience along the different aspects of this project. This should allow the reader to get a sophisticated understanding of the project and implementation as a whole, thereby allowing them to recreate the project within their environment.



## FUNDING

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# FOOTBALL WORKS

## OVERVIEW

The Football Works project runs between 01/02/2023 until 31/01/2026 and aims to provide support for current inmates to prepare them for release and reintegrate them back into society. The consortium aims to achieve this by using the social value of football, and to some extent other sports, alongside educational and employability workshops, to best develop required skills and build confidence. Hence, following the workshops and release of the participant, they will have developed as an individual in a way that should allow them to find suitable work and reintegrate into their social environment. Project partners aim to continue contact with participants upon release, using the trusting bond built within the prison to continue support and be that familiar face where the participant deems it as necessary.

For this project, multiple football clubs and prisons across Europe are collaborating as they all share the vision of sport being the perfect tool to engage hard to reach groups and reintroduce them to education, encourage personal development and prepare them for work following release. The Football Works project aims to reduce the high re-offending rates across Europe by providing employment and volunteering opportunities for released inmates.

The consortium is made up of seven organisations across the Netherlands, Serbia, Norway, Ireland, England and Germany: Dienst Justitiële Inrichtingen (DJI), Stichting FC Emmen Naoberschap (FC Emmen), The Serbian Ministry of Justice in the form of KPZ Sremska Mitrovica, Stiftelsen Vålerenga Fotball Samfunn (VIF), Bohemian Football Club CLG An Cummann Peile Boithemeimeach Cuideachta Faoitheorainin Rathaiochta (Bohemian FC), Saints Foundation (Southampton FC), and Bayer 04 Leverkusen Fußball GmbH (Bayer04).

To achieve the above mentioned targets, the project utilises a unique 3-Step methodology, which the project aims to test so that it can be replicated across Europe by the end of the project. The Football Works Methodology presents a three-step path towards preparing inmates across Europe for the reintegration after release to the labour market through a collaborative effort of health-enhancing and employability and educational activities. Participants will move through all three steps for a successful completion. This methodology will be tested and delivered throughout Europe to validate its success and to establish a truly European methodology.

## AIMS OF THE PRACTITIONER'S GUIDE

The purpose of the Practitioner's Guide is to make people familiar with the Football Works project as a whole. This means that the project and its implementation will be explained in detail, link to other relevant resources in the project, such as the Football Works Website and the Trainer Toolkit, as well as share all of the learnings the individual partners and the consortium as a whole have done throughout the project. By the end of reading through this guide, it is hoped that the reader will be able to implement the project themselves in their local environment. Nevertheless, while Football Works as an Erasmus+ project stops, it will continue to be delivered among many of the partner organisations through other sources of funding and as such as there is a committed project team that are more than happy to help with any questions that may arise after reading. Towards the end of this guide, key contact details will be provided.

As such, we will first present the overall project objectives of Football Works as well as guide the reader through the methodology. Each of the steps will be explained in detail and relevant examples given. Following the methodology, the delivery and implementation are described and experiences shared.



This includes topics such as setting up contact with prisons, football clubs, other organisations relevant to the delivery, how to plan sessions and how to integrate all steps together to have a fully functioning methodology. The Football Works Festival is also a major part in the Football Works project and as such these festivals will be described following the delivery. The reader will get an understanding on the purpose of the festivals and how they can implement these festivals themselves. Afterwards, future steps and overall conclusions are shared, further outlining how the project is set to continue after this project finishes as an Erasmus+ programme. Partners will share some of their plans on the continuation of the project and outline the sustainability of this project. Lastly, case studies and testimonials are shared to show the positive qualitative impact the project has left on its participants.

# PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The project aims to create a transferable sport-for-development methodology that increases the level of physical activity among people in custody and reduces recidivism upon release. By harnessing the universal appeal and values of football, the project supports individuals in their reintegration into society and a safe environment as well as the European labour market.

## PROJECT GOAL

To use the power of football to promote positive social and community values, strengthening partnerships between sport, prison, and reintegration actors to reduce crime rates and the risk of reoffending.

## PROJECT OBJECTIVES

As such, the project pursues the following key objectives:

- Diminish the high rates of reoffending by released prisoners once they have completed their sentence through a combined football and education programme.
- Improve health-enhancing physical activity participation inside prisons within Europe and target the human rights' policies.
- Using the power of football, remove barriers linked to education and training systems, and social status for successful reintegration into the EU labour market.

While the project follows a shared methodology with all partners working to reach the above mentioned objectives, local partners are encouraged to tailor their implementation to their specific prison environments, institutional structures and community needs. This allows the application of the methodology across countries borders and help react to local needs, thereby strengthening the delivery and positively influencing its success.

At the heart of the delivery is a clear Theory of Change showing how football participation can act as a catalyst for wider behavioural and social change. Hence, the underlying logic assumes that:

1. Regular engagement in football, and other sports, strengthens personal and social skills reflected in the 11 core values of Football Works (further explained below).
2. Improved attitudes, behaviours and skills, enhancing an individuals' readiness for education, training and employment.
3. Increased confidence, routine, and connection supporting participants after release, thereby reducing the likeliness of returning to criminal activity.
4. The above outcomes thereby contribute to the long-term goals, with participants being more likely to obtain a job, become successfully reintegrated and a general lower rate of reoffending among them.





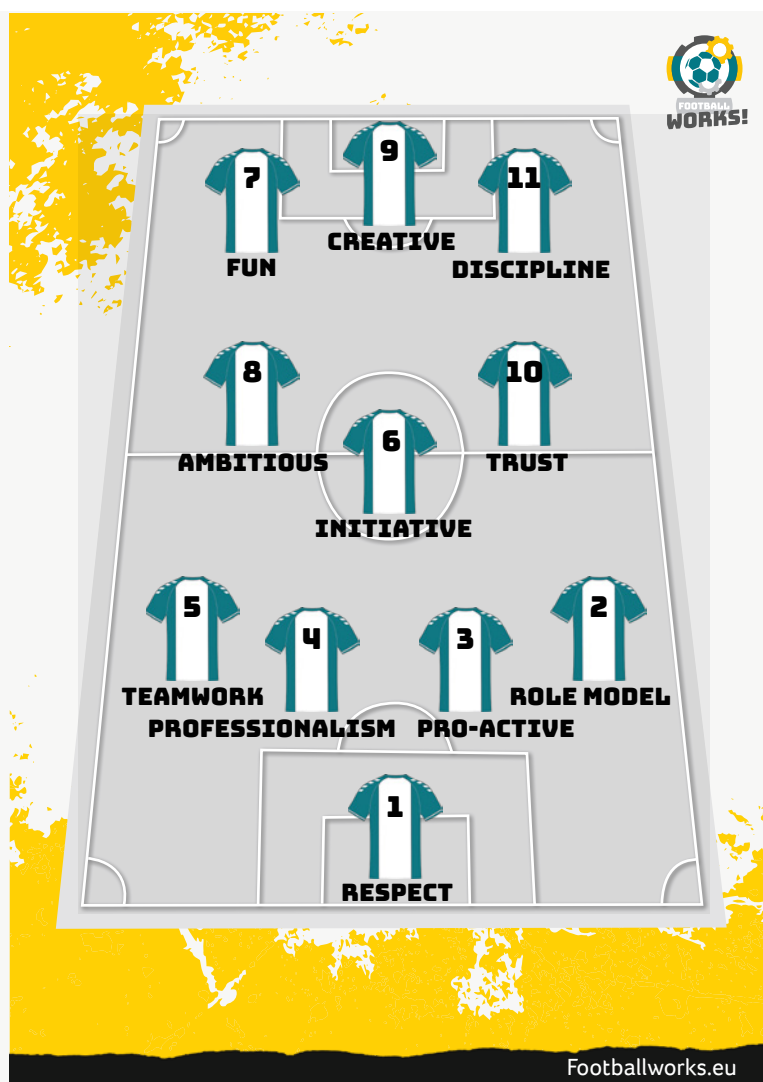
# THE FOOTBALL WORKS METHODOLOGY

The Football Works project tested and validated a unique 3-Step methodology to make it applicable in a European context, inspiring and allowing other clubs and prisons to implement the methodology at the end of the project. The methodology, with the three steps and the underlying 11 core values, explained below, have been tested through five different delivery phases, each scheduled in for about four months, while actual deliveries ran for 12 weeks within those four months. During those 12 weeks, 2-hour sessions have been delivered twice a week. Therefore, each partner delivered 24 sessions per delivery period, leading to 48 hours of contact.

This refers specifically to Step 1 and 2 of the methodology, where the duration of Step 3 was much more flexible and individually catered. As one delivery period lasts up for four months, we do recommend to take another two months to evaluate the delivery period. Hence, for those interested in delivering the methodology, it is advised to have two delivery periods per year. During the project, the Football Works consortium has attended 6 transnational project meetings (TPMs) to critically evaluate every delivery phase and make recommended adaptations to the methodology to ensure robustness by the end of the project.

## THE 11 CORE VALUES OF FOOTBALL WORKS

The 11 core values used in Football Works are key social skills that are the underlying feature to the 3 Step Methodology. Critically, these core values can be taught through sport, particularly football, and as such the First Step of the Methodology: Football in Prison, focuses on engaging participants with sport, while making them familiar with these 11 core values. Following the completion of Step 1, participants can then learn to better apply the skills during the 2nd Step of the Methodology: Employability and Educational Workshops. These workshops are interactive and supposed to make participants familiar with varying situations that can happen upon their release and as such they can learn during the workshops to best apply the learned core values from Step 1. Lastly, in Step 3 of the Methodology: Release, participants are released from the prison and become reintegrated not only into social society but into the labour market. Hence, now they are able to fully apply the 11 core values in any social situation.



# STEP 1:

## EMPOWERING INMATES THROUGH SPORT AND FOOTBALL INSIDE PRISONS

Step 1 of the Methodology focusses on providing football, and also other sports, training within the prison environment. We work with professional football clubs on the delivery as the power of the badge can often inspire inmates to start taking part in these training sessions. We work mainly with football, but other sports can work equally well in getting participants active and teaching them valuable skills. Moreover, different sports could be used across a delivery phase, with each sport potentially impacting individuals differently, although team sports are recommended to help build key skills. Nevertheless, the sport used for delivery may also depend on the local conditions – for instance, how much space is available and how many people can practice together. While the general training already provides positive outcomes, such as better physical health, the key purpose of this step is to utilise the educational component of sports, particularly football to teach participants vital skills. Hence, the 11 core values are a central component to each training session where participants are made familiar with each of the core values, thereby learning to apply them within a sporting environment.



Stichting FC Emmen Naoberschap



Stichting FC Emmen Naoberschap

For Step 1, it is recommended to look for a group of about 10-20 participants. This number can be flexible and depends on multiple factors, such as for example local prison conditions (e.g. how many people are allowed to participate at the same time) or the relevance of the project to the participants. For instance, we do recommend to focus on inmates that will be released within a few months up to a year, but if there are not a lot of inmates that suit this criteria, it is important to get enough people to be able to deliver good footballing (or sporting) sessions, hence participation in step 1 can be opened up to other inmates, unless it may create tensions among participants.

It is recommended to have both people from the football club as well as people from the prison, particularly those that work with the participants closely, available at the sessions. This gives the opportunity to create stronger relationships with the participants and is particularly important to help guide participants throughout the programme.

# STEP 2:

## BUILDING ESSENTIAL HARD AND SOFT SKILLS

The second step of the methodology is about bringing the participants inside to attend varying educational and professional workshops that prepare them for the life after release – both for the social setting as well as the professional setting. Hence, workshops around employability, digital training, CVs as well as workshops around substance misuse, getting a home, opening a bank account and more are provided to best prepare them for release. Moreover, and linking to Step 1, this is the environment where participants can learn to apply their recently acquired social skills (core values) from the football ground and fine-tune them to other social settings. The learnt skills are easily transferable to other areas of life, meaning that they greatly help with personal and professional development of participants. Additionally, employers can be invited into the prison to set up first contact meetings between participants and potential employers. This contact can be sustained throughout the rest of the delivery period and end with the release where the participant hopefully is able to start working for that employer.

For Step 2, we recommend around 12 participants so that classes are not too congested and everyone can receive quality guidance and individual support. To decide on who can move from Step 1 to Step 2, the people responsible for Step 1 should be involved in order to get an idea of which participants have demonstrated a great behaviour, referring back to the 11 core values. It is key to have participants that are motivated and committed to personal development to ensure a successful reintegration.

In this step, it is also best to focus on participants that have a short sentence left (e.g. a few months) as these will be benefitting the most from educational and employability workshops.

With the smaller group sizes, it is recommended to kick off this step with an introductory workshop so that all participants, as well as the teacher, get to know everyone. This session could be used to not only make one familiar with each other, but to also present the course, highlight expectations, establish certain ground rules, perform some ice breakers, collect data such as for example via a questionnaire and find out about additional needs.

It is not only important to communicate with the participants, but to also have a clear communication with the wider prison system. Establish a clear organisation and check for potential partnerships where different organisations with key expertise as well as other key services within the prison can be contacted and introduced to the programme. It is important to then set up meetings with each organisational lead and explain the project and how they can play a big role in ensuring it's successful. Having these links ensures the participants have access to professional support within different topics and your role is to assist with workshops and refer participants into existing agencies. Work with each partner to create a 30-45min session plan for their topic, ensuring there is a referral process for additional support following the session.





# STEP 3:

## JOBS, INTERNSHIPS AND VOLUNTEERING

In the final step, participants can further enhance learnings as well as properly apply the skills learned from Step 1 and 2 through internships, volunteer or paid jobs at local and professional football clubs as well as other businesses. In Football Works, a lot of the football clubs work with a business network, which gets invited to the prison to have a match against a group of participants as well as participate in a social dinner to formally close the chapter inside the prison. Participants achieve certificates and can use this opportunity to network with the business club. This greatly increases their chances to find some form of job opportunity at one of the organisations, thus benefitting greatly from the pre-existing relationships of the delivery partner. This allows each participant to apply and fine-tune skills in a professional setting, ensuring a successful transition to the European Labour market.

In Step 3, we hope to be able to support as many participants as possible from Step 2 in their step back into society. Again, participants need to display positive behaviour throughout their participation in the workshops (referring to the 11 core values). For the time of their release, we continue to offer support, but we also give the participants the freedom to decide on how much support they want to receive on an individual basis. Thus, the support provided differs based on the individual's needs. Project partners reported greater success by integrating these participants with other projects the organisation may be running, not only continuing to help the participants to find a job, internship or a way back into education, but directly integrating them into the social environment of the project.

Apart from connecting participants with potential employers, a critical success factor of the project is the sustained point of contact of the delivery partner with the participants even after release. In fact, this is how Football Works differentiates itself clearly from almost any other reintegration oriented project. Through stable staffing, the person that delivers the project inside the prison should continue to be the contact for released participants to give the participants a sense of security and stability. Moreover, partners have suggested a few additional key activities to ensure the success of the project around this step:

### ADDITIONAL SUPPORT THROUGH THE GATE

**Links to probation-** It is important to make links with probation services, especially for when someone is released from the prison. At times, probation officers have also checked with project partners to see if they can be engaged in further programmes that the partner may be running in the community, leading to a continued support after release.

**Boundaries upon release-** It is important to put clear boundaries in place once a participant is released from prison. It is worth setting out a clear timeline and rules for when people can contact the professional upon their release.

**License conditions upon release-** It is important to view a participant's license conditions upon their release. This will help with planning the support on offer and ensuring this sits within their conditions in the community.

**Sporting opportunities-** Ensure you make links with local gyms and sports centres to offer participants the opportunity to continue exercise upon release from prison. This also allows for their exercise routine to continue similar to one that was the same whilst in prison.

**Changes to approved premises upon release day-** Multiple partners mentioned that some participants are only finding out where they are going on their release day. This makes it hard to organise specific support plans for these participants and in some cases has meant some participants have broken their license conditions. A way to mitigate this has been shown by Saints Foundation, where they have looked at exit routes outside of Southampton and worked closely with probation and offender management unit (OMU) to ensure that they are aware in advance to know where each participant is being released to.

**Release from prison-** Participants are given the option to be met at the gate by the Saints Restart coordinator who will then accompany them to their approved premise or home. There is then a continued support with those participants that have been released into the community. This consists of regular 1:1 mentoring, links with probation, trust fund opportunities, links to other Saints Foundation programming and volunteering/ attending matchdays. The overall aim is to support the participant to achieve their personal goals.

## PARTICIPANT PROGRESSION WITHIN THE METHODOLOGY

As can be observed from the above mentioned target group sizes for each step, not all participants will always progress to the next step. If a participant leaves the programme, they simply return to the regular prison lifestyle. The lack of progression can have different reasons such as a lack of positive behaviour, a lack of commitment and attendance, potentially a long sentence left (e.g. Step 2 and 3 is ideal for people with a short sentence).

The lack of progression for a participant does not mean that the programme was a failure – they still had the chance to learn valuable skills that they can continue to work on while inside the prison. Moreover, they can always try to join another delivery of the project to be able to continue to successfully progress through the Football Works methodology.

# THE FOOTBALL WORKS DELIVERY

The Football Works project is not just about delivering and completing the different Steps in isolation, but rather to carefully integrate all three steps together for the benefit of the participants. As such, each delivery partner received autonomy to implement the steps in a way that works best for their own respective local environment. Hence, there are some key differences between each delivery of each partner making it difficult to outline and clearly explain how an implementation phase can look like. Below some of the general steps in creating the Football Works Delivery are explained.

## PLANNING SESSIONS

Effectively planning the sessions is integral to deliver a high-quality programme where football becomes integrated with reintegration. Sessions should therefore be based on the project's objective, tailored to the specific prison environment and supported by a strong collaboration between the different actors such as club, prison services and wider partner organisations. Below are key principles for the planning and delivering of the sessions in the Football Works 3-Step Methodology.

### ALIGN SESSIONS WITH PROJECT GOALS

All Activities, regardless of Step 1, 2 or 3, need to be carefully linked to the project's aims. Hence, sessions should link to personal development, the learning of soft skills and employability.



Footballworks.eu

- 1** Integrate football sessions and workshops to reinforce learning: through the use of the 11 core values, it can be analysed whether these core values are not only learned within the sporting environment, but also finetuned during the workshops.
- 2** Plan workshops to build transferable skills, not just focussing on the 11 core values, but also wider social skills needed for employability or other social reintegration such as communication, resilience, conflict management, self-awareness and motivation. It is recommended to use partners that are professionals within different areas to provide quality workshops (e.g. mental health – prison psychologist).
- 3** Conduct regular evaluations with all stakeholders to monitor progress.

## COLLABORATE CLOSELY WITH THE PRISON

The impact of a strong cooperation with the prison staff cannot be understated as it is essential for access, safeguarding and smooth delivery.

- Maintain regular communication with case managers, PEI staff, and security teams.
- Ensure referral and consent forms are completed and reviewed jointly with the prison and your club's safeguarding lead.
- Always check up-to-date behaviour reports before each session.
- When planning a sports session, involve the PEI staff early – they know the equipment available, what rules must be adapted and what is realistic within the prison context. Not all the sessions that are delivered outside a prison environment can simply be redelivered inside the prison walls.
- Be aware of lock-up times, staff availability, security procedures for moving participants, restrictions around group sizes and equipment.

## RECRUITMENT AND PARTICIPANT SELECTION

Not all inmates can participate in Football Works. This makes the selection process a key success factor for a successful delivery. A clear and fair selection process thus helps to ensure a safe delivery and targeted support.

- Work with prison staff to identify participants using multidisciplinary consultation.
- Establish criteria based on behaviour, remaining sentence length, motivation, and ability to benefit from employability support.
  - o If someone wants to participate in the programme they should also display good behaviour – not only during the programme, but during all times within the prison.
  - o To have maximum impact, it is recommended to focus on those inmates that have relatively little sentence left.
- Involve existing participants in recruitment on the wings. They are credible messengers and can greatly influence peers.
- Adapt criteria when necessary to match cohort size and the realities of the prison population.
- Always review referral information for risk assessment and safeguarding prior to engagement. This includes the ability to adapt sessions to better meet the needs of the participants.
- Involving local authorities or the football club in this process also means that there is a higher interest in reaching those inmates that are likely also to be resettled into the local environment where the football club and local authority is based.

Disclaimer: In Football Works, it should also be noted that no inmates with some form of sexual assault sentence or other very serious sentence have been accepted into the programme.



## DESIGN INCLUSIVE, LOW-THRESHOLD FOOTBALL SESSIONS

Looking at Step 1 of the methodology, football sessions should be accessible to participants with different abilities, confidence levels and physical conditions. The aim of Football Works is not to develop the next professional footballer, but rather to use football as a tool to achieve wider social aims and educate participants.

- Prioritise simple, low-threshold exercises that maximise playtime and involvement.
- Focus on learning by doing: embed the 11 core values directly through the exercises rather than long talks.
- Use the “Power of the Badge”: provide kits or shirts from the football club as it can build pride, motivation, and group identity
  - o Often times having the coach simply walk in a club uniform to the prison can already break the ice with many inmates, leading to a higher interest to participate in the programme.
- Allocate responsibility to participants (e.g. a session captain could lead warm-up) to strengthen leadership.
- Incorporate occasional fun sessions, tournaments or mixed games with club staff.
- Where possible (e.g. in half-open prisons), organise stadium visits or gamedays to strengthen connection with the club. Connected to this can be player or manager visits to the delivery, allowing them to see the project and its impact.
- Not all sessions need to focus on football, try with other sports, that can be delivered inside the prison walls. Some participants may struggle with football but feel empowered in another sport, further increasing motivation across all participants.





## PLAN EFFECTIVE AND ENGAGING WORKSHOPS

Workshops should be interactive, relevant and link to a participants' real-life challenges (particularly those challenges that they will likely face on their release).

- Avoid duplication: coordinate with the prison services and other organisations to build upon workshops that may already be running inside, rather than offering competing sessions.
- Work with specialist partners such as employability teams, substance misuse services, mental health staff, financial advisors and more to deliver topic-specific workshops.
- Follow the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) principles when working on goal-setting to help participants see their progress and stay motivated.
- Make the sessions accessible: literacy levels, language levels may greatly differ as well as some participants having additional needs. Consider these differences and the impact it can have on group dynamics so that you can design a workshop that is relevant to all participants.
- Keep the content lively with group work, breakout tasks, and practical exercises. For example in a workshop around interviews for employability, make the participants interview and test each other. Not only do they get to practice, but they also get to bond with one another.
- Plan around the prison restrictions such as limits on electrical equipment.
- Create a safe and respectful environment where participants feel comfortable to share personal thoughts and troubles.

## ONE-TO-ONE SUPPORT AND SAFEGUARDING

While One-to-One support is not currently part of the overall 3-Step Methodology, we do think it is a pivotal aspect of a successful delivery as seen by the impact the Saints Foundation have had with it. Personal support helps to build trust and address individual barriers a participant may not want to share in a group setting.

- Begin one-to-ones once rapport has been built (for example, week 3 onwards)
- Plan for up to 15 minutes per participant per week. Note that not all participants may want to have individual sessions.
- Record key information and follow internal and prison safeguarding procedures for any concerns.
- Never make promises. Always express commitment to try your best, within prison procedures.
- Hold conversations in rooms that ensure privacy while still meeting safeguarding requirements (e.g. rooms with observation windows).

## POST-RELEASE PLANNING AND CONTINUITY

Careful planning for the transition period is crucial and many participants may need time to adjust before securing employment.



- Maintain continuity where possible: having the same staff member supporting participants inside and outside the prison builds trust and stability as well as motivate the participant to reach out to a trusted person in case there is a concern.
- Organise follow-up meetings and regular check-ins to help participants navigate housing, routines, job searching, social reintegration and other concerns they may face.
- Integrate participants into other club or foundation programmes (e.g. community football, employability projects). This not only helps to create social networks and routine but also makes it easier to stay in contact and support where necessary.
- Explore whether community punishment / sentences can be completed at your organisation as a supportive transition.
- Host a match between the participants and the club's business network to introduce participants with employers and showcase the project's impact. If possible this should take place towards the very end of the sentence within the prison walls.

## BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS AND USE OF EXTERNAL EXPERTISE

No organisation is able to address all needs alone, meaning that a careful screening for potential partners is necessary to ensure that the project can have the aimed impact.

- Coordinate closely with employment agencies, local authorities, mental health services, substance misuse teams and probation.
- Bring external experts into the prison where possible.
- Use partnerships to design interactive, expert-led workshops that reflect participants' needs and the realities of release.



# INTEGRATING ALL THREE STEPS OF THE METHODOLOGY INTO A DELIVERY

After having completed multiple different delivery phases across multiple different delivery organisations, the consortium has found that a properly integrated 3-Step methodology can guarantee success. Each of the step does not operate in isolation, but rather needs to be carefully constructed, alongside the above recommendations, and properly intertwined with all steps and the 11 core values. While each step does have a distinct purpose, they are reinforcing one another and below this integration is further highlighted.

1

## COHORT SELECTION AND PREPARATION

An integrated delivery already begins through a careful screening and selection process, where the main aim should be to find participants that have a realistic chance of completing all three steps so that they can interact with one another for the duration of the project. Hence, ideally, individuals are nearing release and are interested in seeking employment.

Ideally, the project staff can identify around 12 participants to deliver the project with. While Step 1 is recommended to have more participants, this is to ensure that the football training has enough participants for a proper training session, while the workshops in Step 2 can be tailored to the uniquely identified participants. It is also recommended to have some inmates as a back-up in case there are multiple participants at high risk of drop out. While they may not join from the start, they can fill the gap when there is a clear lack of numbers to deliver meaningful sessions. Nevertheless, after around 25% of the programme is completed, it is also not beneficial to add potential new participants as plenty of group dynamics and relationships have already been formed and there is not enough time for new participants to learn about the skills in the little time that may remain in that one delivery.

2

## CONNECTING FOOTBALL TRAINING WITH WORKSHOPS

As outlined above, one of the key learnings in the project has been the integration of particularly Step 1 and 2 of the methodology. Hence, rather than delivering football trainings and workshops separately and start workshops only after all football trainings are concluded, it was found to positively influence participants if they can be delivered continuously throughout. Hence, the boundaries between Step 1 and Step 2 are somewhat blurred. On average, football sessions take place at least twice per week, delivered jointly by club coaches and prison sports instructors. In line with the aims of Football Works, technical football skills are a nice addition but not the main focus of the delivery. Rather, sessions consistently emphasise the core values such as teamwork, discipline, self-control and more. Participants build a weekly rhythm and can see tangible progress along the way.

Workshops around varying factors in employability and education (such as CV writing, job applications, conflict management and many more) are scheduled parallel to the footballing trainings. To reinforce continuity, and make

delivery staff fully accustomed to all steps of the programme, workshop trainers frequently attend footballing sessions and football trainers frequently attend workshop deliveries. This way the true progress of participants and how they apply the skills can be observed, further demonstrating a single, coherent programme, rather than different set of separate activities.

Regular visits from employment agencies and job coaches also help track of individual progress, identify opportunities and helps participant to keep a focus on their future pathway.

## MAINTAINING MOTIVATION AND EMBEDDING CORE VALUES

It is important to keep participants engaged and motivated across all steps in the methodology. This means that the programme should be participant-centred where activities are engaging, interactive and appropriate to the prison environment. Low-threshold training, social events, team-building activities and occasional fun tournaments help maintain enthusiasm and support the development of positive group dynamics.

Equally, programme staff are encouraged to be innovative in how the 11 core values can be integrated across the programme. Exercises should be practical, there should be group discussions, peer leadership role for participants and more. With the involvement of football clubs, project-branded T-shirts and equipment of the football club also help to reinforce identity and pride. Moreover, certificates to showcase successful completion have also shown to leave a positive impact for participants.

## TRANSITIONING INTO STEP 3 AND ENSURING CONTINUITY AFTER RELEASE

The key difference between Football Works and other prison oriented projects is that Football Works does not stop at the gate, but rather support lasts well into the release, showcasing the impact of involving outside actors compared to the typical prison environment. Step 3 is only effective if it builds on the relationships created during Step 1 and 2. Hence, ideally, the same staff member who delivers the in-prison activities is also available to host an initial meeting with the participant outside to provide further support, and where necessary, support them to get in contact with other agencies or staff members. The outside support activities can include the following:

- Individual follow-up conversations
- Meet at the gate and accompany home / to probation
- Assistance with job preparation, referrals and applications
- Placement in volunteering roles, internships or employment
- Integration into other foundation projects or programmes
- Opportunities to build new social networks rooted in positive and safe environments

A key activity, connecting the inside to the outside activities is also the potential of a match between the participants and possible organisations (such as the football club's business network) to connect relevant actors with participants already inside and allowing them to explore opportunities for paid work after release. This increases visibility of the programme, strengthens employer engagement and also offers potential direct jobs to participants.

3

4

## USING THE REPUTATION AND NETWORK OF THE FOOTBALL CLUB

Across all steps, the power of the Football club remains a key part. The reputation, social status and identity of a professional football club remains a powerful motivational tool. The badge boosts engagement, pride and aspiration, and participants benefit from the wider connections the club has to organisations in the community. Hence, participants encounter a supportive community that believes in their potential, further showcasing the high potential for a successful reintegration. For instance, participants (and their families) may receive matchday tickets and stadium tours, further helping to bring the family together. Equally, players could make an appearance, giving out certificates as well as bond with the participants.

## EXAMPLE IMPLEMENTATION

To better showcase how the different steps can be integrated, below is a Best Practice implementation example from the Saints Foundation.

The proposed structure focuses specifically on Step 1 and 2 of the methodology as the 3rd step of the methodology can lead to some clear differences in approaches across countries and partners. One key difference of the Saints Foundation compared to other partners is the introduction of 1-1 mentoring as an additional step, and continuous throughout the delivery. Whether 1-1 mentoring can be introduced in the implementation can often depend on funding and general staffing as it is time and cost intensive. However, Saints Foundation have reported that this has been a key success factor as it allowed the delivery staff to build up a good connection to each participant.

Moreover, this gives participants a better chance of opening up, sharing their thoughts and reaching out for help where necessary. Sometimes participants have struggled to open up in a workshop environment in front of other participants, but this has changed due to the 1-1 mentoring, proving its success inside the prison.

Moreover, its success outside of prison also cannot be understated as there have been plenty of released participants reach back out to the delivery staff as they managed to build a close relationship and wanted to continue to receive some form of support post-release, further lessening the risk of reoffending. For instance, and also linking to the delivery of other partners, multiple participants have reached out after release to be connected with other projects the organisation may be running in the community, allowing participants to become better integrated into the local community, build up their own social network and continue to participate in projects for their benefit.

Another thing to note about the above structure is the delivery of both Step 1 and 2 at the same time. While the initial project proposed delivering one after the other, multiple partners have noted that delivering both simultaneously has lead to positive outcomes. There is more regular and in-depth contact between delivery staff and participants and a lot of participant appreciate being able to do some form of sports continuously throughout the programme. This has lead to much higher motivation, impacting their general behaviour, their behaviour during workshops and their general perception of the programme as a whole, positively influencing them within the prison as well as outside.

### BEST PRACTICE IMPLEMENTATION

WEEK NUMBER	WORKSHOP (STEP 2)	SPORT (STEP 1)	I-I MENTORING
WEEK 1	INTRODUCTION SESSION	VOLLEYBALL	
WEEK 2	SUBSTANCE MISUSE TEAM	FOOTBALL	
WEEK 3	SPURGEON'S- FAMILY SUPPORT	CIRCUITS	MENTORING
WEEK 4	OFFENDER MANAGEMENT UNIT	BADMINTON	MENTORING
WEEK 5	MENTAL HEALTH TEAM	BASKETBALL	MENTORING
WEEK 6	ID'S AND BANKING	FOOTBALL	MENTORING
WEEK 7	DWP	VOLLEYBALL	MENTORING
WEEK 8	EMPLOYABILITY HUB	GYM	MENTORING
WEEK 9	GAMCARE- GAMBLING HARMS	BADMINTON	MENTORING
WEEK 10	READY FOR RELEASE- CERTIFICATES/PLAYER APPEARANCE	FOOTBALL	MENTORING

To give a better idea of the type of activities that are planned for each Step please see below a few examples from the Trainer Toolkit. The Trainer Toolkit has been created by the consortium to also present the Football Works project, with a specific focus on the type of activities for each Step. It presented the methodology, showed how the project could be implemented and provided plenty of examples.

Hence, in the Trainer Toolkit you will also find a lot more examples for each of the three steps.





# STEP 1:

## INTRODUCTION / FITNESS

NAME OF THE ACTIVITY	Introduction / Fitness	MAIN OBJECTIVE(S) OF THE ACTIVITY
AGE GROUP	18+	Getting to know each other, practicing basic skills and improving the technical ability of all participants; observe participants physical state
GROUP SIZE	20	
EQUIPMENT NEEDED	Playable field; 20 balls; two movable goals, cones	
STAFF NEEDED	One outside coach, one prison coach, one security guard	CORE VALUES AT WORK
		Respect, Fun
DESCRIPTION		

This is an introduction session in order to get to know the participants.

- Warm up
- 6x jog (you can stop whenever you want)
- Circuit of basic skills (60 sec)
  - Dribbling at speed with sprint
  - Fake inside
  - Fake outside

- Slalom
- Headers
- control chest + pass
- control foot + pass
- 8x jog (you can stop whenever you want)
- Core exercises (6x 40 sec)
- Pass + bounce exercises
- 4x sprint
- Match

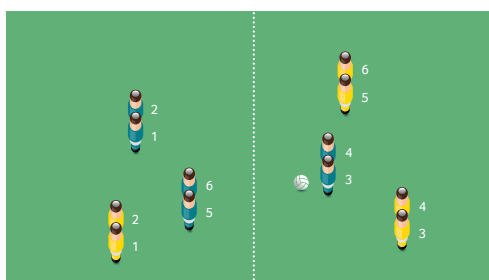
## TRUST YOUR TEAMMATE

NAME OF THE ACTIVITY	Trust Your Teammate	MAIN OBJECTIVE(S) OF THE ACTIVITY
AGE GROUP	18+	Gain a better understanding of the importance of fun, trust and teamwork. Increase in physical exercise
GROUP SIZE	8 - 12	
DURATION	60 mins	
EQUIPMENT NEEDED	12 bibs, two balls, Football goals, cones	CORE VALUES AT WORK
STAFF NEEDED	PE department, staff	Trust, Teamwork, Fun
DESCRIPTION		

The outcomes of the activity include: Arrival Activity / Warm Up


- **Layout**
  - Layout 15 cones upside down and 15 cones the correct way up in a 25 x 25 square
- **Instructions**
  - Split the group into two teams, one team need to try and put all the cones the correct way up and the other team needs to put all the cones upside down.
  - Play the game twice for 90 seconds each time. The losing team does 10-star jumps.
  - Form a circle and stretch following exercise.
- **Introduction**
  - Explain the core values targeted in the session
  - Explain the rules (see below)
  - Demonstrate the session
- **Main Activity:**
  - Ask the group to get into pairs and split the group into two teams (6 v 6 = 3 pairs v 3 pairs)
  - In the pairs one player will use the bib as a blindfold, covering the eyes of their partner. This will leave you with six players who can see and six players who cannot (depending on total number of participants).
  - Set up a small pitch 25 x 20 with goals at either end
- **Progress the session:**
  - Both players are now allowed to see, but have a bib tied around their wrists
  - Both players can touch the ball
  - Play the game again for 10mins until you have a winner

- **Debrief the session:**
  - Take Home: When playing football, it is really important to work as a team, to trust your teammate and to have a lot of fun!
- **Rules**
  - The player who can see must communicate and move their teammate around the pitch
  - Players who can see are not allowed to touch the ball
  - It must be walking football
  - When trying to kick the ball the player is only allowed to use the inside of the foot and keep their foot below shin level
  - If the ball goes out of the pitch, the game is restarted by the coach
  - The teams play against each other for five minutes
  - Play again but this time switching the person who could not see with the player that could.
  - Play the game again for five minutes, ensuring the teams fully understand the rules.



## STEP 2:

### PERSONAL GOALS

NAME OF THE ACTIVITY	Personal Goals	MAIN OBJECTIVE(S) OF THE ACTIVITY
AGE GROUP	18 – 45	The main goal is for participants to learn how to set goals, with a focus on their first year after release
GROUP SIZE	10	
DURATION 	120 mins	CORE VALUES AT WORK
EQUIPMENT NEEDED	Paper, marker, flipchart	Enhancing ambition, creativity and proactivity. Those are key elements in setting and accomplishing goals
STAFF NEEDED	Two treatment officers – psychologist and special pedagogue	
DESCRIPTION	THE OUTCOMES OF THE ACTIVITY INCLUDE:	

• **There are five activities in this particular workshop:**

- 1) Creation of pleasant atmosphere (warming up for workshop) – to make it easier getting to know each other, every participant have to say adjective with first letter that is the same as the first letter of their name, along with their name. For example – strong Simon;
- 2) What are goals and what are plans - defining goals, learning what are short-term and long-term goals. Learning purpose of planning – planning is the way we are accomplishing our goals;
- 3) S.M.A.R.T. method – setting and accomplishing of the goals is simpler if we know S.M.A.R.T. method. Goals need to be: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time Bound;
- 4) Discussion about goals – every participant picks one of their goals and explains the way they think that goals is reachable. Participants discuss with each other and offer various possibilities;
- 5) Homework – using S.M.A.R.T. methodology, participants have to present one of their goals for the period of one year after detention.

- Getting familiar with goals that are relevant for every participant individually and learn how to recognise the importance of individualising the goals.

### MENTAL HEALTH AND SOCIETY

NAME OF THE ACTIVITY	Mental Health and Society	MAIN OBJECTIVE(S) OF THE ACTIVITY
AGE GROUP	16+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Greater knowledge of mental health</li> <li>- Coping mechanisms for stress</li> <li>- How to stay motivated</li> <li>- Greater knowledge around support networks available</li> <li>- Society changes</li> </ul>
GROUP SIZE	Any	
DURATION 	60 mins	CORE VALUES AT WORK
EQUIPMENT NEEDED	Flip chart paper	Professionalism, Trust, Creative
STAFF NEEDED	Club representative, PE department, mental health team	
DESCRIPTION		


- Warm Up / Arrival Activity
- Introduction – Recap the previous session and run through how this session will look. (5mins)
- Mental health
  - What is meant by mental health – split the group into two and ask them to do a bubble chart labelling everything that comes to mind when you think of mental health. Explain the definition of mental health.
  - Stats related to prison setting
    - one in four people will experience a mental health issue of some kind each year in England
    - Around 40% of people in England who have overlapping problems including homelessness, substance misuse and contact with the criminal justice system in any given year also have a mental health illness
    - 45% of adults in prison have anxiety or depression

- Coping mechanisms
  - Stress
  - What works for you? Everyone is different
  - Support networks in the community
  - Keeping motivated
- Self-care
  - How can we look after ourselves more?
  - What are some of the signs we can look for?
  - What works for you?
- Support networks
  - Can you identify these yourself?
  - What is available in Southampton?
  - Who can support you?
- Society changes (more for those serving longer sentences)
  - Is there anything you feel might have changed since you were last released?
  - Price of living changes
  - Transport changes
- Recap the session with main outcomes

# STEP 3:

## READY FOR RELEASE

This is a specific example from Englang through the Saints Foundation. This concerns the final step for inmates within the prison when they get ready for release.

NAME OF THE ACTIVITY	Ready for Release	MAIN OBJECTIVE(S) OF THE ACTIVITY
AGE GROUP	16+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure all release pathways are in place</li> <li>Release day plan</li> </ul>
GROUP SIZE	Any	
DURATION 	60 mins	CORE VALUES AT WORK
EQUIPMENT NEEDED	Flip chart paper, marker pens, sticky notes	Fun, role model, teamwork
STAFF NEEDED	Club representative, PE department, Governor, lead from each department, player visit (where possible)	

### DESCRIPTION

- Arrival Activity / Warm Up
- Introduction – Recap the previous session and run through how this session will look (5mins)
- Release Day – give participants the release day form for them to fill in and ensure all details are completed on collection (10mins). Explain what club can offer on release day (meet at prison, escort back to prison/agreed location)
- Location and Housing – ensure this information is completed on the release day form
- Referrals and pathways – explain the referrals and pathways available to them and ask each participant to tick which ones they would be interested in joining. Explain that you as the facilitator will be there to support the integration into any particular pathway they choose to be interested in (10mins)
- Social support – HMP Winchester and what probation can offer (10mins)
- One-to-ones once released – talk through how the business card works, importance of these one-to-ones and the support Saints Foundation can give during these one-to-ones (10mins)
- Endline data and course evaluation forms – Each participant to complete both forms (10mins)
- Certificates and prize giving – ask for each inmate to vote for one of their peers that they feel have progressed a lot during their eight weeks and have always put themselves forward to help and be engaged in every session. Give everyone a certificate (potentially get someone senior from prison to present this or a player if safety allows). Give a prize to the participant with the most votes (15mins)

## VÅLERENGA GATELAG (STREETFOOTBALL)

NAME OF THE ACTIVITY	Vålerenga Gatelag (StreetFootball)	MAIN OBJECTIVE(S) OF THE ACTIVITY
AGE GROUP	18+	A comprehensive offer with football as the most important tool to 1) create mastery; 2) motivate; 3) engage; 4) break down barriers; 5) develop routines; 6) healthy everyday life; 7) build relationships and networks; 8) provide opportunities
GROUP SIZE	30+	
DURATION 	One year (training three times a week)	CORE VALUES AT WORK
EQUIPMENT NEEDED	Football gear, Football field, place to be before and after training, fridge for food	NA
STAFF NEEDED	Min. two	

### THEME AND DESCRIPTION

Streetfootball is known worldwide as a football inclusion project, with some projects specifically designed to support those facing challenges around drugs. Therefore, it is a low-threshold, drug-free activity.

The activity includes football training, playing games in a league or national tournaments, strength training, food distribution, provision of fitness equipment, social activities, tours, work-oriented follow-up, and creating positive networks and relationships.

### THE OUTCOMES OF THE ACTIVITY INCLUDE:

- Drug-free hours, weeks, months and years
- Better life
- Inclusion in society as well as job opportunities
- Health benefits
- Money saved for society
- Social arena



Below, we will also go through a few other factors that are key to the Football Works delivery. You can expect some advice on how to work with prisons, how to work with football clubs and how to set up contact with other key organisations to the delivery.

## WORKING WITH PRISONS

Considering that Football Works is based on the successful collaboration with prison systems across Europe, below are a few key characteristics to establish a closer partnership with the different prisons across countries.

### STIFTELSEN VÅLERENGA FOTBALL SAMFUNN (VIF), NORWAY

Tips to establish initial contact:

- Direct outreach is pivotal: try to contact, often multiple times, the partner of interest and be persistent. Email potential contacts until you reach the right person.
- Engagement does take place at multiple levels, including social support services, individual correctional facilities and transitional housing providers.
- Existing relationships with one prison serves as an entry point to the prison system. Hence, this can enable introductions to other facilities and housing units.

Conditions for successful cooperation:

- Internal project leadership: collaboration is most effective when the prison has their own project leader, which for this project is ideally someone that is interested in football and committed to the project. Having an internal prison project leader, shows that the prison has some commitment to the project, facilitating the overall implementation.
- Strong club-prison communication: success depends heavily on the quality of communication between the prison's project leader and the football club's project staff.
- Qualified and complementary trainers: a combination of trainers from both the club and the prison is best as they can help each other.
  - o Prison-based trainers bring knowledge about the prisoners, helping to identify suitable participants and maintain continuity between sessions.
  - o Club-based trainers can provide the footballing expertise, equipment and sport-specific structure.
- Understanding the target group: Trainers and staff must be familiar with the needs and challenges of people in custody. Staff should be enthusiastic, patient and well-suited to this work.
- Involvement of recreational leaders: engaging recreational staff within the prison strengthens the logistics and increases participation.



### BAYER 04 LEVERKUSEN FUßBALL GMBH (BAYER04), GERMANY

Networks for making first contact:

- National foundations or initiatives with established prison access can facilitate introductions, thus it is important to do a preliminary analysis of the wider environment in the industry and find out about possible network organisations.
- In Germany, the Sepp-Herberger-Stiftung and its initiative "Anstoß für ein neues Leben" (Kick off for a new life) provide structured cooperation between football clubs, regional associations, the employment agency, the justice ministry, and other stakeholders.
- Through this initiative, clubs can support an "Anstoß-Team" in a nearby prison (typically around 15 participants) with a strong potential for reintegration, receiving both football training and employability support.

Practical experience from ongoing cooperation:

- Close, consistent communication with the prison's head of sports is crucial for enabling regular football training inside the facility.
- Long-term commitment by club coaches fosters trust and stability. Experienced coaches who have built rapport with the participants are particularly effective.
- Maintain contact after release is challenging due to local laws, especially with young people. Hence, participation in follow-up activities depended on the individual's willingness to stay engaged.





Dienst Justitiële Inrichtingen  
Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid

## STICHTING FC EMMEN NAOBERSCHAP AND DIENST JUSTITIËLE INRICHTINGEN (DJI), NETHERLANDS

### Establishing the collaboration

- Initial contact often begins through professional networks. In the case of FC Emmen, a business associate connected the club with a correctional facility and arranged a study visit to a London project, demonstrating the potential impact of such collaboration.
- Multiple conversations with different prison representatives followed, leading to the start of the partnership.

### Project Development and Impact

- FC Emmen was the first Dutch club in the country to run a structured programme combining football sessions with work guidance for participants.
- The initiative helped participants reintegrate through sport and employment, with several securing jobs through the club's network.
- The project originated through a collaboration between the football club and the prison of Veenhuizen, demonstrating the value of a proactive local initiative.

### Additional guidance from Dienst Justitiële Inrichtingen (DJI)

- Appoint an internal project leader in the prison. This should be someone intrinsically motivated and responsible for liaising with external partners.
- Use trainers that are familiar with the target group and are thus able to emphasise and understand the participants' challenges.
- Provide post-release support through the contact network of the club. This can lead to access to employers and thus pathways into jobs.
- Build internal support within the club. This can be done by for example inviting staff to visit the prison or holding joint activities such as small tournaments with prison staff and project participants.
- Manage expectations: not all participants will succeed to the same extent and thus focussing on the positive outcomes can help to maintain motivation and momentum.



**NAOBERSCHAP**



## ADMINISTRATION FOR THE EXECUTION OF CRIMINAL SANCTIONS (KPZ SREMSKA MITROVICA), SERBIA

- Establish a project team within the prison with clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
- Present the project to the entire institution to ensure broad support as this is essential for smooth implementation.
- Develop collaboration with a football club not only for training but also for engaging participants in practical club-related tasks such as pitch maintenance and construction.



**SAINTS  
FOUNDATION**

## SAINTS FOUNDATION, UNITED KINGDOM

Create a contact and visit the prison to discuss initial plans- It is important to create a contact within the prison's 'Head of reducing reoffending' team and discuss the programme with the prison. It should be a programme that is created based on the needs of that specific prison and facilities available. It is also an opportunity to ensure you're not duplicating any work that is already being done. The project design should be created alongside the reducing reoffending lead and ensure you have the buy in from project partners before starting.

Work in partnership with the PEI (Physical Education Instructor) team to deliver the programme- It is important to work closely with the PEI teams within the prison. Allow them to have some ownership of the project as they are pivotal for the project to be a success. The PEI's will help with the following:

- Key point of communication between the football club and the prison
- Assist with recruitment
- Assist with ensuring all partners are available
- Assist with security protocols
- Assist with ensuring staff have access to appropriate training
- Assist with player appearances
- Help with transferring participants from different parts of the prison
- Facilitate the sporting session

Prison staff training- This is conducted alongside security checks before someone has access to the prison facility. Training consists of:

- NOMIS training (computers)
- Key training
- Health and Safety
- Radio training
- De-escalation training

Staff to visit prison- It is worth the member of staff visiting the prison a few times before starting the project, just to get used to the surrounding and feel comfortable with each area of the prison.

Data sharing agreement- This needs to be put in place between the football club and the prison before any delivery is completed. This allows for participant data to be shared and for risk reviews to take place.

Participant consent form- Each participant will complete a participant consent form which states that the participant allows Saints Foundation to access personal data relating to their sentence.

Steering groups- Every 6 months it is important to bring all project partners together to discuss the project, look for learning and see how best the project can keep developing.

Funding- It is important to check if there are funds available from the prison to assist with the project. This also gives more buy-in from the prison.

## HOW TO GET IN CONTACT WITH FOOTBALL CLUBS

Similarly to the importance of working with prisons across Europe, it is also of pivotal importance to involve a football club in the delivery of the Football Works project. Below are some key points in how to approach a football club for a possible implementation.

### DIENST JUSTITIËLE INRICHTINGEN (DJI), NETHERLANDS

DJI highlights that visibility and proactive engagement are the foundation for a successful collaboration with football clubs

Key practices:

- Increase institutional visibility: Share your sports and reintegration activities on LinkedIn and connect strategically with club representatives, associations and community foundations.
- Attend external events; Participate in networking meetings hosted by clubs or football associations and offer to present your work.
- Invite new people into the prison: many people have never been inside a prison and leave with a more positive and realistic impression. Such visits can often mark the start of a partnership.
- Identify the right individuals: invest in people who show genuine motivation. If a contact is not engaged, look for someone else within the organisation who may be more aligned with the goals.



### ADMINISTRATION FOR THE EXECUTION OF CRIMINAL SANCTIONS (KPZ SREMSKA MITROVICA), SERBIA

The Serbian example shows the importance of formalised and structured agreements in partnerships.

Key practices:

- Create formal agreements: in 2020, a technical agreement between the correctional facility and a football club was established to engage inmates in work activities during their sentence.
- Focus on meaningful work tasks: participants supported stadium infrastructure maintenance, which aligned with the rehabilitation goals.
- Ensure legal clarity: compensation and responsibilities were fully aligned with Serbian law.
- Highlight mutual benefits:
  - The prison was able to benefit from opportunities to support work habit development and reintegration.
  - The football club was able to benefit from motivated workers contributing to stadium operations.



## STIFTELSEN VÅLERENGA FOTBALL SAMFUNN (VIF), NORWAY

Vålerenga emphasises internal engagement within the club and integrating the prison programme into the club's broader social initiatives.

Key practices:

- Secure involvement from club staff: trainers must come from the club and a designated club representative should manage logistics.
- Leverage existing community programmes: combine resources from different projects to build a strong, interconnected support system.
- Promote regular contact: club visits to prisons help inmates understand the available support outside prisons and delivering inside the prison helps to build trust before the release.
- Create continuity: by linking prison-based training with community projects, participants can transition more smoothly into support structures after release.

## SAINTS FOUNDATION, UNITED KINGDOM

Using the hook of Southampton FC

Player appearance/ videos: We have the opportunity during the season to request player or manager appearances or video messages from the men's first team players, former players or Saints legends. The previous manager Russell Martin had a strong interest and found this programme something close to his heart. We were lucky enough to have Russell visit the prison and meet the participants on one of the cohorts. This was filmed and broadcasted by BBC South today and BBC breakfast to over 10 million viewers. We were also lucky enough to have a visit from two first team players, who came in as part of the celebration event at the final session of a cohort. They spent time speaking with the participants, before signing and presenting participants with a certificate at the end of the cohort.

Matchday tickets and stadium tours- Participants upon release have the opportunity to attend matchdays at St Mary's stadium and are also given the opportunity to tour the stadium. These opportunities have also allowed participants to build stronger bonds with family members, and we have so far given out over 100 matchday tickets for both Championship and Premier League fixtures. We have also conducted over 30 stadium tours for released participants and their families.

Partner usage- During the programme we have also used St Mary's stadium to host partner events and have given the opportunity to prison partners to use the facility free of charge for any meetings/events they would like to conduct. This allowed stronger partnerships throughout the programme.

Volunteering and job opportunities- there were opportunities for participants to volunteer on matchday's with potential for this to become a paid opportunity. We have had participants volunteer as flag wavers on matchday's and have made links with both Southampton Football club and Gather and Gather (events and hospitality) to offer job opportunities upon release. The range of jobs consist of stewarding, security, setting up for events, cleaning and waiting. So far, we have had 8 participants volunteer on matchdays and one apply for a matchday cleaner role.

The badge and image- using the badge and the image of the club makes it easier for us to recruit participants from the target group. It is also a conversation starter amongst inmates and the fun 'banter' between the Portsmouth fans and Saints fans make the sessions even more enjoyable.

Visit inside HMP Winchester from Russell Martin (First team manager), Nathan Wood and Joe Lumley (First team players).

[// Southampton FC helping HMP Winchester prisoners deal with release - BBC News](#)

Football club social media- It is important to use the football club's social media to give as much exposure of the project as possible.



Saints Foundation



Saints Foundation

# SETTING UP CONTACT WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

As highlighted in previous sections it is also important to involve other expert organisations in the programme. This has multiple advantages such as better alignment with the services inside the prison, potentially leading to a greater support from the prison staff; a better and more efficient use of funding as the same workshop is not offered by different parties also leading to lower staffing costs; involvement of expert organisations in workshops which positively impacts the outcomes for the participants and more. Below, tips and recommendations from the different partner organisations are provided.

## DIENST JUSTITIËLE INRICHTINGEN (DJI), NETHERLANDS

Creating Support for Prisoners:

- Organise prison tours for organisations unfamiliar with custody environments. Meeting motivated inmates can help challenge traditional stereotypes about this group and humanise the individuals behind the sentence.
- Leverage media and social platforms: promote projects on social media and invite journalists to share stories. This can be particularly effective with the involvement of football clubs due to the club's brand attracting public attention.
- Facilitating interaction with employers: conclude project cycles with friendly matches between the participants and the club's business network. These events allow participants to network with potential employers and the employers are able to witness the project's impact and connect with participants in an informal environment.

Involving additional Stakeholders:

- Local Authorities: Engage municipalities early and throughout the process as they play a vital role in the resettlement process (e.g. housing, financial support, post-release programmes). After all, all inmates need to return to some local authority after detention. Local authorities can also support the recruitment of suitable candidates in prison.
- Employers: Regularly invite companies to organise workshops or observe prison-based work. Companies may be interested in outsourcing some tasks to prison workshops and can then see potential employees working in real time, creating a win-win situation for all.
- Employment and outplacement agencies: recruiters can offer job application training, insights into the labour market and directly link to employers. Involving them in the project can be key to help participants find jobs for the after-release as they can be the different makers with an employer. Particularly if the participants may only have a limited network.
- Rewire Partnership: A partnership to build physical and mental resilience through functional strength training. Participants learn how to deal with stress, time and create a work-life balance. Participants also discover the effects of their connections with people around them and how to improve these relationships.

## STICHTING FC EMMEN NAOBERSCHAP, NETHERLANDS

Establishing contacts through intermediaries:

- USG Restart (an employment agency) served as a key connector between participants and potential employers.
  - o They used their own employer network and combined it with FC Emmen's community connections to broaden opportunities.
  - o This partnership was key due to it acting as a single entry point for employers, thereby strengthening the overall support chain for participants.

## ADMINISTRATION FOR THE EXECUTION OF CRIMINAL SANCTIONS (KPZ SREMSKA MITROVICA), SERBIA

Setting up contact with organisations:

- Before initiating communication, clearly define the objectives: connect with organisations working in post-penal support and employment services, build a reliable partner network that supports project participants, establish long-term cooperation beyond the project's duration, seek cooperations to support project activities and participant engagement.
- During meetings with partner organisations: project goals and planned activities are presented, opportunities for cooperation are discussed, concrete forms of collaboration are agreed upon (e.g. participation in workshops, providing counselling and employment support, offering sports activities through the football club).
- To ensure sustainable cooperation, regularly updates partners on project progress and activities, invites them to join events, keep communication open and consistent to build trust and long-term collaboration.
- Engage journalists and media outlets to share project activities, raise awareness, and help change public perception about formerly incarcerated individuals.
- Partnership with NGO "Restart" – delivering two workshops per delivery phase with the focus on post-penal support.



#### **BAYER 04 LEVERKUSEN FUßBALL GMBH (BAYER04), GERMANY**

##### Awareness and Internal Engagement:

- Internal visits to the prison should be organised for club employees and other inclusion teams. These visits are key in building an understanding within the club before expanding external engagement.
- Exploring new project ideas, or expansions, such as hosting a tournament with former participants at the club's facilities. This would leverage the club's network for broader reintegration support.
- Social media visibility has been established, which has been primarily done through the women's team channels (bayer04frauen).

#### **SAINTS FOUNDATION, UNITED KINGDOM**

##### Partnership Network:

- Substance misuse team- This workshop focuses on the addiction cycle and allows participants to open up about any sorts of substance misuse and the usual topic is drugs and alcohol. Following the session participants have the option to refer into more 1-1 support with a specialist.
- Spurgeon's- Spurgeon's offer family support, allowing fathers the opportunity to re-establish or continue strong family relationships whilst in prison. Spurgeons help children of prisoners by providing a prison family hub, which supports them through contact, family days, videos of their father reading them a bedtime story, homework clubs and much more.
- Gamcare- Gamcare offers support for people and families experiencing gambling harms.
- Offender Management unit/ Probation- Each participant will be assigned a prisoner offender management officer whilst in prison. Offender Management Units (OMUs) play a crucial role in the management and rehabilitation of an offenders' time in prison, as well as promoting public safety, by helping to reduce recidivism through facilitating the successful reintegration of offenders into society. The officer liaises with the community probation officer and is responsible for license conditions, housing and overall responsibility of the participant. During this workshop the Prisoner Offender Manager should discuss topics and answer any specific questions a participant has.
- Mental Health team- The session touches on coping strategies and takes into context the environment within the prison. Following the session, it is important that there is follow up support from the team for anyone that needs it. \* Try to give trigger warnings and allow a safe space in case someone wants to move remove themselves from the session.
- ID's and banking- Linked to the employment hub, there is the ability to apply for both a driving license (if not banned) and a birth certificate. Both documents are needed to collect benefits upon release from prison and act as forms of ID's for background checks for accommodation.
- Department for working pensions (DWP)- DWP can help participants with understanding their benefits and setting up job centre appointments upon release from prison. They also have links to accommodation and can help with different pre release payments.
- Employability hub- This session reflects on key skills and work experience of participants. A CV is created and reflection on positive skills and opportunities a participant has to gain employment following release from prison. We also link with employees in the community who are keen to work with prison leavers.





# FOOTBALL WORKS FESTIVAL

A great way to disseminate about the project and to make many more organisations familiar with the project as well is the use of Football Works Festivals. During this project, three separate European Football Works Festivals have been hosted. Each festival is made up of a football tournament and a conference. Thereby, tournaments are not solely for partner teams, but it is encouraged to reach out to other prisons and projects, running similar programmes and invite them to participate to better spread the message of the differing projects. They are delivered solely within prison walls and thus need great support from the hosting prison. The idea is to reward released participants for their participation in the project where the participation in the tournament is a final highlight to close off the chapter, thereby having a full day of celebration and some competitions. In 2023, the festival was organised at the PI Veenhuizen, the Netherlands; in 2024, the festival was hosted by KPZ Sremska Mitrovica in Serbia; and in 2025, the festival was hosted at the PI Dordrecht, the Netherlands.

All project partners are competing with their own teams and more prisons that are interested in reintegration work can be invited to participate and learn about Football Works. Moreover, many more actors in the general field are invited to attend the tournament and participate in the conference to encourage the sharing of knowledge around Football Works and also any other project around reintegration work so that key messages can be spread to an international audience.

Each tournament has been a great success as they received wider media attention, increasing the likelihood of other organisations reaching out to learn more about the project and potentially support future editions. Moreover, the atmosphere has been immense at all events, with all participants, whether these are external actors, project partners, former participants, or even current inmates that are interested in participating in the project in the future. Moreover, due to the positive word of mouth and the inspiration the events have caused among attendees, other organisations have already delivered similar events. For instance, with the help of the Saints Foundation, another Football Works tournament has been delivered to an UK audience in the May of 2025, further disseminating the project to a key audience.

Below we further outline how you can plan and organise your own version of the Football Works Festival. Similarly, make sure to check out a video we have created for the 2023 edition of the festival in the PI of Veenhuizen:

<https://youtu.be/ibhb0aXUgo8>.



Footballworks.eu



# THINGS TO CONSIDER

Organising a Football Works Festival requires detailed logistical planning, a strong cooperation with the hosting prison and a careful consideration of legal, financial and operational constraints due to this unique environment as well as the unique background of the players. As such we recommend to carefully consider the following topics to ensure that the event can be safe, inclusive and impactful.

## RISK MANAGEMENT AND SAFETY

At the forefront of organising such an event should be a comprehensive risk assessment. This should be completed well in advance and shared with partner organisations attending the festival. The information can be given in the form of an info package, where information around travel safety, emergency procedures, movement within prison, safeguarding considerations and other prison-specific requirements are outlined.

Similar to other tournaments, there should be an appropriate staff-to-participant ratio. This means that there is enough supervision and support to take care of all participants within the group. This is a necessity due to individuals in the group potentially having complex needs and varying travel experience.

Linking to the 3-Step methodology and that (hopefully) released participants are fully reintegrated into the social environment and labour market after Step 3, the event dates should be communicated well in advance to allow participants to coordinate with their employer their work schedules. This greatly facilitates their attendance without jeopardising employment stability.

## LOGISTICS, TRAVEL AND ACCESSIBILITY

When planning a European Football Works Festival, the choice of location plays a crucial role. Hosting the event in a country with affordable travel options makes participation more accessible for partner organisations. Proximity between the airport, accommodation and the prison should be manageable, especially when moving multiple international teams and staff. Accommodation for visiting teams may include budget hotels, shared group facilities or other low-cost options.

It is essential to consider that participants cannot always travel abroad to any country, and individuals recently released may face licence conditions or visa restrictions that prevent them from leaving their home country. Additionally, participants who are still on licence are often not permitted to enter certain prison settings. Early coordination with probation services is therefore critical.

All participants and staff must have valid passports (where applicable) and appropriate travel and medical insurance to prevent financial or administrative issues in case of injury or emergencies.



## OPERATING INSIDE PRISON WALLS

As the festivals are held inside prisons, close collaboration and transparent communication with prison authorities is of pivotal importance. Entry procedures, staff availability, permissible equipment, room usage and movement within the facility must be aligned with security protocols. Clear communication channels with the prison's security and media teams help ensure smooth operations during the day of the event.

Movement between the different areas such as pitch, workshop rooms, catering areas, should be planned in advance to avoid delays and ensure compliance with internal rules. Host prisons also need to determine suitable spaces for workshops, conferences and hospitality activities. It is recommended to visit the potential hosting prison multiple months in the lead up of the event to align the expectations of the event organiser together with the opportunities within the prison setting. Moreover, following such a visit, it is recommended to set up some kind of taskforce, made up of the tournament organisers, key actors in the prison as well as other organisations that may be involved in the organisation of the event (e.g. catering provider, transport provider) so that regular meetings can be held to discuss progress and overcome challenges.

## BUDGET, SPONSORSHIP AND RESOURCES

Budgeting is also integral to a successful delivery of the event. A detailed budget should be made early in the planning and include costs such as travel, accommodation, catering, equipment, trophies, workshop materials and venue preparation. Potential support through sponsors could be discussed with the networks of the different football clubs, the prison's network or through other local organisations that have an interest in reintegration work (or other prison oriented work).

Providing branded clothing, equipment or certificates contributes to the professional feel of the event and strengthens participants' sense of pride and belonging. However, these items should also be catered for in the budgeting plan.



## MEDIA, VISIBILITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Football Works Festivals offer great opportunities for dissemination. Inviting and engaging local, national and international media increases visibility and encourages more organisations to find out about the project and learn about its methodology. Similar to all other aspects of the tournament, media access must be coordinated in detail with the prison. This usually happens through the prison's communication or press team, respecting internal rules regarding photography, filming and interview permissions.

Inviting a wide range of stakeholders such as other prison authorities, reintegration services, NGOs, football clubs, employers and policy-makers, enhances learning and strengthens international collaboration. Guest appearances from current or former professional players, coaches or managers, particularly those that may have a background around the legal system, can add a lot of additional visibility and inspirational value.

## TOURNAMENT DESIGN AND SCHEDULING

It is also important to consider the number of teams need to not only run a successful tournament but to also fit the local conditions present in the prison. For instance, what is the pitch and team size, how many pitches, what is the budget, how many matches could be played as well as their duration and what is the timeframe given by the prison (when can a festival start and by when does it need to be finished). Organisers should ensure that each team has sufficient game time and that the tournament format is fair and engaging.

Award ceremonies have also been a special aspect in Football Works Festivals, with many of the trophies and awards being created by inmates in certain prisons, making the events feel further special.

## INTEGRATING WORKSHOPS AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

The conference aspect of a Football Works Festival is a key component as it encourages the sharing of other Best Practice projects with likeminded individuals. Hence, workshops or conference sessions for participants, staff and other stakeholders should be planned carefully. Key considerations include:

- availability of suitable workshop rooms inside the prison (also somewhat close to the tournament festivities).
- identifying a target audience for each workshop.
- scheduling sessions for teams without interrupting tournament play.
- clarifying the learning objectives and practical takeaways.
- ensuring accessibility for individuals with additional needs.
- assessing the feasibility of electrical equipment in a secure environment.
- managing participant movement between workshop and pitch areas.
- involving expert guest speakers where possible.



# NUMBER OF TEAMS AND PARTICIPATION APPROACH

As outlined above, the number of teams that can participate in a tournament largely do depend on the specific facilities and security conditions present within each prison. This can simply include the number of available football pitches, but is also impacted by the overall inmate population and the corresponding operational considerations such as staffing and internal movement procedures.

As a general guideline, based on ten years of Dutch Football Works tournaments, prisons are encouraged to organise tournaments from 10 to 16 teams. This guideline ensures a dynamic event with manageable logistics and safety.

To maximise the impact of the tournament and broaden its social message, event organisers are encouraged to invite a diverse mix of teams from not only their own prison, but other prisons and social initiatives. This can include:

- Homeless World Cup teams or other similar community-based football groups working with vulnerable populations.
- Teams such as FC De Rebellen in the Netherlands – a team of former professional footballers with challenging past experiences who serve now as powerful role models and help generate positive media attention.
- Teams from other prisons that run Football Works or comparable programmes. Participation can then serve as an incentive and reward within reintegration pathways.
- Staff teams from other football clubs to potentially inspire them to take up their own Football Works implementation.
- Teams around specific topics such as for example a National Dutch Lawyer team as present in the Netherlands. This further insures that relevant stakeholders are present at the festival.

Including external teams enriches the event in key ways. It supports social learning through interaction with participants from varied backgrounds and creates opportunities to showcase key success stories. For the different partners in Football Works, the value in attending the event does not solely lie in playing football, but to be able to exchange between diverse teams from across Europe, as well as the unique experience of participating in a tournament inside a prison environment. Hence, this open and inclusive approach to team participation strengthens the event's rehabilitative and social objectives but also offers opportunities for visibility and impact.

Nevertheless, the involvement of external teams also greatly affects logistics. The process does become complex and needs to be carefully planned in the months leading up to the event. Participants, particularly from other prisons, need to be screened for security risks and specialised transport must be arranged well in advance.



## LINK TO DELIVERY

The quality of a Football Works Festival is directly linked to the success of the specific Football Works implementations inside the prisons. Successful deliveries of the training sessions, mentoring, and personal development activities not only prepares participants for the event but also enhances the overall atmosphere, learning value, and credibility of the tournament.

Participation in the tournament is intentionally linked to involvement in the Football Works programme. Only prisoners who have taken part in the project's regular sessions are eligible to join their prison's team, ensuring that the event serves as a meaningful milestone within their personal development pathway. Prisoners from other facilities who are engaged in similar Football Works initiatives may also take part when travelling teams are invited.

This connection reinforces motivation as the tournament becomes a reward for consistent engagement, while also providing a real-world context in which participants can apply the skills and behaviours developed during the programme.

Beyond current participants, the tournament also provides an important platform for former prisoners who have completed the Football Works programme. Their involvement is encouraged in two ways:

- As team members: Former participants who have reintegrated into society can join external teams. Their presence demonstrates that positive change is possible and provides immediate, relatable role models for participants still in detention.
- As mentors and ambassadors: Former participants can be invited to take part in workshops, speak to teams, or engage with media during the event. Sharing their experiences, both, challenges and successes, adds authenticity and helps strengthen public understanding of rehabilitation through sport.

By ensuring strong continuity between programme delivery and tournament participation, the event becomes much more than a competition. It becomes an extension of the learning process, a celebration of progress, and a powerful bridge between detention, release, and reintegration.



# CONFERENCE IDEAS

Alongside the tournament, the Football Works Festival offers a fantastic opportunity to share knowledge, showcase impact, and strengthen the network of organisations working around reintegration through sport. A well-designed conference component can therefore enrich the event for participating teams, practitioners, policymakers, and external guests.

From experience, it is recommended to organise up to four short workshops / presentations, with each lasting around 30 mins. This ensures that the programme is engaging and manageable as well as provides the participants the chance to network with peers and attend the tournament. These sessions should offer a balance between Football Works related content, broader rehabilitation initiatives, as well as inspiring personal stories. This ensures that there is something of interest for all attendees. As such please find some recommendations around the themes for presentations below.

1

## RECOMMENDED PRESENTATION AND WORKSHOP THEMES

Using the Power of Networks in Reintegration through Sport

- Demonstrate how the Festival brings together clubs, prisons, community organisations, NGOs and much more from across Europe.
- Share examples of cross-border cooperation or joint initiatives that have emerged through previous Football Works events.
- Invite network-oriented organisations such as for example the EPEA (European Prison Education Association) or similar bodies to present their work and explore synergies.

2

Showcasing Football Works Delivery Models

- Present different approaches to running Football Works programmes. This can be done through the different delivery organisation where they can present their specific approach to implementation.
- Highlight lessons, variations in structure, and examples of how the delivery quality influences outcomes.

3

Inside-Outside Reintegration Pathways

- Use the conference setting to share insights into how football-based programmes link pre-release training with post-release support.
- This may include collaborations with employers, community clubs, social enterprises, mentoring structures or others.

Stories of Change: Former Participant Perspectives

- Invite former participants who have successfully reintegrated to speak about their journey and experience in the programme.
- These testimonials can give guests a rare and authentic insight into the challenges of reintegration and the role that sport can play to build key skills and allow for personal development.

Showcasing other Prison-based Projects

- Including workshops from unrelated but other innovative prison programmes (e.g. education, vocational training, arts or health interventions) provides variety and can also appeal to guests who may not be exclusively focussed on football.
- This can also strengthen the prison's broader narrative around rehabilitation.

## PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Being able to deliver a high quality conference aspect to the tournaments is also dependant on the available facilities and preplanned actions. Factors such as spaces and equipment should be arranged well in advance including for example that the chairs are set up, projectors are tested, sound is working and printed materials are prepared. Equally, it is important to properly communicate about the different presentations to the festival participants. Internet and access to phones is a rarity within prisons and as such the presentations should be outlined in some form of festival booklets that includes an overview of presentations or through posters and flyers at the venue. Similarly, if there is some form of PA system, short announcements in the lead up to sessions could be made to inform participants (e.g. 15mins in advance).

Offering a concise but varied conference programme allows the Football Works Festival and event organisers to create space for dialogue, offer learning opportunities and provide a platform for deeper collaboration, ensuring that the event will leave a lasting impact.





# STEPS TO ORGANISE A FESTIVAL

Below the different steps to organise a Festival are outlined. These are based on some of the topics that have been previously covered and are thus based on the input from the different project partners, ensuring that the Festival can be a success.

**1**

## SECURE A MOTIVATED HOST PRISON

Identify a prison that is willing and enthusiastic about hosting the festival. Early conversations should cover both logistical and financial implications, including catering, staffing, and security, as well as the benefits, such as enhanced prison climate, positive publicity, and an engaging experience for staff and participants.

**2**

## CLARIFY FINANCING AND SPONSORSHIP

Work with prison management to determine how the event will be funded. External organisations may be interested in supporting the event and thus offer some form of sponsorship. Sponsors should receive meaningful visibility, for example being acknowledged in the opening speech of the prison director, featured in programme materials, and displayed on banners around the pitch.

**3**

## APPOINT AN INTERNAL PROJECT LEADER AND TEAM

The prison should designate a motivated internal project leader who has the mandate and capacity to lead the process. This person is responsible for forming a cross-departmental project team and creating an action plan with clear task distribution.

The project team should meet monthly to track progress, adjust timelines, and learn from materials or experiences of previous host prisons.

**4**

## INVITE PARTICIPATING TEAMS

The project leader should invite teams that align with the Football Works concept. These may include:

- Teams from other prisons running Football Works programmes
- External reintegration teams or partner organisations
- International teams, where feasible

It is recommended to support international teams by helping them find affordable travel and accommodation options. For instance, it is valuable to offer transport from an airport to the venue to facilitate the process of travel especially as prisons are often in somewhat isolated areas.

**5**

## INVITE STAKEHOLDERS AND GUESTS EARLY

To maximise impact and visibility, key guests should be invited well in advance. These may include representatives from:

- Sport organisations and community partners
- Labour-market and reintegration networks
- Prison service leadership and relevant ministries

The right audience increases the festival's credibility and fosters broader support.

**6**

## CONDUCT SECURITY SCREENING AND ARRANGE TRANSPORT

All visiting prisoners must be screened early to ensure they are permitted to attend under prison security regulations. Any required secure transport should be organised in collaboration with prison logistics teams to avoid last-minute complications.



## 7

### ENGAGE THE MEDIA

Inform media outlets about the event and invite a limited number to attend. Ideally, this would include one film crew and one print journalist, preferably from national outlets.

Promote the festival through the prison's communication channels and through the networks of participating teams. To encourage the posting it can be beneficial to prepare some form of templates for a social media post.

## 8

### COMMUNICATE RULES AND REQUIREMENTS

Ensure that all teams and guests receive clear information about the festival and prison rules at a very early stage to avoid any confusion and unnecessary discussions during the event. This includes:

- Registration deadlines (e.g., at least two weeks in advance)
- Prohibition of mobile phones, smart watches and other electronic items inside the prison
- Identification requirements at the entrance

Clear and transparent communication at an early stage avoids delays and ensures smooth entry for all participants.

## 9

### DELIVER THE EVENT – AND ENJOY IT

On the day of the festival, the operational plan will guide the activities, but it is equally important to appreciate the significance of the event. Football Works Festivals are a rare and inspiring celebration of collaboration, personal development, and reintegration. Enjoying the day is part of what makes it memorable for everyone involved!

# FUNDING AND LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY

Securing sustainable funding is essential to ensure that the Football Works programme can continue beyond the initial lifespan of the Erasmus+ project. As such this initial funding via the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union has played a crucial role in enabling the consortium to truly test the Football Works methodology and refine it where necessary. With this funding stream ending at the start of 2026, the continuation of the delivery across all partner organisation depends on securing diverse funding streams and being able to use a strong evidence of impact.

## THE ECONOMIC CASE FOR CONTINUED INVESTMENT

For public institutions, Football Works represents not only a socially valuable initiative but also a financially prudent one. The costs of incarcerating a single individual for a year remains extremely high across countries within Europe. For instance:

- United Kingdom: more than £50 000 per inmate per year
- Germany: more than €60 000 per inmate per year (based on around €166 per day) with trends pointing upwards
- More countries information:  
<https://www.datapulse.de/en/incarceration-costs-in-the-eu/>

Comparing to the overall Football Works budget (via the Erasmus+ programme) - €400 000 – as well as the 230+ participants that have completed the methodology, even modest reductions in reoffending would indicate that the programme pays for itself. Moreover, preliminary internal analysis among some partners has suggested that the reoffending rate among Football Works participants has been around 25%, much lower compared to the numbers cited at the start for the project. For instance, adult offenders had a proven reoffending rate of 28%, juvenile offenders a reoffending rate of 39.2%; and adults that served less than 12-months had a reoffending rate of 62.7%. Nevertheless, these figures need further validation once official national data is released and partners have the chance to analyse reoffending rates among their participants. However, in this sense, Football Works has the potential to pay for itself several times over, especially when public authorities support its continuation given that this can save considerable taxpayer money.

## NATIONAL APPROACHES TO FUNDING AND CONTINUATION

Although in the Football Works project all partners unite under one banner, each partner needs to analyse the project within its own local context to determine how the project can continue after the start of next year. Below, some of the strategies and funding opportunities that have opened up are presented to give an idea of the type of organisations that are keen to continue to support a Football Works delivery:

Saints Foundation, United Kingdom

- Due to interest of other prisons within the country, exploring opportunities to scale the model nationally by training additional prisons and football clubs.
- Developing a project, which focuses more on supporting the ex-offenders in the community and can be funded by local partners.
- Building stronger links with the wider prison system to secure long-term institutional support.

Dienst Justitiële Inrichtingen (DJI), Netherlands

- Increasing support from local governments and prisons, recognising the positive behavioural and social impact of the programme.
- Growing interest among Dutch football clubs, wishing to collaborate with nearby prisons to deliver the project.

Stichting FC Emmen Naoberschap, Netherlands

- Strong commitment to continue the programme with prison partners.
- Exploring potential funding from national foundations.
- Working with the prison to identify new collaborative models and long-term delivery mechanisms.

Administration for the Execution of Criminal Sanctions (KPZ Sremska Mitrovica), Serbia

- The prison has strengthened internal support to continue Football Works- based initiatives.
- Exploring further collaborations with external stakeholders.
- Other Serbian prisons expressed interest in learning more about the project.

Bohemian FC, Ireland

- Secured a new community partner, the Chrysalis project, to support ongoing delivery for participants after release.

Stiftelsen Vålerenga Fotball Samfunn (VIF), Norway

- Integrating Football Works with other foundation based programmes to optimise staffing and resources.
- Benefitting from a strong cooperation across the prison service, probation service, welfare system, transitional housing and several other interested prisons.
- Exploring further funding streams via Footballstiftelsen, a national funding organisation.

## MONITORING AND EVALUATION

To obtain the above information and ensure that Football Works and its methodology was developed throughout the project, a strong monitoring and evaluation system was key. M&E is an integral part of any project, as it helps to keep an overview of all activities; monitor progress; and specifically shows what kind of impact one is making in the lives of the participants. Moreover, keeping track of this information helps to make more informed decisions about the programme and improve it through well-planned changes.

The Football Works project used the monitoring and evaluation platform 'Upshot'. This is an online platform that each Football Works project partner has access to and multiple partners are keen to continue using it.

As part of the Football Works project, partners are asked to collect the following information:

- Added each planned and delivered session (football training session; each workshop)
- Added each participant to Upshot
  - And their attendance at all sessions and workshops.
  - Participant Data included Name, Nickname, gender, Date of Birth (due to the unique environment of prisons as well as GDPR requirements, real names are not necessary for the participation creation on Upshot, as long as the coach knew which participant links to which name).
- A Football Works survey was created in the early stages of the project to keep track of valuable insights and improve delivery. As such the following information was collected:
  - Attitudes towards the 11 core values
  - Physical activity and health
  - Mental health (heavily inspired by the Warwick Edinburgh Wellbeing Survey)
  - Work motivation and opportunities
  - Feedback on the programme



- The survey was done pre- as well as post-programme.
- Timeline events: to each participant profile, multiple timeline events can be added, which can be seen like qualitative notes based around certain themes. Hence, this process made it possible to follow along the participants and keep an overview of the progress and write down key notes.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In some prison there may be a NOMIS system inside the prison that tracks the behaviour and attitudes of inmates.





# FUTURE STEPS / CONCLUSION

The Football Works project has demonstrated that a football-based reintegration methodology can be successfully adapted in prisons across different countries. Throughout the delivery, partners have gained extensive insights around what a high-quality implementation entails, how the methodology can be adapted and what is required for long-term sustainability.

## STRENGTHENING THE METHODOLOGY THROUGH RESOURCES AND PARTNERSHIPS

Across the project, a consistent finding has been the importance of adequate staffing and stable partnerships. Delivering the full methodology, particularly the intensive work required in Step 3, demands time, continuity and strong relationships with organisations and actors both inside and outside the prison. Some partners found that the project implementations have been most effective when a full-time staff member could coordinate delivery, analyse participant progress and build links with employers and community organisations. While this is not always possible, due to the necessary costs and funding, it does greatly enhance quality, evaluation and long-term outcomes.

Several partners have also succeeded in attracting new partners as a direct result of visible impact. For instance, multiple local authorities across the Netherlands expressed their interest in future collaboration due to the programme's potential to reduce reoffending, and prisons are continuing Football Works initiatives without the reliance on external subsidies. In the UK, the Saints Foundation also highlighted the value of partnerships with internal prison departments, such as the substance misuse teams or probation, as well as the crucial role of 1-to-1 mentoring in supporting participants before and after release. The Serbian and Irish partners similarly noted improved delivery and reintegration pathways through a strong internal collaboration and valuable community partnerships.

## ADAPTING AND IMPROVING THE 3-STEP METHODOLOGY

The consortium also reflected on the methodology itself. For instance, a key recommendation is the parallel delivery of Step 1 and Step 2 over a period of around 12 weeks. This structure helped to maintain a high motivation through regular football sessions while also facilitating the process of completing surveys and collecting evaluation data. It created a more consistent rhythm of workshops, physical activity and personal development, thereby bringing a clear routine to the participant lives – something that is valuable even for their release.

As expected at an early stage in the project, partners also emphasised the need for local adaptation. Each prison operates within its own logistical, security, and organisational framework, even when within the same country. National legislation, local rules, staff capacity, and facilities all influence programme delivery. As a result, no single implementation across partners has been exactly identical. While this may seem challenging for a standardised evaluation, the project consortium believes that this has produced much greater insights into how Football Works can be delivered across vastly differently environments, showing great and much needed flexibility.

## INSIGHTS FROM DELIVERY: WHAT WORKS IN PRACTICE

As it is not possible to list all of the individual learnings made throughout the project by all individual partners, certain themes have emerged that are important for achieving meaningful and lasting impact:

- Participant Selection: It is highly recommended to select participants with 6-12 months left of their sentence and an interest in preparing for employment as they will benefit the most.
- Consistent internal leadership: projects with a dedicated project leader inside the prison were more likely to maintain momentum and coordination.
- Structured support up to and after release: Regular 1-to-1 meetings, continuous contact until release and careful planning around licence conditions improve post-release engagement, reducing the chance of reoffending.
- Realistic timeframes: Cohorts of 9-12 weeks proved to be a suitable timeframe depending on local conditions, whereby early release schemes and high staff turnover requires flexibility.
- Positive identity and belonging: perhaps one of the greatest impacts in connecting football clubs with prisons is around the power of the badge and the use of brand identity and clothing. Participants displayed increased motivation, confidence and a sense of being valued. They were motivated to behave well as to not be excluded from the programme. This was achieved through club shirts, receiving certificates and creating strong group bonds through the delivery and stable participation.
- Employer engagement within prison: facilitating contact between employers and participants before release reduced dropout and improved reintegration outcomes.

## NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS AND PATHWAYS FORWARD

As outlined further above, several partners are planning to expand the work in this area. The Netherlands will further disseminate the Inside model, with numerous prisons collaborating with football clubs across the countries and integrating improved monitoring through the Upshot system. In Serbia, the prison is committed to applying lessons learned from the project to further improve future programmes and strengthen internal expertise. The Saints Foundation in the UK will continue its programme beyond the pilot phase, sharing learning with other prisons and exploring further options such as expanding the delivery outside the prison to better support former inmates. Norwegian, Irish and German partners are also exploring further collaborations, thereby improving internal processes and assessing future directions. Across all countries, the project has shown that football can be used as a tool and lead to individual change, motivating participants, build trust and create new opportunities for the life after release.

## LOOKING AHEAD: A SHARED EUROPEAN PLATFORM

The website of Football Works (<https://footballworks.eu/>) will also continue to be used outside of the Erasmus+ project. It will serve as a platform for prisons, football clubs and reintegration projects that use football as a tool for social change. It will offer insights, share resources and help institutions to connect with one another, contributing to a wider European movement towards more effective and community integrated reintegration practices.

As such project coordinator DJI, or more specifically Gerko Brink, is committed to keep the Football Works delivery running within the Netherlands and Europe wide. Further tournaments will be hosted on a regular basis. For any additional information do not hesitate to reach out to some of the key contacts in the Football Works project:

NAME	ORGANISATION	COUNTRY	EMAIL
Gerko Brink	DJI	Netherlands	<a href="mailto:g.brink@dji.minjus.nl">g.brink@dji.minjus.nl</a>
Nikolina Vaselek	KPZ Sremska Mitrovica	Serbia	<a href="mailto:vaseleknikolina@gmail.com">vaseleknikolina@gmail.com</a>
Frank Linde	Bayer 04 Leverkusen	Germany	<a href="mailto:frank.linde@bayer04.de">frank.linde@bayer04.de</a>
Jed Haney	Saints Foundation	England	<a href="mailto:jhaney@saintsfoundation.co.uk">jhaney@saintsfoundation.co.uk</a>
Jack Dyer	Saints Foundation	England	<a href="mailto:jdyer@saintsfoundation.co.uk">jdyer@saintsfoundation.co.uk</a>
Maren Vik Edvardsen	Vålerenga Samfunn	Norway	<a href="mailto:maren.vik.edvardsen@vif.no">maren.vik.edvardsen@vif.no</a>
Hugo de Olde	FC Emmen	Netherlands	<a href="mailto:Hugo.deOlde@fcemmen.nl">Hugo.deOlde@fcemmen.nl</a>

## FINAL REFLECTIONS

The Football Works project has demonstrated that the Football Works methodology does indeed work and that it can grow, adapt and inspire. Staff across countries noticed the increased motivation and pride in participating in a recognised, high-impact initiative. Participants themselves have also highlighted feelings of feeling valued and supported, leading to further improvements in behaviour, commitment to improve life skills and higher chance of a successful job search.

Ultimately, the project's success is grounded in collaboration, knowledge exchange and a commitment to continuous improvement. While challenges do remain, such as resource constraints and structural limitations within the different prison systems, the consortium has build a foundation for the future. The work in the project displays the impact of right partnerships, strong support, and a belief in participant's potential and how football can indeed be a force for rehabilitation in Europe.



# CASE STUDIES AND TESTIMONIALS

Below are some notable Case Studies and Testimonials from the participants of Football Works throughout the years.

## CASE STUDIES

### CASE STUDY 1:

#### FC BUITENSPEL

In this 2-part documentary, national Dutch television follows 4 participants from the FC Emmen delivery in the prison of Veenhuizen. It is available on the website in video format: <https://footballworks.eu/case-studies/fc-buitenspel-in-fc-emmen-inside-project-pi-veenhuizen/>



### CASE STUDY 2:

#### ADULT MALE- 36 YEARS OLD, 3 SPELLS IN PRISON, RECENTLY COMPLETED A 9-MONTH SENTENCE AT HMP WINCHESTER.

During his recent sentence, Participant A completed his barbering level 2 qualification whilst at HMP Winchester. Participant A joined the Saints Restart programme with 8 weeks left on their sentence and became fully engaged in both the sessions and his barbering. Having also been engaging with Spurgeon's, an organisation that works with fathers with a key focus on children and strengthening family relationships, Participant A had shown a huge commitment towards a positive change.

Upon release Participant A continued his engagement with the Saints Restart programme, attending sessions in the community, and joining 1-1 mentoring sessions. Following a few practice haircuts at St Mary's Stadium on Saints Foundation staff, Participant A was motivated to join a meeting with a potential barber willing to take him on as an apprentice.

Following a short meeting, he managed to win over the barber and got himself an apprenticeship with a barber within Southampton and was absolutely "buzzing" at the opportunity. With collaboration from Saints Foundation, Spurgeon's, and probation Participant A felt they had a support network like never before. Showing a great initiative and passing all drug tests, probation was happy for Participant A to move out of the approved premises after only a month, rather than 3 months proposed. On top of this participant A continued to work with Spurgeon's upon release and following a month of consultations and, he now has full access to all 5 of his children.

Overall Participant A has shown a real desire for positive change, completing his first ever qualification, joining an apprenticeship opportunity, building strong family connections and liaising with his probation officer. Participant A is so appreciative for the support from Saints Foundation, HMP Winchester, Spurgeon's and his probation officer.

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*"Thank you bud, since going to jail for the second time, i ruined my bond with my daughter and found it so hard to speak to her at times, this has brought us close again mate and it's so nice, I could never thank you enough."*

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### CASE STUDY 3:

#### ADULT MALE- 51 YEARS OLD, RECENTLY COMPLETED AN 18-MONTH SENTENCE AT HMP WINCHESTER (FIRST OFFENCE)

Participant B completed the Saints Restart programme and helped with identifying participants for the next cohort, whilst on the wing. Participant B was really engaging during the sessions and really enjoyed his time whilst on the programme while in HMP Winchester. Upon release Participant B has engaged on a weekly basis and has managed to find employment. Participant B also managed to volunteer to wave the flags pre match at a Southampton FC league match. Participant B really wants to get involved more with the Saints Foundation and engaged weekly upon release, including joining for the Feltham football works tournament and will be in attendance for the tournament in Holland this September.

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*“It’s a fantastic programme. It’s the interaction you get with the others. Jed and Daz have been awesome, made you feel at ease & it’s good to meet the different sections of the prison. You don’t always get the answers you want, but at least you can ask the questions. It’s good at team building, knowing when you get outside there’s someone you can talk to and somewhere you can go where they’ll help you, and maybe you can help them. This is the best thing I’ve done since I’ve been here.”*

”



### CASE STUDY 4:

One young man who benefitted from the project is participant C, a tree surgeon, who was living in the city of Southampton with his partner and dogs, before he was reprimanded.

Catching up with Pathways Project Manager Jed a month after his release, Participant C said: “I was really suffering with my mental health leading up to my sentencing. The Saints Restart project is very good for your mental health helps to keep you busy.”

Saints Foundation work in partnership with the prison team at HMP Winchester to support offenders through 1-to-1 mentoring, physical activity, and group sessions, with engagement continuing beyond the gate as the team continue their work with the probation officers.

“I have been doing boxing with Jed, and it’s helping me stay away from crime, there were some days all I could think about was drinking and getting recalled.”

Since leaving prison Participant C has gained funding to complete their tree surgeon qualifications and has moved into employment.

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*“The workshops in prison are amazing, they really help bring people out of their shells and help you talk while in custody, it makes you feel like you aren’t just a prisoner, or a number It made me feel human again.”*

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## CASE STUDY 5:

### INTERVIEW WITH A PARTICIPANT FROM THE FC DORDRECHT DELIVERY IN THE PI DORDRECHT

Interview -> Yaffa (fictitious name).

Yaffa has currently been out for 8 months. Before this, he was detained in the prison of Dordrecht for 5 years. He currently lives in Utrecht in his own owner-occupied house.

#### 1 WHAT ARE CURRENTLY YOUR DAILY ACTIVITIES (WORK/EDUCATION)? HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU CURRENTLY WITH THIS?

He works for a construction company for 2-4 days a week. He also occasionally works at his brother's business. Besides work, he likes to play sports like football with friends. Before getting stuck, he trained as a car mechanic but did not finish it.

#### 2 ARE THERE ANY SPECIFIC CHALLENGES OR OPPORTUNITIES AT WORK YOU ARE FACING?

In the beginning, he had to get very used to the crowds around him. During detention, he had become used to being behind the (cell) door after 17:00. As a result, he had become very used to rest in the evenings. Now in freedom, he notices that after a busy working day, he can really enjoy the peace and quiet in the evening. To do anything else in the evening causes too many stimuli. He needs time to process everything.

Furthermore, he found it difficult how others thought about him in the workplace. There is always a certain stigma on 'having been stuck' anyway. He was afraid that people might judge him on this.

#### 3 WHY DID YOU WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROJECT?

He had been asked for the project. He had quite some prestige in the ward and could manage other inmates quite well. This had given him the task of leading the group in a positive way. Furthermore, he also found football very interesting and was curious to see what he could learn from the project. Anyone with a maximum of one and a half years left to serve could join the project, from any layer of society (status, money, etc...).

#### 4 HOW DID YOU EXPERIENCE THE PROJECT?

The interviewee considered the project very instructive. He has a positive outlook on the project. He favours every inmate to participate because this project means a lot to many inmates.

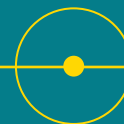
He was allowed to participate in the football tournament in Krimpen prison and he felt quite sorry for the inmates still inside at the time. He had a bad feeling about it when he went through the gates into the prison. Therefore, it was very nice that he was allowed out again after the tournament. It is sad that the inmates are inside and have had to leave their families and their lives behind.

#### 5 WHAT DID YOU TAKE AWAY FROM THE PROJECT?

Through the project, he has learned to let people speak properly. Previously, he found this difficult. He has taken this trait outside and he now applies this in many areas, including at work. He 'corrects' people through his non verbal communication, allowing others to elaborate. This happens naturally without coming across as harsh or unkind.

#### 6 DO YOU HAVE THE SAME GOALS AS BACK THEN? AND WHY?

His goal was to have a home after his detention. This he succeeded in doing. He also currently has a girlfriend which makes him very happy. From the project, he has also noticed that he can have a positive influence on people. From the municipality, he has been asked to perhaps do something in the neighbourhood with young people. He is still talking about this. It is not yet known when or how he can start this.



## **7 CAN YOU GIVE AN EXAMPLE OF THE GOALS IN WHICH YOU HAVE GROWN THROUGH THE PROJECT?**

Yaffa is a frequent speaker and knows how to convey that to people in a convincing way. He feels that both during his time in detention and outside detention, people listen to him. He is aware that he is good at telling stories and getting a message across to another person. This is because he speaks calmly and clearly but is also good at listening to others.

## **8 DID YOU INVOLVE ANYONE FROM THE SOCIAL NETWORK IN THE PROJECT? IF SO, HAS THIS BEEN ABLE TO CONTRIBUTE TO YOUR CONNECTION WITH THIS PERSON?**

During the project, he had a good friend of his involved. This friend always comes first with him. Even before and during his detention, he has always continued to support him. He trusts this friend and they do a lot together. In his opinion, it did not necessarily make the bond stronger because this bond was already good. He did like seeing him after detention in a different setting than the visitors' room. He did not like receiving visitors in a prison very much at all.

The interviewee indicated that he could see himself in a similar role to Jules Rasoelbaks. This is an expert by experience who now works in prison. He feels that, like Jules, he can be very convincing.

He also feels that he often has some standing with other inmates because of his offence. He does not think this is a good example himself but unfortunately this does make people listen to him.

## **9 WHAT OTHER TIPS COULD YOU GIVE US FOR THE PROJECT?**

At the beginning of the project, the sportswear was not there. He noticed that when the sportswear came, it made him feel more united with the team. This made for better cooperation. These football clothes made the group have a better identity in the prison. He gave a tip for the project that perhaps the training sessions could be made a little more attractive. Sometimes boys have no motivation to go to training sessions. If they know that they get something tasty at every training session, which they may not be able to get themselves, they will be more inclined to attend every training session. This might cause fewer dropouts. He mentioned 'inside out' as an example. In this project, you get filled cakes and apple turnovers every week. As a result, there are many motivated participants to come to training every week.

## **10 WHAT WOULD YOU GIVE SOMEONE WHO IS STILL AT THE START OF THE PROJECT?**

He indicated that it is important to fully focus on the project and look at how people really are. It is important to give everyone a chance so that they can also become more confident.

## **11 WHAT DID YOU RUN INTO WHEN YOU GOT BACK OUTSIDE?**

When he just got out, he ran into a lot of problems with not being able to apply for a bank account. At every bank, he was refused because you had to fill in whether you had been in touch with justice in the last 5/10 years. The same goes for applying for car insurance.

Other than that, he enjoys every day since being outside again but continues to find the crowds and all the stimuli difficult.

## **12 COULD THE PI OFFER MORE TO GIVE MORE SUPPORT IN THIS(RIC)?**

You run into things like housing and checking accounts etc.. As a PI, they can offer little support in this because it is difficult for everyone.

### 13 WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE LIKED TO HAVE ALREADY ARRANGED INSIDE THAT WOULD HAVE MADE IT EASIER OUTSIDE?

Arranging social housing. This he had not yet arranged inside. Via via via it later after about a month it worked out. Here you should be helped from the municipality's aftercare, but they were only able to do little for him. He had to do this on his own.

### 14 WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHANGE YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED ON A PERSONAL LEVEL IN THE PAST YEAR?

He noticed that his behaviour had changed a lot by working with the core values. He can control his anger much better. He no longer gets angry so easily. He noticed that he has become more patient and kind. Furthermore, Yaffa now has a house and a girlfriend. These are also 2 big changes.

### 15 WHAT WERE THE BIGGEST CHANGES THAT HAD DEVELOPED IN SOCIETY BEFORE YOUR DETENTION AND AFTER?

Especially digitalisation. Paying everything with debit cards and almost nothing in cash anymore. He also felt that prices had changed a lot (increased). He also felt that young people had become very cheeky. He was shocked by the language used by fairly young children. He felt that society has hardened and become less civilised. Further, he also indicated that he does not give his number to just anyone who is still in prison. He wants to put this chapter behind him and not be constantly reminded of people still inside. There is 1 inmate he still speaks to once every few weeks.



## CASE STUDY 6:

### INTERVIEW WITH A PARTICIPANT FROM FC EMMEN GIVING UP IS NOT AN OPTION

**Hans (49)** spent more than three years in prison and left the jail with a job. 'Before, during and after detention, you can face many setbacks. The biggest setback? That I ended up in jail, left my wife pregnant and could not be present at the birth of my son. I had done something wrong, but didn't want to make it worse than it already was. I decided to flip the switch: what can I do to make the most of the time inside?'

'Through my case manager, I started talking about what I wanted after detention. Because I live near Emmen, I started volunteering at FC Emmen. There I came into contact with Matchboyz Recruiting and Career, the company of former FC Emmen director Henk Eising and Jasper Veenstra. They knew I really liked cooking, but I had no papers for it and besides, training costs a lot of money. Because I was motivated, they set out to arrange something for me. And with success! During the latter part of my sentence, I went to work at a restaurant and trained as a cook. This was the breakthrough for me.'

'I think my motivation played a big role. I too thought, perhaps like you, that others don't really listen and didn't understand me either. But always look at yourself and don't blame anyone else. Realise that setbacks can always come your way, but try to get something positive out of them every time. And a final tip: show that you really want it!'

## CASE STUDY 7:

### STREETFOOTBALL BECAME GOALKEEPER RUBEN'S SAVE

#### Study Case Vålerenga Samfunn

Rusavhengige Ruben (42) ble dømt til fotball. Nå stortrives han i buret - [Fagbladet.no](https://www.fagbladet.no)

#### Streetfootball became goalkeeper Ruben's save

**Club:** Stiftelsen Vålerenga Fotball Samfunn (Vålerenga Samfunn)

**Name:** Ruben Pedersen      **Age:** 42 years old

**Gender:** Man      **Country:** Norway

For the goalkeeper, he got a punishment he would not have done without. As a child, he loved to play and be a goalkeeper. He played for Sarpsborg's boys' team. But bad experiences both in his family and in the football, community led to substance abuse and a destructive life. But along the way, he always missed football. That is why the community sentence he received last year was a lucky hit: training with the street team for a year and participating in volunteer work at the club was his save. If he didn't receive the community service sentence, he wouldn't be on the training field here today and would most likely be living on the streets. He wouldn't have been drug-free for a year either.

Ruben have had a tough background. His childhood was full of insecurity. His father was violent towards his mother. Eventually, she got away. Shortly after, his father committed suicide. Around the same time, six-year-old Ruben starts playing football.

He loves playing in goal. But then something happens that will cast new dark shadows over his life. Ruben and three other teammates are sexually abused by the coach. The abuse continues until they are twelve years old. He couldn't talk about things and started skipping school. When the teacher asked if something was wrong, Ruben replied "no, nothing". Other parents suspected what might have happened, but didn't say anything to his mother. Then he started to follow the footsteps of his three-year-old brother and started using drugs. It helped the anxiety and pain. He managed to play football until he was 16, but then football became a bit more serious, and drugs took over. He was seen as a problem child at school. Instead of being taken care of and talked to, he was placed in a special class and then in the child welfare system. Then it all started with a prison sentence for two armed robberies he and a friend committed equipped with an air rifle and a knife. He got into debt. He got out of prison at 18, got hooked on heroin and has mostly lived on the streets since then. Out of consideration for his mother, he chose the streets of Oslo. He has occasionally been in rehab and treatment at various places. He has rarely managed to stay longer than a week. With poor impulse control he would leave as soon as he felt like it. As soon as he walked out the door, he regretted it, but it was too late.

Ruben has been in the LAR system for several years and tried various medications as an antidote to heroin. But it didn't help, because he wasn't ready for it.

The turning point came with a hat-trick of favorable factors. Three weeks of detoxification at a hospital, moving into an apartment at Haugenstua and community service on the street. The punishment was because he, armed with an air pistol, threatened the ex-boyfriend of a girl he was with, when he got to know that the ex-had abused her. With his history and trauma, he did a stupid thing. But something good came out of it. He received community service and started playing football again. Going to training, playing matches, volunteer work and making new friends is the best aftercare he could get, Ruben believes. He praises the coaches and the people around the projects in Vålerenga their great follow-up.

As soon as they see that you are having a difficulty time, they are there for you. Ruben's brother has been drug-free for 15 years. It happened through salvation at a gospel center. That was not for Ruben. No, football and Vålerenga Samfunn was his salvation. "Vål`enga is his religion".





## CASE STUDY 8:

### PREDRAG FROM SERBIA - FORMER PRISONER ON THE STRAIGHT AND NARROW THANKS TO FOOTBALL WORKS PROJECT

After seven editions in a Dutch prison, the international football tournament Football Works was held in another country for the first time on 13th September 2024. This time it took place in Sremska Mitrovica prison in Serbia. Football Works is an international football tournament for prisons and organisations that work with (former) prisoners. The aim is to help them successfully reintegrate into society through sport.

Sremska Mitrovica Prison is not only the largest prison in Serbia, but in the Balkan region as a whole. The prison consists of a closed, semi-open and open department and can host up to 1850 inmates. Among other things, the prison includes a horse breeding farm, numerous production departments such as a metalwork facility, a farm and two hotels. The prisoners who stay in the open facility are well aware that they must behave in order not to lose their relative freedom. One misstep means being transferred back to the much stricter normal prison, and they absolutely do not want to risk that.

#### REHABILITATION THROUGH SPORT

The regular prison, with some new but also many older buildings, includes a large work complex. There are various departments here, including a printing works and a woodworking department. Around 300 dogs are also connected to the prison. The four-legged friends are lovingly cared for and resocialised by the prisoners. Resocialisation is also the goal for the prisoners, where sports is used for this purpose.

The **Football Works** tournament, which is a great reward for a group of motivated prisoners, is a good example of this.

The organising prison is represented by two teams. One team is selected from the high-security section of the prison, the other from the open facility. They are joined by one ex-prisoner. During the tournament, Predrag (34), a former prisoner from Novi Sad in Serbia, explains that he was not only imprisoned in Sremska Mitrovica, but also spent time in an Austrian prison. He earned his living in agriculture, but ultimately made the wrong choices in life and ended up in prison twice.

#### 'FOOTBALL GAVE ME THE RIGHT PUSH'

"Football gave me the push in the right direction again. I always played football outside, so when I heard about the football project in Sremska Mitrovica, I signed up immediately. During the project, I worked on the core values of Football Works, such as discipline, respect, initiative and teamwork. I learned new skills. For example, how to write a CV and what is expected of you in the job market. I also worked on my self-confidence and behaviour. I followed the workshops offered by Restart on addiction, crime prevention and support for (ex-)prisoners with great interest."

During the tournament in the autumn of 2024, Predrag will be a free man again. But when he received a call from his old coach in prison asking him to return as a guest player to



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*Football gave me the push in the right direction again.*

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participate in the prison football tournament, he didn't have to think twice. I owe a lot to the football project, I wanted to see my old teammates again and I want to be a good example for other prisoners who are not as far along as I am.

#### EARNING HONEST MONEY

Predrag has already applied for several jobs and made such a good impression that he could start working. But because he wants to focus on finding a job with a higher salary, he has decided to return to his old job on his family's farm for the time being. He grows tomatoes and peppers. The ex-prisoner still maintains good contacts with the prison where he previously served his sentence and where he learned that you can also earn money in an honest and decent way.

Sremska Mitrovica Prison helps him wherever possible to find a suitable job. As a token of appreciation, but also to help men who are in the same boat he was in, Predrag likes to visit the prison to play football again. This time not as a prisoner, but as a role model. In the hope that others will also choose a different path in life.

#### TWO TELEVISION CREWS

The fact that the Football Works tournament on Serbian soil was a special event was evident from the presence of no fewer than two television crews. Serbia's national television station made several reports for the evening news broadcast on television and their online platform. A television crew from the Netherlands was also present, filming a two-part documentary about a football project in the Veenhuizen prison. The television documentary provides an insight into what the project entails, what it can achieve and how prisoners, prison staff and the professional football club involved experience this special initiative.

## TESTIMONIALS



*"It's helped me open up a lot more. Before, I'd rarely talk about anything – but it's helped me know it's alright to share things. **Most of my life I've been passed aside but to have someone say, I can help you, you deserve to be helped, it's a very good thing.** I've got a bit more at ease for my release knowing there is a route I can take. Go into a job. Go into actual goodness. I have no experience at all in the work place. Having someone liaise with me, tell me what I can do – it makes me more at ease."*

– Joe age 22, HMP Winchester, serving an 18 month sentence.

*"I was starting to get depressed and really anxious. [Restart] has made me feel positive, **it's been that bridging voice, between us and what happens next. If I've had any issues about what happens next Jed has been the one to help.** It's made my time leading up to release a lot more positive, and it's made it go a lot faster."*

– Brian, age 54, HMP Winchester, serving an 18 month sentence (has been in prison 3 times before)

*"It's made me know a lot more, readying for release. **It's good to have a genuine, positive avenue to go down. I know I now have someone to go to, it's a brand new world and we'll utilise the help.** If it wasn't for Jed I wouldn't have even met my POM – I'd be sat on the wing, I'd be getting stressed and when I'm on my own I'm my own worst enemy. You end up wasting away and then it's straight back on the merry go round."*

– Jamie, care leaver age 46, HMP Winchester, serving a 2 year sentence but has spent a total of 17 years in prison.



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*“It’s a fantastic programme. It’s the interaction you get with the others. Jed has been awesome, made you feel at ease & it’s good to meet the different sections of the prison. **You don’t always get the answers you want, but at least you can ask the questions.** It’s good at team building, knowing when you get outside there’s someone you can talk to and somewhere you can go where they’ll help you, and maybe you can help them. This is the best thing I’ve done since I’ve been here.”*

– Matthew, age 51, serving an 18 month sentence (first offence).

*“I would like to thank Winchester gym staff and the Saints Restart team for letting me take part, I found it very helpful and fun. **All of the agencies and staff who were part of the workshops also came to see me individually to ensure that I had everything in place prior to my release.** This really helped me and allowed me to squash some of the worries I had prior to release. I would recommend this course to anyone as it works and will benefit all.”*

– Stefan, 44 years old, seventh spell in prison serving a 20th month sentence.

*“I’m grateful to of been a part of it. It was something different and it felt like something I started in prison had gone full circle to Holland and be playing football representing the saints foundation was super cool for me. Also being out in a foreign country with Jed and Daz was nice because I met them at a bad point in my life going to jail so it was a sweet finish to the whole situation. **It offered me a chance to reflect without realising in hindsight that you can end with something good from a bad situation stay positive and life turns out good.**”*

– Dale, 42 years old, Football works tournament player, second time in prison, serving a 2 year sentence.

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*“I really enjoyed being with Vålerenga Samfunn, and I learned a lot of new things that can help me to have a positive and healthier lifestyle.”*

*“Very cozy place and very easy to talk to the people who work there.”*

*“Considering how they made everyone feel comfortable and heard 😊👍.”*

*“Helped me to keep healthy and fit.”*

*“Physical activity, playing football again, something I missed since my youth.”*

*“New drug-free friends, socializing, belonging, being treated like a human being and seen as a completely normal person in such a big club as Vålerenga, I think that shows great respect for the job Vålerenga Samfunn does to ensure that everyone is seen and heard”*

*“Vålerenga Samfunn with great people and arrangement. They made me feel welcome and secure. I really liked being there. They made me feel part of something again”*

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