

**STATE OF PLAY IN PRISONS
ACROSS EUROPE:**

IDENTIFICATION OF SPORTS- BASED ACTIVITIES



SPPF

Sports in Prison. A Plan for the Future.

**Hebe Schailée,
Inge Derom
& Marc Theeboom**



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

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**HEBE SCHAILLÉE, INGE DEROM
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SASO REPORT 7



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A PLAN FOR THE FUTURE.**



**Title of report:**

State of play in prisons across Europe: Identification of sports-based activities

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About the SPPF-project

Researchers at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) have prepared this report as part of the project entitled “Sports in Prison, a Plan for the Future (SPPF)”, which is co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union. This three-year project (with start date 01-01-2020 and end date 31-12-2022) is a collaborative partnership that is coordinated by De Rode Antraciet from Belgium and involves different organisations as partners: Vrije Universiteit Brussel from Belgium, Unione Italiana Sport per Tutti from Italy, United professionals for sustainable development Association from Bulgaria, Association for Creative social work from Croatia, and Dienst Justitiële Inrichtingen from the Netherlands. Researchers at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel have conducted a review of the literature to map existing practices that facilitate the use of sport activities to prepare prisoners for life after prison and sport activities that (might) have a link with the outside world. They have also conducted an online survey to gain additional insights from prison staff on the organisation and evaluation of sport activities in prison. The survey was distributed throughout the networks of the project partners.

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1. LITERATURE REVIEW

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights is a multilateral treaty adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 16 December 1966, and put in force on 23 March 1976 in accordance with Article 49 of the covenant. This treaty is in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and commits its parties to respect the civil and political rights of individuals, including those within the penitentiary system. Article 10.3 states that “The penitentiary system shall comprise treatment of prisoners the essential aim of which shall be their reformation and social rehabilitation.” As such, the treaty requires prisons to focus on reform and social rehabilitation rather than punishment (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2021). Each national or regional government has implemented legislative or other measures in accordance with the provisions in the treaty. To provide one example, the government of Flanders – the Northern, Dutch-speaking region of Belgium – has approved the Decree of the Organisation of Assistance and Services to Prisoners that was put into force on 21 April 2013. The government in Flanders has made available a range of services to facilitate a successful return to society and these services include an offer around sports, culture, education, employment, welfare, and health within the prison walls. In this decree, the objectives of assistance and services are described as: 1) stimulate the prisoner’s self-development; 2) restore the prisoner’s social, relational, and psychological balance; 3) limit the negative consequences for the prisoner and his/her immediate social environment caused by and during the detention; 4) promote integration and participation in society after the detention period; 5) stimulate a process of recovery between perpetrator, victim and society; and 6) limit the chance of recurrence (Flemish Government, 2013).

The perspective of providing services that shape the purpose and meaning of a person’s life aligns well with the Good Lives Model of Offender Rehabilitation (GL-model), developed by Ward and Stewart (2003). The difference between the GL-model and other more traditional desistance approaches such as the Risk, Need, Responsivity Model (RNR-model) of Andrews and Bonta (2010), is that the treatment of offenders is not merely focusing on managing risk factors. The GL-model is an alternative approach that focuses on the intrinsic needs of offenders. While both theoretical models offer the opportunity to look at rehabilitation from another perspective (i.e., managing needs versus managing risks), it seems that participating in leisure, which can be – but is not limited to – sport activities, is important. The GL-model consists of a list of primary goods that are essentially activities, experiences, or state of minds that individuals pursue for self-interest as they increase their sense of fulfillment and happiness (Ward & Stewart, 2003). One of these primary goods of the GL-model relates to excellence in work, sport, and play (Noom & Van den Berg, 2019). According to the RNR-model that primarily focuses on managing risks, it seems that non-participation in leisure time activities – including sport – is recognised as being one of the four moderate risk factors for criminal behavior and recidivism. Despite the different theoretical perspectives, both models show that leisure time activities (such as sport) can play a crucial role in rehabilitation services to prisoners. According to the basic law on prisons and the legal status of prisoners in Belgium (see Article 79 §1), every prisoner has the right to at least 2 hours of sport per week. Despite the existing legal basis in Belgium and other partner countries of the SPPF-project, this is a standard that is rarely achieved. This is in part a consequence of a lack of sport infrastructure and facilities. But sport is also low on the priority list because of the persistent overcrowding in most prisons (Grégoire, 2016).

In 2018, countries within the European Union had a prisoner population of 111 prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants (Eurostat, 2020). Even though the prisoner population has declined since 2012, conditions within the prison walls remain problematic (Norman, 2020) and some countries continue to experience high overcrowding rates (Eurostat, 2020). The conditions within detention result in poor physical and mental health of prisoners (Maschi, Viola & Koskinen, 2015; Psychou et al., 2019). Compared to the general population, prisoners have a higher risk of cardiovascular disease, obesity, hypertension, diabetes, osteoporosis, and other diseases (Psychou et al., 2019). Multiple studies have shown the association with drug use, alcohol abuse, frequent smoking, and a lack of physical activity (Fazel & Baillergeon, 2011; Fischer, Butt, Dawes, Foster et al., 2011). A lack of physical activity has also been associated with a more negative psychological state of prisoners (Psychou et al., 2019). Prisoners are more likely to experience anxiety (Boothby & Clements, 2000), stress and depression (Plugge, Douglas & Fitzpatrick, 2006), as well as poor self-confidence (Amuche & Mayange, 2013), aggression (Haney, 2001), boredom and loneliness (Jamieson & Grounds, 2005).

Individuals living within custody are in essence excluded from mainstream society. They lose their possessions, social contacts, employment, education, and self-confidence and according to Hobfoll and colleagues (1996), this loss is directly related to the experience of physical, psychological, and emotional stress. Maschi, Viola and Koskinen (2015) concluded that



prisoners experience stress because of separation from their families, poor nutrition and health care, and a lack of organised activities. These activities (which can be – but are not limited to – sport activities) are opportunities for prisoners to take their mind off things and implement coping strategies to deal with stress and traumatic experiences (Maschi, Viola and Koskinen, 2015). A distinction is made between problem-focused coping, in which the prisoner will attempt to change the situation, and emotion-focused coping, in which the prisoner will attempt to view the stressful situation differently (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980).

SPORT IN PRISON: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF ACADEMIC LITERATURE

A systematic review of academic literature revealed 8 articles that investigate if sport in prison can contribute to mental well-being, attitudinal and/or behavioural change of prisoners (see Table 1). This selection of articles is in part retrieved from 212 articles found via the data bases Web of Science and SPORTDiscus, of which 5 articles were selected. Three additional articles from other sources were also included. The articles were published between 2010 and 2020. Each study is briefly described.

Table 1. Selection of articles in peer-reviewed journals published between 2010-2020 that investigate if sport in prison affects prisoners' well-being, attitudes, and/or behaviour

Year	Authors	Title	Source DOI
2020	Welland, S., Duffy, L.J., & Baluch, B.	Rugby as a rehabilitation program in a United Kingdom Male Young Offenders' Institution: Key findings and implications from mixed methods research	https://doi.org/10.12965/jer.1938726.363
2019	Psychou, D., Kokaridas, D., Koulouris, N., Theodorakis, Y., & Krommidas, C.	The effect of exercise on improving quality of life and self-esteem of inmates in Greek prisons	https://doi.org/10.14198/jhse.2019.142.10
2019	Castillo-Algarra, J., García Tardón, B., & Pardo, R.	Sport in Spanish prisons: Towards the third degree or the third half?	https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/224989522.pdf
2019	Dosseville, F., Raça, I., Dugué, M., & Lecavelier, F.	Effet d'une intervention en activité physique adaptée sur le niveau de compassion des détenus	https://doi.org/10.1051/sm/2018023
2017	Moscoso-Sánchez, D., De Léséleuc, E., Rodríguez-Morcillo, L., González-Fernández, M., Pérez-Flores, A., & Muñoz-Sánchez, V.	Expected outcomes of sport practice for inmates: A comparison of perceptions of inmates and staff	https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/2351/235149687004.pdf
2016	Basaran, Z.	The effect of recreational activities on the self-esteem and loneliness level of the prisoners as an alternative education	https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1099797.pdf
2015	Battaglia, C., di Cagno, A., Fiorilli, G., Giombini, A., Borrione, P., Baralla, F., Marchetti, M., & Pigozzi, F.	Participation in a 9-month selected physical exercise programme enhances psychological well-being in a prison population	https://doi.org/10.1002/cbm.1922
2012	Ghanbarzadeh, M., & Mohamadi, A.	Aerobic exercise on mental health of prisoner people	http://www.efsupit.ro/images/stories/vol_12_2__Art_33.pdf



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1. The study by **Welland et al. (2020)** examined the effect of a rugby training programme as a rehabilitation programme in a Young Offenders' Institution in the UK. Forty-six young adult males were randomly assigned to two groups: those participating in an 8-week intensive rugby training programme and those who did not participate. A mixed-methods research design was implemented. Quantitative data were collected using an instrument to measure criminal attitudes (including scales on violence, entitlement, antisocial intent, and attitudes towards associates). Questionnaires were administered to participants at the start of the intervention and at the end of the final week, using a pre- and post-test design. The quantitative results showed no significant change in pro-criminal attitudes before and after the rugby training programme. However, qualitative data presented more insights. Qualitative data were collected via interviews (with participants and non-participants) that took place over the second half of the 8-week programme and via focus groups (with participants only) that were organised during the final week of the programme. Questions related to the respondents' views on sport and participation, experience of the rugby programme, self-perception and attitudes towards reoffending and release. The qualitative results showed that the rugby training programme created a sense of belonging among participants, facilitated socialisation between prisoners, provided an opportunity for conflict resolution, and promoted positive health behaviours. Positive results also related to the establishment of coping mechanisms as playing rugby provided a productive and controlled way of releasing tension.
 2. The study by **Psychou et al. (2019)** examined the effect of an exercise programme on the quality of life and self-esteem of prisoners in the Correctional Institution of Grevena in Greece. Sixty male prisoners were randomly assigned to two groups (one experiment group and one control group). The experiment group took part in a 12-week training programme which included three one-hour sessions each week. The weekly sessions included: 1) circuit resistance training (including for example sit-ups, pull-ups, and chest press), 2) sports activities (including for example basketball, handball, and volleyball), and 3) traditional Greek dance activities. The control group did not participate in the exercise programme. Quality of life and self-esteem scales were completed by all prisoners using a pre-test and post-test design. Results revealed significant increases in physical health, mental health, and self-esteem among prisoners who completed the exercise programme. They reported experiencing less problems with daily activities and feeling more powerful and energetic. It was concluded that participation in exercise and sport can help prisoners to cope with prison conditions and improve self-esteem levels.
 3. The study by **Castillo-Algarra et al. (2019)** examined the effects of a 13-week football programme on prisoners in a Spanish prison. Thirty prisoners participated in a weekly football session that lasted three hours and was organised by a trainer who held a degree in physical education and was qualified as a football coach. During each session, the trainer took time to talk to the participants at the start to discuss organisational issues and at the middle and the end to discuss compliance with rules and the attitudes and behaviours of the group and/or prisoners. Qualitative data were collected through interviews with prison staff (n = 21) and prisoners taking part in the football programme (n = 9), as well as through participant observation recording the discussions between the trainer and prisoners from the side of the football pitch. The football programme was perceived to transmit values such as solidarity, teamwork, responsibility, and respect for rules. Prisoners confirmed that it provided a distraction from the daily routines in prison, and it increased social relationships between prisoners and people from outside prison walls. The methodology and profile of the trainer, who focused on promoting values through the practice of sports and who was appointed as someone with expertise from outside the prison walls, were identified as important criteria that influenced the success of the programme.
 4. The study of **Dosseville et al. (2019)** examined the impact of an adapted physical activity session on sentiments of compassion among 13 convicted males with a violent past. The men were convicted for serious violence and were imprisoned in a correctional facility for long-term offenders in France. The compassion scale was used in a pre- and post-test design as participants completed it one week before the first session and upon completion of the second session. Two adapted physical activity sessions were organised by a trained sports instructor: blind football (1:30h) and wheelchair basketball (2:30h). The authors reported a significant effect of the adapted physical activity sessions on three dimensions of compassion as participants had a greater understanding of the suffering and pain of others (i.e., those with disabilities), reported with higher levels of caring and humanity, and lower levels of indifference. The authors suggested that future research is needed to evaluate whether adapted physical activity sessions can have an effect on behaviours of prisoners known for violence and aggression.





5. The study by **Moscoso-Sánchez et al. (2017)** sought to examine the psychological and social benefits of sport in prison and its impact on reintegration by interviewing prison staff (n = 6) and prisoners (n = 11) in Andalusia in Spain. Both staff and prisoners agreed that sport practices had positive effects on the prison population in terms of their attitudes (e.g., increase of daily discipline, healthy habits, social relations), values (e.g., increase of empathy, personal responsibility, tolerance) and social integration (e.g., progressive move away from drugs). Prison staff mentioned two fundamental objectives for sport activities in prison: it helps prisoners to structure their lives around the prison system and it helps them to channel aggression. Prisoners valued the sport activities for three main reasons. It helped them to adapt to the prison system (internalise routines and escape feelings of isolation), it helped them to establish social relations (accepting authority and resolving conflict), and it helped them in the development of social skills (more assertive and less aggressive). Although sport was identified as a way to reconcile prisoners through acquiring personal skills, improving social relationships, learning healthy habits, and forming new attitudes, prisoners did not perceive that this would help them enough for social reintegration when released. Prison staff shared this perception. Whether and how the prison system can become a means of social rehabilitation depends on the pedagogical methodologies and aims of the sports programme, which unfortunately were not analysed in the context of this study.
6. The study by **Basaran (2016)** examined the effect of recreational activities on the self-esteem and loneliness level of 23 convicted females in Kandira Open Detention House and Prison in Turkey. Two days a week, for a total of 12 weeks, the group participated in different recreational activities that lasted one and a half hour. These activities were selected taking into account the conditions in prison and the opportunities provided to strengthen communication and cohesion among prisoners. Activities included sports such as aerobic, dancing, volleyball, and frisbee, but also other activities such as karaoke, meditation, and sculpturing. Self-esteem and loneliness scales were completed using a pre- and post-test design. There was an increase in self-esteem level, but it was not statistically significant. There was, however, a significant decrease in the level of loneliness. Furthermore, high self-esteem levels were associated with low loneliness levels. Recreational activities may help prisoners to socialise and communicate with others, which might contribute to their psychological health.

7. The study of **Battaglia et al. (2015)** examined the effect of an exercise programme on the psychological well-being of male prisoners in the Italian prison of Larino. Seventy-five prisoners, i.e., who needed low-medium security and had been detained for at least 1 year before entry into the study, were randomly assigned to one of three groups: those receiving cardiovascular and resistance training; those receiving high-intensity strength training; or those not participating in an exercise programme (control group). The exercise programme was organised during a 9-month period, with training sessions lasting one hour, twice a week. Each participant completed a survey about his psychological well-being using the 90-item symptom checklist, using a pre- and post-test design. The main findings were that 9 months of supervised exercise had a positive effect on the mental well-being of sentenced male prisoners, with a difference between exercise protocols and with cardiovascular and resistance training leading to more effective results. Both exercise groups reported significant decreases on depression, while a significant increase on depression scores was reported among the control group. Other reported effects were decreases on interpersonal sensitivity and anxiety scores. This study supports the introduction of supervised, moderate intense exercise in prison as it requires minimal special equipment and can reduce the risk of depression and anxiety among prisoners.
8. The study by **Ghanbarzadeh and Mohamadi (2012)** examined the effect of an exercise programme on the mental health of prisoners in Iran. The prisoners were individuals who were convicted for financial or addition/narcotic crimes. After completing a general health questionnaire, prisoners with low mental health were randomly assigned to an experimental and control group. The experimental group completed an 8-week aerobic exercise programme which included 3 sessions per week, lasting 45 minutes each. Using a pre- and post-test design, the results indicated a significant improvement in mental health of prisoners following the exercise programme, with a better result among prisoners convicted for addition/narcotic crimes when compared to those convicted for financial crimes. In general, mental health encompassed physical complaints, anxiety, social performance disorder and depression scales.

All 8 articles examined the effect of an intervention on the individual health or well-being of prisoners. The characteristics of the intervention were different across the studies and included, among others, fitness (Battaglia et al., 2015), multi-sport activities (Psychou et al., 2019), adapted physical activities (Dosseville et al., 2019), and single sport activities such as rugby (Welland et al., 2020) and football (Castillo-Algarra et al., 2019). Most studies used a pre- and post-test design, where researchers administer questionnaires to prisoners before and after the intervention. To identify the potential effect of an intervention, some studies have included an experiment group (those participating in the intervention) and a control group (those not participating in the intervention) and collected data from both groups (e.g., Battaglia et al., 2015; Ghanbarzadeh & Mohamadi, 2012; Psychou et al., 2018). Some studies collected qualitative data from prisoners and prison staff (e.g., Castillo-Algarra et al., 2019; Moscoso-Sánchez et al., 2017) to better understand the potential effect of the intervention on, for example, the attitudes and behaviours of prisoners. One study used a mixed-methods design that included both quantitative and qualitative data (i.e., Welland et al., 2020). Only one study specifically mentioned the objective of the intervention being the transfer of positive values through football from the trainer to the participating prisoners (i.e., Castillo-Algarra et al., 2019). Other studies examined outcomes without specifying whether these outcomes refer to the objectives of the interventions. Similar to the study by Castillo-Algarra et al. (2019), other studies sought to examine how attitudes and behaviours have changed among participants (e.g., Moscoso-Sánchez et al., 2017; Welland et al., 2020). Other outcomes that were measured included self-esteem, anxiety, and depression (e.g., Basaran, 2016; Battaglia et al., 2015; Ghanbarzadeh & Mohamadi, 2012; Psychou et al., 2018). In general, prisoners reporting more positive attitudes and behaviours (e.g., better social relationships, better coping mechanisms, less feelings of depression) were identified as a proxy of better education and development towards social rehabilitation in the outside world. None of the studies included a follow-up study with ex-prisoners who participated in the intervention and were released from prison following their sentence to examine the effect of the intervention.





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SPORT IN PRISON: INSPIRING PRACTICES

A narrative review of non-academic literature was conducted to map inspiring sport-based programmes for prisoners. A structured internet search based on keywords, including 'sport in prison', 'rehabilitation', and 'sport programme' among others, was used. This search was combined with relevant documentation delivered by the partners of the SPPF collaborative partnership. In addition, we searched for similar sport-based projects for prisoners, such as 'Prisoners on the move'. The review revealed 10 sport-based programmes for prisoners (see Table 2).



Table 2. Inspiring sport-based programmes for prisoners

Programme		Programme description	Qualifications ¹	Through the gate ²
1	Football works (UK)	The football-based project is used as an intervention before prisoners are released. Prisoners gain transferable skills throughout the programme and get the opportunity to obtain a legitimate qualification.	Yes	Yes
2	Werk via Sport - Employment-through Sport (NL)	In this project sport is used to rehabilitate prisoners. After release, prisoners are stimulated to volunteer in sport clubs, which in several cases lead to a decent job. Naoberschap Inside is part of 'Werk via Sport'. In this sport-based programme participants learn transferable core values through football. After release, prisoners are stimulated to volunteer in sport clubs, which in several cases lead to a job.	No	No
3	Twinning Project (UK)	The football-based project is used as an intervention before prisoners are released. The main aim is to improve life after release for prisoners by helping prisoners obtain legitimate qualifications and improve their wellbeing. After release, they can get help to get a paid job. The Breaking the cycle programme is part of the 'Twinning project'. This football programme is used as an intervention before prisoners are released. During this programme, prisoners gain new skills and legitimate qualifications, which could help them after release.	Yes	No
4	Street Team (UK)	In this cricket-based programme prisoners improve their skills, gain experience and get the chance to be part of the coach staff. They also get support after being released with finding employment.	Yes	No
5	Downview's prison PE programme (UK)	This sports programme focuses on obtaining a legitimate qualification and working experience, which gives prisoners an extra asset when they are looking for paid work. After release, prisoners get help to find employment.	Yes	No
6	YOI Ashfield's sports programme (UK)	This sports programme is a 'release on temporary licence' programme. In this programme young offenders get the opportunity to participate in a academy focused on a specific sport. In this academies, prisoners can obtain a sport qualification, which gives them an extra asset when they are looking for paid work.	Yes	No
7	HMP & YOI Portland's sports academy (UK)	This football/rugby-based programme offers young offenders intensive sports training and matches in combination with theoretical classes. While in prison they can obtain legitimate qualifications. Individual through the gate support is provided by a caseworker, which helps the young offenders resettle into the community.	Yes	Yes
8	In2sport (UK)	This is football-based programme where prisoners can enrol after release. The main aim of the programme is to reduce reoffending, develop and improve their skills, obtain legitimate qualifications and provide work opportunities.	Yes	No
9	Boats not Bars (UK)	This rowing-based programme is a 'release on temporary licence' programme. In this programme, prisoners can race in a rowing competition against other prisons. After release prisoners can practice this sport in a local rowing club, which changes their environment.	No	Yes
10	Football Changes lives (UK)	This football-based programme is a 'release on temporary licence' programme. In this programme prisoners gain the skills they need to fully reintegrate into society. They can also obtain a legitimate qualification. After release group or individual support is provided, which includes searching for a paid job.	Yes	Yes

Notes. 1. Qualifications is broadly defined as a condition or standard that must be complied with as for the attainment of a privilege; 2. Through the gate support consist of sports-based programmes for prisoners that are delivered during custody and after release as interventions to prepare prisoners for life after prison.



In the following section each programme is briefly described:

1. **Football Works of Street Soccer Scotland (UK).** Street Soccer Scotland (2004) seeks to link activities inside prisons and community programmes outside prisons by combining football with skill development, personal development, work experience, and training. This programme is used in prison as an intervention before release and gives prisoners the opportunity to obtain a qualification in communications and team work that can be used outside prison. Depending on the regime of the prison, prisoners are able to participate in activities outside prison, and thus integrate into a local community (Alliance of Sport in Criminal Justice, 2019).
2. **Werk via Sport – Employment through Sport (NL).** This project is not just about reintegration into society and sport, but it involves sport associations, mainly football clubs, that provide opportunities for paid work for ex-prisoners. In this project prisoners have three different options: (1) they can either volunteer in a sport club, (2) work in a sport stadium, or (3) participate in a reintegration programme in a professional football club. If prisoners excel in this programme, they are provided with paid work in a similar setting after their release. Since 2015, a total of 356 participants participated in this project, of whom 115 secured paid work afterwards (Dienst Justitiële Inrichtingen, 2017). Naoberschap inside is one of the most remarkable programmes within 'Werk via Sport' (Employment through Sport). Translated from Dutch dialect this means: "Small communities where neighbours help each other or give each other advice". This project offers prisoners training opportunities with a local football club (Football Club Emmen), where they learn the core values of the football club, such as collaboration, trust, discipline, initiative, proactive, and respect (Schaart & Brink, 2019). After finishing the programme, the most motivated prisoners are secured with employment (Asser Courant, 2019). 'Naoberschap inside' is based on a social project in the Premier League in England, which is called the 'Twinning Project'.
3. **Twinning Project (UK).** This is a collaboration between Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service and professional football clubs across the UK. The aim of this project is to connect every prison in the country with a local football club. Every year approximately 100 prisoners get the chance to get involved in this project. The aim of the professionals involved in the Twining Project is to improve participating prisoners' mental and physical health, and wellbeing, and assist them in obtaining a qualification which will help improve their life chances and gain employment upon release (Twinning Project, n.d.). An example is the 'Breaking the Cycle'-programme, which is a collaboration between Feltham prison and Football Club Chelsea. This programme is a combination of sport sessions as well as educational sessions, where prisoners can obtain two vocational qualifications and a level 1 futsal coaching award (Chelsea Foundation, 2019). Another example of the Twinning Project is Cardiff City Football, which has a formal agreement with Her Majesty's Prison Parc. A six-week football programme is organised, which leads to qualifications in communication skills. This collaboration has a link with the community and can eventually lead to volunteer opportunities or permanent employment.
4. **Street Team (UK).** Prisons are not only partnering up with sport associations, but also with charities. Cricket for Change is such a charity that delivered ground-breaking work in a number of London's prisons in the 1990s when they delivered coach education courses qualifying prisoners as cricket coaches. In 2008, the 'Street Team' was launched (The Change Foundation, 2020). Through this initiative, young prisoners are given the opportunity to participate in a cricket programme while in prison. In this programme they can improve their skills, gain experience, and get the chance to be part of the coaching staff. They are also supported after their release from prison to find employment. This support is individually determined and can vary from several days up to a year after release (Meek, 2014).
5. **Downview's prison physical education programme (UK).** Female prisoners of Downview's working prison (UK) can take part in the physical education programme. In this programme they can obtain certain qualifications in fitness and leisure up to level 3, administered by a local college. During their incarceration, prisoners are provided with working experience, which gives them an extra asset when applying for a job after release. This working experience can be attained by giving fitness classes to fellow prisoners or volunteering in a local sport facility. Links between Downview's prison and fitness centres are established which facilitates job application after release (Meek, 2014).
6. **Ashfield Young Offender Institute sports programme (UK).** In this programme young offenders between 15 and 18 years receive the opportunity to participate in a sports-based programme that is structured around a series of 'academies' aimed to improve opportunities for youngsters involved. Each academy covers a 12-week programme and is designed around a specific sport, including football, boxing, and basketball, to name a few. When completing the academy, prisoners gain both theoretical





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and practical experience, including sport coaching, life-skills mentoring, and community placements. Prisoners can obtain an accredited sport qualification, which can facilitate opportunities for release on temporary licence. According to Meek (2014) and De Rode Antraciet (2011), some young offenders were able to get permanent employment after being released from the Young Offender Institute.

7. A similar project to the Ashfield Young Offender Institute sports programme is the **Her Majesty's Prison & Young Offender Institute Portland** (UK) football/rugby-based sports academies. In these academies, young offenders get intensive sports training and matches in combination with theoretical classes, that cover for example collaboration training and goal setting exercises. While in prison they can obtain accredited qualifications in coaching and first aid. Individual through the gate support is provided by a caseworker, who helps young offenders to resettle into the community (Meek, 2014).
8. **In2sport** (UK). This is one of the few sport-based projects in which prisoners can enroll after their release. The main aim of the project is to reduce reoffending rates, develop and improve personal skills, such as communication, organisational skills, and leadership skills, and provide work opportunities. Ex-offenders also have an opportunity to obtain certified qualifications (Meek, 2014). In this project, football is used as a hook to motivate ex-prisoners to participate (plus-sport).
9. **Boats not Bars** (UK). Her Majesty's Young Offenders Institute Feltham is known for inspiring practices regarding resettlement and 'release on temporary licence' programmes. 'Boats not Bars' is an example of a 'through the gate'-activity in Feltham prison. In this programme prisoners get the chance to race in an indoor rowing competition with other prisons on a weekly basis. After their release, they can practice rowing in a local rowing club, which changes their environment in a positive way and can help reduce reoffending (Fulham Reach Boat Club, 2019).
10. **Football changes lives** (UK) is another 'through the gate'-programme in Feltham prison. In this programme the prison collaborates with Fulham Football Club Foundation. While in prison, offenders are provided with the skills they need to fully reintegrate into society. When they are released, individual as well as group support is provided by Fulham Football Club Foundation. This support includes finding secure employment. Throughout the project, prisoners can obtain qualifications, such as coaching level 1, health and safety level 2, and personal development for employability (Prospects, 2017).



The 10 cases are limited to the UK (n = 9) and the Netherlands (n = 1). We should note that this narrative review is influenced by language barriers as non-academic literature (e.g., policy documents) is not necessarily published in English. Reviewing and translating policy documents from other languages to English was outside the scope of this review. In terms of targeted outcomes, most cases described in this report (n = 8) lead to qualifications for the prisoners. Qualifications is broadly defined as a condition or standard that must be complied with for the attainment of a privilege such as volunteering/coaching in a local sport club after release from prison. Because educational qualifications might not be available in all circumstances, validated qualifications can be externally reviewed and awarded when individuals are given the opportunity to demonstrate themselves to others. When searching for sport-based programmes for prisoners, we noticed that the sport activities delivered in prison rarely have a link with the outside world to facilitate prisoners' reintegration into society after release from prison. Consequently, only limited documentation is available regarding 'through the gate' activities in prisons. Through the gate support consist of sport-based programmes for prisoners that are delivered during custody and after release as interventions to prepare prisoners for life after prison. Based on the sport-based programme descriptions for prisoners it seems that a minority (n = 4) is delivering through the gate support. From the limited available documents, we can assume that if follow-up activities are organised, these are mainly organised by external organisations. The actual outcomes of these practices are rarely reported (e.g., whether ex-prisoners found a job, recidivism rates of the participants), and this lack of information makes it difficult to evaluate the programmes. There is a lack of evidence to what extent these sport-based programmes support an optimal reintegration into society. The following information is essential to evaluate good practices: frequency and intensity of the activity, actual content of the activities and approach used (more than providing sport), competencies of staff who are involved in organising the activity, the extent of prisoners' involvement in organising the activity, whether skills learned in the activity are applicable and useful after release, reoffending rates of ex-prisoners. To conclude, we also noticed that the role of sport - that can vary from being a tool to attract prisoners to being an experiential learning context - often remains unclear.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC LITERATURE

- Overall, the scientific articles claim that prisoners participating in sport activities progressed in a positive way. As an example, a significant decrease in the level of loneliness was reported in the study by Basaran (2016). But significant improvements were not found for all measured outcomes.
- Except for one single study (i.e., Castillo-Algarra et al., 2019), researchers examined specific outcomes without specifying whether these outcomes refer to the objectives of the sports-based interventions for prisoners.
- The non-academic literature review shows that most sport activities for prisoners have the intention to lead to (sport) qualifications but that through the gate support is often lacking.
- In both the academic and non-academic literature, we found that important information about the interventions is missing (e.g., the role of sport, intensity level and frequency of practice, number and type of sports provided, the role of coach/mentor).
- This means that we still do not have a good view on sport activities that prepare prisoners for life after prison or activities that (might) have a link with the outside world.





2. ONLINE SURVEY RESEARCH

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The survey is an important part of the 'Sports in Prison, a Plan for the Future'-project funded by the European Commission in the context of Erasmus+ sport. The survey enabled the project consortium to get a good view on activities that prepare prisoners for life after prison or activities that (might) have a link with the outside world. It is important to note that the survey only collects data on the most meaningful activities of which sports is an important element. The survey was developed for everybody working in a prison environment involved in a sport offer, in projects or working together with ex-prisoners in follow-up projects (prison management, prison staff, activity providers, sport organisations, social organisations, etc.). Survey respondents were asked to answer questions based on the normal functioning of the prison (i.e., prior to COVID-19). The SPPF consortium distributed the online survey widely through the networks of the project partners. Data collection occurred between June and September 2020. All data were processed anonymously.

The survey consisted of the following three parts:

- General information about the survey respondents and their employment (8 questions).
- Information regarding meaningful activities organised in their prison of which sport is an important element. Respondents were asked to describe each activity separately (20 questions). Respondents could describe a maximum of 5 activities.
- General information regarding all activities in their prison (8 questions).



SURVEY RESPONDENTS

In total 198 individuals completed the survey, providing 352 activity descriptions of which 243 descriptions focused on social integration. Moreover, the sample included 163 individuals from SPPF partner countries (82% of our response rate). The respondents from the SPPF partner countries provided 293 activity descriptions of which 200 descriptions focused on social integration. Research has emphasised that sport in prison can contribute to better physical and mental health of prisoners. The focus on social integration, however, is important because of the assumption that by organising sport activities in prison with a connection to the community or the 'outside world', prisoners can strengthen their relationships with others, develop personal networks, and battle social isolation.

Of the 198 respondents, 64% was male. The majority (58%) had between 1 and 10 years of experience in their current function (M=9.22 years, SD=7.84 years). Overall, more than 80 functions were described, including sport coaches, social workers, prison officers, directors, etc. Respondents were mainly employed in prisons with closed regimes (71%) and were dealing with mid to high security levels (87%). The respondents (N=198) were predominantly employed in SPPF partner countries, with a large share of respondents from the Netherlands (see Table 3).

Table 3. Survey respondents according to country of employment

Country	n	%
Netherlands (SPPF)	64	32.3
Croatia (SPPF)	28	14.1
Belgium (SPPF)	27	13.6
Bulgaria (SPPF)	24	12.1
Italy (SPPF)	20	10.1
Romania	11	5.6
Spain	9	4.5
Denmark	4	2.0
United Kingdom	4	2.0
Estonia	3	1.5
Austria	3	1.5
Ireland	1	0.5

The project consortium was successful in reaching the intended target group as 91% of respondents reported to have an activity in their prison that prepares prisoners for life after prison or that has a link with the outside world. The results that follow focus on the 293 activity descriptions submitted by 149 respondents from the SPPF partner countries. Most respondents (74%) described 1 or 2 activities (M=1.97, SD=1.12). Results, however, should be interpreted with caution as one activity could be submitted multiple times (e.g., prison staff working in the same prison could both complete the survey separately) and one activity could be described differently depending on the experiences from the respondents (e.g., a sport coach and a case manager could report on the same activity differently).

RESULTS ON SPORT ACTIVITIES IN PRISONS ACROSS EUROPE

It was clear that a wide variety of different sports are offered in activities in prisons, covering the most common **Olympic sport disciplines** according to components of exercise and cardiovascular adaptation. These disciplines include power sports (e.g., weightlifting and boxing), skill sports (e.g., table tennis and karate), mixed sports (e.g., soccer and basketball) and endurance sports (e.g., cycling and running). In addition, some activities were not restricted to a single sport and offered a multi-sport programme. Other sports outside the Olympic programme were also offered and included yoga, capoeira, folk dancing, and darts, among others.





In terms of the objectives related to the activities, many seem to have different objectives. The number of activities with non-sport related objectives is very high. Respondents were able to identify multiple objectives (see Table 4). However, the survey was unable to identify how these objectives and related outcomes are defined by those working with the prisoners and how the activities intend to reach such objectives (e.g., what pedagogical approach is used in this context).

Table 4. Objectives of the sport activities

Objective	%
Health promotion (physical and mental wellbeing)	80.9
Personal and social development	77.8
Social integration	68.3
Leisure	61.1
Other (e.g., relaxation, emotional discharge)	12.3
I don't know	1.0

Almost all activities (96%) were voluntary. It is unclear, however, whether the target group is reached through voluntary engagement and what the motives are for those participating in the activities. Half of all activities (50%) are open activities, meaning that everyone can participate. The other activities are either closed activities (26%) that require registration or targeted activities (21%; n=62) that include only specific target groups. For this last activity category, a combination of different target groups exists within the sample. Most target groups (64%), however, are not fitting the predefined categories of, for example, prisoners with a remaining sentence of 2 years or less (35%) or youth under the age of 30 (27%). Target groups that were mentioned under the 'other' category were residents of the drug-free section and individuals behaving well.

On average, activities reach 22 individuals as participants (SD = 39 individuals) and 61% of all activities consist of participant groups between 5 and 15 individuals. In terms of their participation rate, prisoners participate in these activities on average

twice a week. However, for almost half of all activities (49%), this is merely once a week. It is remarkable that 58% of the activities reported dropout among participants. When questioning the reasons, respondents mentioned a decrease of interest among prisoners (60%), a relocation of prisoners (52%) and a lack of effort among prisoners (38%) as frequent reasons to explain dropout. On a positive note, 27% of activities reported no dropout and 15% were unsure about any dropout. Besides, it appeared that for 21% of all activities, there is a waiting list. This might reveal that many prisoners are not able to participate in sport activities that focus on social integration. Based on the current data, the estimation might reveal 1,782 prisoners waiting to join (on average 22 participants per activity x 81 activities with a waiting list). This might be an underestimation of the reality as most activities do not have a waiting list.

More than half of the activities (52%, n=151) involve prisoners in the organisation of the activity. In these activities, prisoners take on a variety of roles, but they are predominantly involved in assistance (72%), promotion (40%), coaching (35%), and logistics (20%). For 38% of the activities, specific competencies are required for prisoners to be involved. When analysing the results, social skills are perceived to be crucial, followed by sport skills (being good at the sport that is offered) and organisational skills. In general, prison staff is involved in the activities (69%, n=202), taking on multiple tasks such as providing support for prisoners and guiding them from their cell to the sport location. About 25% of the activities do not involve prison staff, which might be explained by the involvement of external organisations in the organisation. Almost half of the activities (46%, n=136) involve external partners (see Table 5). Multiple partners were identified (M = 2.78, SD = 3.71). The majority of the external organisations are sport organisations, followed by social organisations, and governmental organisations. The most important roles of these partner organisations are coaching/teaching the activity (66%), helping to connect the prisoners to the outside world (63%), and creating social benefits for example through education (49%).

Table 5. Type of external partners involved in the activities

Objective	n	%
Sport organisation	93	68.4
Social organisation	61	44.9
Governmental organisation	39	28.7
Private person	26	19.1
Other (e.g., drug treatment, employment agency)	26	19.1
I don't know	2	1.5

For only a minority of all activities – about 20% of the activities (n=58) – there is a follow-up activity outside the prison walls connected to the activity they described. For 58% of the activities, there is no follow-up activity and for 22% of the activities, this is unknown. The objectives of these follow-up activities are related to personal and social development (84%), social integration (74%) and health promotion (57%). For more than half of these follow-up activities (n=30) participants are selected with intrinsic motivation being the main selection criteria. Moreover, half of all follow-up activities are evaluated (n=30) with organisers as the main evaluators.

Sixty-one per cent of all sport activities in prison is evaluated, but still 29% is not evaluated (for 10% of activities this is unknown). The majority is evaluated by prison staff (57.5%) and prison management (42.5%). For only 34% of the described activities prisoners are involved in the evaluation process. As this is merely a fraction of all activities that were described, we can wonder why end-users of the activities are not included. Approximately 41% is evaluated by external organisations (e.g., De Rode Antraciet). Multiple sources of evaluation can apply to individual activities. Respondents were asked to report on the perceived added value of the sport activities among prison staff as well as prisoners, using a score from 1 (added value not recognised at all) to 10 (added value recognised very much). Respondents reported a mean score for the added value by prison staff of 7.12 (SD = 1.85) and a mean score for the added value by prisoners of 7.93 (SD = 1.72). Prisoners were not part of the target group for this survey. Therefore, it is unknown whether this estimated mean added value score concurs with the real perceived added value of prisoners. The inclusion of prisoners in the evaluation of activities could provide more accurate confirmation in the future. Those completing the survey, nonetheless, reported a high added value of the activities for prisoners.



Of the 293 reported activities, 71% were permanent within the prison. This permanent offer provides some opportunities, for example, to create a context that allows structural improvement of activities and supports the monitoring and evaluation of outcomes. It is preferably to (re)consider the role of prisoners within the organisation as well as the evaluation of the activities. Of the 293 reported activities, 25% were temporary within the prison. Of 4% of the activities, respondents were unsure about the permanent or temporary character. Approximately 21% (n=62) of the activities receive external funding and moreover, 67% (n=42) of those receiving external funding are depending on this funding for the sustainability of their activities. This represents a minority of all activities (only 14%).

RESULTS ON PRISON CONTEXT

To better manage participation in sport and other activities, 89% of the respondents from SPPF partner countries mentioned the use of **rules of conduct** for prisoners. Examples provided were the adherence to core values of sport such as integrity, respect for others, and personal care. In addition to rules of conduct, 24% of the respondents were aware of laws that are relevant for the organisation of sport activities. It is important to note that almost half of the respondents (44%) were unaware of any relevant laws.

To obtain a better understanding of the generalisability of the survey results, respondents were asked to consider whether activities in their prison are similar or different to other prisons in their country. Sixty-two per cent of the respondents perceive that the activities in their prison are similar to those in other prisons. But many respondents (56%, n=91) are not aware of any other relevant activities organised in other prisons in their country. And even less is known (78%, n=117) about other relevant follow-up activities in their own country.

Data collection occurred between June and September 2020, a period with different COVID-19 restrictions and measures in different European countries. When asked about the potential impact of COVID-19, 58% (n=83) of respondents predicted an impact of the measures on the organisation of sport activities in their prison. Respondents mentioned negative impacts (e.g., challenge of staying in contact with different partner organisations), but some also mentioned unexpected opportunities (e.g., use of digital tools within the prison context).

CONCLUSIONS OF THE ONLINE SURVEY RESEARCH

- The prison context is favorable for creating a sustainable sport offer that can be monitored and evaluated, although evaluations are currently not common. Moreover, the involvement of prisoners in the evaluation of sport activities is often lacking.
- While social integration seems to be a frequently mentioned objective of the sport activities, we need to dare to question the potential of reaching this outcome through sport. This is a challenge because collaborations with external partners and follow-up activities are missing.
- Many prisoners currently do not have access to sport in prison despite the existing legal basis in Belgium and other partner countries of the SPPF-project. The results of the survey indicate that access to sport is instrumentally used to maintain the social control within the detention context, whereby prisoners who behave well are rewarded with access to sport activities and through the gate support.
- When prisoners are involved in the organisation of activities, the majority of participants take up roles that do not allow them to engage in experiential learning. This implies that the potential of sport as a means is not yet fully used.





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3. CONCLUSION

The objective of the survey was to obtain a good view on practices in EU member states that use sport activities to prepare prisoners for life after prison and sport activities that (might) have a link with the outside world. This report highlights that the majority of sport activities are permanent activities (71%) and that the majority of sport activities for prisoners are not depending on external funding (86%). This context is positive for the sustainability of the activities in prison, as well as for the implementation of monitoring and evaluation in relation to impacts and outcomes. In terms of the objectives related to the sport activities, the results presented in this report highlight that most activities have multiple objectives. Social integration (68%) is often combined with health promotion (80%) and personal and social development (77%). The number of sport activities that focus on social integration, or in other words the process in which prisoners are connected to mainstream society during their custody, looks promising at first glance. However, the results show that 66% (n=132) of the activities are evaluated. About one third of the evaluations involve prisoners (25%, n=34) and external partners (27%, n=36).

The results also show that only half (i.e., 52%, n=104) of the activities focusing on social integration involve external partners. If collaborations with external partners are set up, multiple partners are often involved, but sport organisations and social organisations are the most popular partners to work with. It is obvious that supporting a process of social integration should not be limited to support during custody as challenges will arise when leaving prison. It is therefore surprising that merely 25% (n=50) of the sport activities focusing on social integration have a follow-up activity outside the prison walls. This leads us to the conclusion that the sport activities for prisoners that pursue social integration as an objective might be less successful



than initially thought as collaborations between societal domains remains scarce and through the gate support is often lacking. These results incite us to critically reflect upon the potential of sports activities for prisoners. Can we assume that paying attention to the preparation of prisoners for life after custody through sport activities is enough for most detainees? Furthermore, is choosing social integration as an objective, regardless of the specific definition, feasible when partnerships and through the gate support are missing? Beyond these issues, social desirability among survey respondents may be at play here and may explain in part these results. To gain more insight into existing practices we should consequently focus on monitoring and evaluation (M&E). M&E of existing sport activities would allow us to understand how social integration is defined and how those working with prisoners intend to work towards this objective. The quantitative approach in this report was insightful to identify sport activities in prisons in 5 EU countries that are part of the SPPF consortium, but it is insufficient to truly understand how and why sport activities are designed and delivered in certain ways.

The length of the survey was a concern when conducting this study, keeping in mind that prison staff should be willing to invest their time to participate in this study. Consequently, choices to include and exclude questions were discussed in the project consortium. The results of the survey did not allow us to gain an in-depth insight into the specific role of sport, even though this gap was found in the literature review presented in this report. We did observe that in 52% (n=151) of the activity descriptions prisoners are involved in the organisation of the activity. In most cases the roles these participants take up do not allow them to engage in experiential learning as their roles (e.g., assistance, logistics) seem to be dominated by the execution of assignments, implying a rather passive attitude of the participants. Such an attitude aligns perhaps best with what is expected from participants in a 'plus sport' approach. In a plus sport approach, sport is used as a tool to reach out to specific target groups in prison (e.g., prisoners with mental problems). Sport is primarily used as a recreational side activity within rehabilitation programmes. The sport component within a plus sport rehabilitation programme can help to facilitate positive contact and social relationships between the rehabilitation officer and prisoners, which is crucial when working with people. A 'sport plus' approach, however, refers to sport-based developmental programmes for specific target groups in prison (e.g., prisoners with no or low levels of education). Sport is the primary activity and is used explicitly as an experiential learning context aimed at producing individual developmental outcomes for participants (e.g., sport sessions to develop social skills, self-awareness). The goal of a sport plus approach consists of fostering embodied experiential learning in which the participant is actively involved. Our results show that merely 18% of all sport activities allow prisoners to take up a coaching role, requiring a more active attitude of the participants compared to the aforementioned roles (i.e., assistance, logistics). We might slightly underestimate the number of prisoners who can engage in experiential learning through sport due to the uncertainty about the role that prisoners can take up within 6% of the sport activities described by our respondents. However, even when considering this underestimation, we conclude that the potential of sport to create an experiential learning context has not yet been fully explored and developed in the prison contexts included in this study.

To clarify, the voices of prisoners were not included in the current study. Future research as well as evaluations of sport activities should include prisoners to better understand their involvement in and experiences of sport participation. To date, including prisoners into the evaluation process is, as showed earlier, not common. Including prisoners as end users can also help to understand their motives for participating in sport activities in prison and their interpretation of how these activities can help them to prepare for life after prison. In addition, the results presented in this report also showed that intrinsic motivation is the main selection criterion for providing prisoners through the gate support. This is understandable as we know from self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) that having a sense of control (e.g., the choice of receiving through the gate support) improves participants' intrinsic motivation. While much attention is given to intrinsic motivation as an inclusion criterion, almost no attention is provided to prisoners' needs when designing, organising, and evaluating sport activities. According to the results of this survey, access to sport is therefore instrumentally used to maintain social control within the detention context, whereby only prisoners who behave well are rewarded by being involved in sport activities.

Based on the data presented in this report, many prisoners might not currently have access to sport in prison despite the existing legal basis in the countries of the SPPF project. About a quarter (27%, n=54) of all the sport activities described in this report are aimed at specific target groups and 22% (n=44) use a waiting list. This shows that the demand from prisoners for sport participation exceeds the existing supply. Sport is not - a priori - a key to success for life after prison, but it can be used to prepare prisoners for life after release and to promote the transition from inside to outside the prison walls. In conclusion, it seems that there is still room left to further improve the quality of the rehabilitation services, which include sport as a leisure activity, and make these services more accessible to those willing to join.



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