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Deliverable D2.1

TEAM Training Guidebook



ASD CULTURA E SPORT
MATERA

MMC Mediterranean
Management Centre



Center for Social
Innovation





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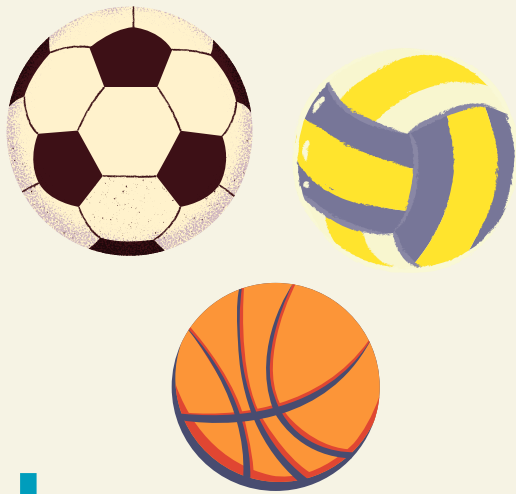
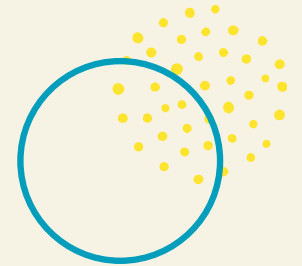


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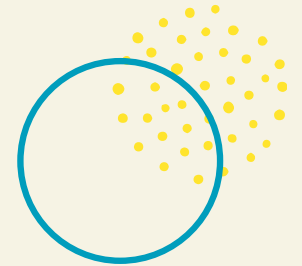
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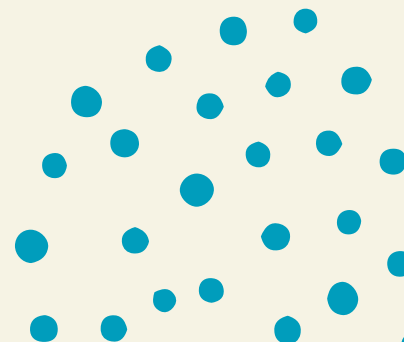
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*ABOUT T.E.A.M.
AND THIS GUIDEBOOK*



This Guidebook represents **Deliverable D2.1 – Project output : TEAM Sports-Based Training Guidebook** of the T.E.A.M. project Proposal number : I01245761.

The T.E.A.M. project has a duration of 24 months.

The TEAM (Together Everyone Achieves More) project is a transformative initiative that harnesses the power of sports to enhance youth employability and social inclusion. Targeting young people in **Greece, Italy, Romania, and Cyprus**, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, TEAM bridges the gap between sports-based learning and career readiness.




By using **Basketball, Soccer, and Volleyball**, the project trains participants in teamwork, leadership, communication, and problem solving—skills highly valued in the job market. Beyond sports training, TEAM connects youth with real-world opportunities through job shadowing, business mentoring, and career networking events, ensuring they gain practical experience and industry insights.

A key innovation of the project is the **TEAM Sports-Based Training Guidebook** and a digital video series, providing open-access resources for schools, sports organizations, and youth programs across Europe. The project's findings and best practices will be shared through a final conference and policy recommendations, promoting the integration of sports-based employability strategies into national and EU policies.

Through inclusive recruitment, structured skills training, and strong employer engagement, TEAM empowers young people to gain confidence, find career pathways, and unlock new opportunities, proving that sports are not just for play, but for building successful futures.

In many parts of Europe, young people face increasing challenges in entering the workforce. For thousands of young individuals, the transition from education to employment is filled with uncertainty, as they struggle to gain the skills and experience needed to succeed in today's job market. This issue is particularly pronounced in **Greece, Romania, Italy, and Cyprus**, where youth unemployment rates remain among the highest in the European Union.






In **Greece**, nearly one in four young people seeking employment is unable to find a job. As of late 2024, **23.1% of Greek youth** were unemployed, reflecting long-standing economic difficulties and limited career opportunities. **Romania faces a similar challenge**, with its **youth unemployment rate at 23.2%**, leaving thousands of young Romanians without clear professional pathways.

In **Italy**, where the **youth unemployment rate is 20.7%**, young people often find themselves trapped in temporary or lowquality jobs that do not match their skills or aspirations. Even in **Cyprus**, a country with a smaller labor market, the youth unemployment rate stands at **15.6%**, indicating that many young individuals struggle to transition successfully into stable careers.

Beyond unemployment, many young people across these countries fall into the **NEET category**—youth who are **Not in Education, Employment, or Training**. In **Romania, nearly one in five young people (19.8%)** is classified as a NEET, the highest percentage in the EU. **Italy's numbers are equally alarming**, with **1.3 million young Italians aged 15–29 being NEETs**, highlighting the severe disengagement from both education and work. In **Greece, 19% of young people with a medium level of education** are NEETs, while in **Cyprus, 14% of young people with a low level of education** find themselves in the same position. These figures paint a concerning picture: across these countries, millions of young people are at risk of long-term economic and social exclusion. Amid these challenges, sports emerge as an **underutilized yet highly effective tool for building essential life skills**. Studies have long shown that participation in team sports fosters **discipline, leadership, teamwork, and problem-solving abilities**—all of which are highly valued by employers. A report from the Women's Sports Foundation found that **69% of women leaders** in top business positions attributed their success to experiences in youth sports. Furthermore, young people who actively engage in sports are more likely to develop resilience, strong work ethics, and the ability to work effectively in teams, making them better prepared for professional life.

This is where the **TEAM** project steps in. By using **Basketball, Soccer, and Volleyball** as structured learning environments, TEAM will help **young people develop workplace-relevant skills** while fostering social inclusion and personal growth. Through targeted sports-based employability training, young participants will **learn to collaborate, communicate effectively, and take on leadership roles**, improving their readiness for the labor market. At least 50% of participants will come from underrepresented backgrounds, ensuring that the project reaches those who need it most.



Relevance to the Scope of the Call

The **TEAM project directly aligns with the scope of the Erasmus+ Sport call**, particularly in the following ways:

1. Encouraging Participation in Sport and Physical Activity

- TEAM increases youth engagement in structured sports activities, ensuring that at least 300 young people across 5 European countries develop teamwork and employability skills through sports-based training.
- By using Basketball, Soccer, and Volleyball as training tools, the project promotes lifelong engagement in physical activities while fostering social inclusion and workplace readiness.

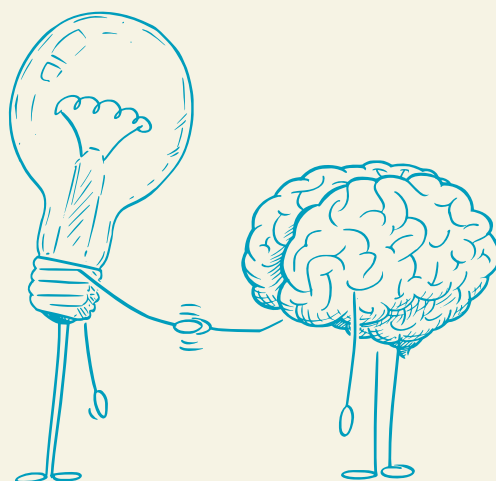


2. Promoting Social Inclusion and Equal Opportunities in Sports

- At least 50% of participants will come from underrepresented or disadvantaged backgrounds, ensuring inclusive access to sports as a tool for employability and integration.
- TEAM actively engages local communities, schools, and youth organizations to reach young people who typically lack access to structured sports-based training programs.

3. Harnessing the Educational Value of Sports for Personal Development and Employability

- The project transforms sports into an employability training mechanism, helping young people acquire soft skills like leadership, problem-solving, and teamwork—crucial for career success.
- TEAM will develop and distribute an Open Access Sports-Based Training Guidebook, ensuring knowledge transfer and sustainability beyond the project's duration.



Contribution to the General Objectives of the Call

The TEAM project contributes directly to the Erasmus+ Sport general objectives by:

Promoting Sports as a Tool for Education and Employability

- By **linking sports participation with workforce skills development**, TEAM demonstrates how team-based sports training can enhance career prospects.
- The project supports **youth employment strategies** by developing structured programs that teach workplace-relevant competencies through sports.



Fostering Social Inclusion and Equal Opportunities in Sports

- TEAM ensures that **at least 50% of participants come from disadvantaged backgrounds**, breaking barriers to **sports participation and employment opportunities**.



- The project implements inclusive recruitment strategies and develops an Inclusion Impact Report, tracking participation rates and diversity outcomes.

Strengthening Cooperation Between Sports Organizations, Employers, and Youth Stakeholders

- TEAM connects **sports organizations, businesses, career centers, and youth workers**, facilitating **job shadowing, mentoring, and networking opportunities**.
- The project will engage **20+ employers and 5 career centers** across partner countries ensuring that **sports-trained youth gain real-world exposure to the job market**.





Contribution to the Priorities of the Call

TEAM is strategically designed to **address key Erasmus+ Sport priorities**, including:

Health-Enhancing Physical Activity (HEPA) & Well-Being

- By promoting structured sports participation, TEAM encourages a healthy lifestyle among young people, helping them adopt long-term fitness habits that contribute to their overall well-being.

Social Inclusion Through Sport

- The project actively supports social inclusion, ensuring that sports-based training is accessible to marginalized groups.
- TEAM's methodology eliminates financial and social barriers to participation in high-quality employability-focused sports training.

Dual Careers & Lifelong Learning Through Sport


- By integrating employability training within sports, TEAM reinforces the role of sports in education, preparing young people for future job opportunities.
- The project ensures that lessons learned from sports are transferred into workplace competencies, equipping youth for long-term career success.

Innovation in Sports-Based Training & Digitalization

- TEAM will develop and distribute three high-quality employability videos, showcasing the connection between sports and workplace skills.
- Through digital dissemination and open-access resources, the project maximizes its reach and long-term sustainability.

The **TEAM project is a highly relevant, impactful, and scalable initiative** that aligns perfectly with Erasmus+ Sport priorities. By bridging the gap between sports, employability, and social inclusion, TEAM demonstrates how sports-based learning can equip young people with workplace-ready skills, foster equal opportunities, and strengthen cooperation between sports organizations and the job market.

With a structured methodology, strong community outreach, and sustainability mechanisms, TEAM ensures lasting impact, making it an ideal contribution to the Erasmus+ Sport agenda



T.E.A.M. project Consortium

01

ASD CULTURA E SPORT MATERA

ASD Cultura e Sport Matera (Italy) is the coordinator of the TEAM project and brings strong experience as a sport club working at the intersection of physical activity, youth engagement, and European cooperation. Based in Matera, the organisation leads the overall management and coordination of the consortium, while contributing its expertise in using sport as a tool for inclusion, skills development, and community participation.

02

M.M.C MANAGEMENT CENTER LIMITED

M.M.C Management Center Limited (Cyprus) is an adult education and training organisation with solid expertise in employability, soft skills, and vocational learning. In TEAM, MMC supports the educational and labour-market dimension of the project, helping connect sports-based learning with career readiness, mentoring, and business engagement for young people.

03

ASOCIATIA SCOUT SOCIETY

Asociatia Scout Society (Romania) is a non-profit association active in the field of sport, with experience in youth work, inclusion, and non-formal education. Within TEAM, Scout Society contributes its knowledge of working with young people, especially through sport-based activities that promote teamwork, participation, and personal development.

04

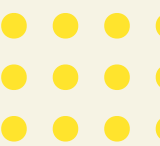
TO HAMOGELO TOU PAIDIOU

To Hamogelo Tou Paidiou / The Smile of the Child (Greece) is a non-profit organisation with strong community presence and experience supporting vulnerable young people. In the TEAM project, it plays an important role in promoting social inclusion and ensuring that disadvantaged youth can access meaningful sports-based opportunities that strengthen confidence, engagement, and employability skills.

05

CSI CENTER FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION LTD

CSI Center for Social Innovation Ltd (Cyprus) is a research and innovation organisation specialising in social impact, education, and European projects. In TEAM, CSI contributes research, innovation, and dissemination expertise, supporting the development of sustainable project outputs such as training resources, digital tools, and wider visibility for the project's results.



Why basketball, soccer, and volleyball?

We chose **volleyball, basketball and soccer** because they are popular sports in the project's partner countries and are the ones that will best enable young people's employability.

Soccer, volleyball, and basketball aren't just the "big three" in terms of popularity; they also represent true professional ecosystems. This is why they offer more opportunities for young people than other sports:

1. Local reach

Unlike niche sports that require specific facilities (think fencing or rowing), every small town has a soccer field, a basketball gym, or a volleyball net.

- Constant demand: Thousands of amateur clubs need instructors, youth coaches, and athletic trainers.
- Accessibility: It's easier for a young person to start working "locally" as an assistant at a soccer or mini-basketball school.

2. The "Professional Pyramid" structure

These sports enjoy a well-structured federation system. This creates a hierarchy that requires professionals at every level:

- Technical Area: Coaches, scouts, match analysts.
- Health Area: Specialized physiotherapists and nutritionists.
- Management Area: Sports secretaries, logistics directors, and press officers.

3. Commercial and media related industries

Football, basketball, and volleyball attract the largest share of advertising investments and TV rights. This money not only pays the salaries of the champions, but also finances:

- Marketing and Communications: Social media managers, photographers, and video editors for the clubs.
- Event Planning: Stadium management, ticketing, and security.

Not just athletes: Emerging careers

Today, a young person doesn't necessarily have to "know how to dribble" to work in this world.

Who is this guide intended for?

This document is a comprehensive training guidebook linking basketball, soccer, and volleyball to employability skills and is aimed at coaches, youth workers, NGOs, schools, employment services, etc.



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The Guidebook effectively contributes to the employability and social inclusion of young people through sport:

I. Sport-Based Learning for Employability

- The project integrates structured sporting activities (basketball, football, and volleyball) with training in key employability skills.
- Each sport is linked to a specific set of skills:
- Basketball: Leadership and quick decision-making.
- Football: Team coordination and problem-solving.
- Volleyball: Communication and building trust.
- The training approach ensures that participants understand and apply these skills in real-world professional contexts.

Why this method?

- Research shows that sport improves teamwork, discipline, leadership, and adaptability, making young people more employable.
- Unlike traditional vocational training, this engaging and hands-on approach ensures higher participation rates and long-term skill retention.

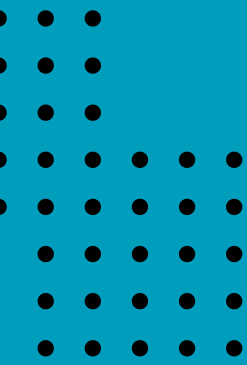
So if you are a coach you will have to start from chapter 4, but it is very important to read all the chapters of the Guidebook.


This TEAM Sports-Based Training Guidebook and a series of digital videos, providing open-access resources for schools, sports organisations and youth programmes across Europe, are a key innovation of the project.

Before starting a session it is very important to adapt the activities to the context of the target groups.



*INCLUSION AND YOUTH
NEEDS: WHO ARE WE
TRAINING?*





Across Europe—and especially in Southern and Eastern European regions such as Greece, Italy, Romania, and Cyprus—young people face a range of complex challenges during their transition from education to employment. These challenges are not only economic but also social, psychological, and structural. For many young people, especially those coming from underrepresented or disadvantaged backgrounds, these challenges can accumulate, pushing them into long-term unemployment, disengagement, and social exclusion.

The TEAM project seeks to respond to these realities by using structured sports environments to support young people in developing transferable life skills, building confidence, accessing supportive networks, and enhancing their readiness for employment. But before we design or deliver sports-based training, we must understand **who** we are training, **what needs** they bring, and **what barriers** stand between them and meaningful participation in both sport and the labour market.

This chapter explores these issues through four interconnected parts:

2.1 Youth Employment Challenges in Partner Countries (Italy, Cyprus, Greece, Romania)

Understanding the economic, social, and institutional landscape shaping youth unemployment and NEET status.

2.2 Priority Groups in TEAM

Identifying which youth populations are most underrepresented in employability pathways and sport, and why.

2.3 Principles of Inclusive Sports-Based Training

Practical guidance for making sports-based employability programmes safe, accessible, culturally responsive, and engaging.

2.4 Safeguarding and Wellbeing

The essential foundations for any youth programme, ensuring dignity, protection, and emotional safety.

The goal of this chapter is not just to share data but to provide **practical insights** that coaches, youth workers, and community organisations can directly apply in their everyday work.



2.1. Youth Employment Challenges in Partner Countries (Italy, Cyprus, Greece, Romania)

Sports-based training can only be effective when we understand the broader context affecting young people's lives. Across the TEAM partner countries, youth unemployment and NEET rates remain among the highest in Europe, reflecting deeper structural challenges such as skills mismatches, limited work experience opportunities, weak social networks, and socioeconomic inequalities.

Below we explore these challenges with up-to-date, evidence-based insights.

2.1.1 Understanding the NEET landscape across Europe

Across the EU, an estimated **11% of young people aged 15–29 were NEETs in 2024**, demonstrating significant cross-country inequalities, with figures ranging from 5% in the Netherlands to 19% in Romania (Eurostat, 2024). NEET youth are not a single homogeneous group; rather, they include:

- unemployed youth,
- discouraged workers,
- youth with disabilities,
- young carers,
- early school leavers,
- and economically inactive youth facing social or health barriers

(Assmann & Broschinski, 2021)

Structural differences across European countries contribute to these variations. Comparative institutional research shows that Southern European countries—such as Italy and Greece—tend to have **higher proportions of discouraged unemployed youth**, partly due to labour-market rigidities and less developed active labour-market policies (ALMPs) (Assmann & Broschinski, 2021). Central and Eastern European countries, including Romania, show higher NEET levels among **young people with care responsibilities**, linked to limited formal care infrastructures (Assmann & Broschinski, 2021).

These findings highlight the necessity of **localised and context-sensitive programme design**, as the structural contributors to youth disengagement differ across TEAM partner countries.

2.1.2. Barriers contributing to youth unemployment and NEET status

Motivational and psychological barriers

A global scoping review reveals that NEET youth commonly experience mental health challenges, including **depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and chronic stress**, which often function both as causes and consequences of youth disengagement (Gunnes et al., 2025). Poor mental health decreases confidence in job seeking, reduces motivation, and contributes to avoidance of structured environments—including sports programmes or training sessions.

Studies also show that NEET youth frequently report **reduced sense of control**, hopelessness about the future, and a heightened risk of social isolation (Gunnes et al., 2025).

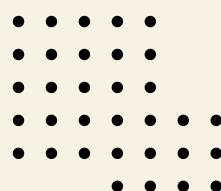
Skills gaps and mismatches

The rapid digital transformation of the labour market has widened skill gaps between NEET youth and their employed peers. Findings from the WeLaR project demonstrate that NEET youth exhibit **lower levels of digital skills**, often having prior work experience in repetitive or physically oriented jobs with limited upskilling opportunities (Smoter & Szymczak, 2024). This mismatch hinders their employability in an economy increasingly reliant on digital literacy.

But what is even more important is that employers also report substantial gaps in **soft skills**, such as communication, teamwork, responsibility, and problem-solving—skills that sport has a unique ability to nurture (Goudas et al., 2015).

Limited social and professional networks

Many NEET youth lack supportive networks that facilitate entry into the labour market. Research shows that successful transitions into employment often depend on **informal networks**, mentorship, and social capital—resources that NEET youth disproportionately lack (Paabort et al., 2023). For migrant and refugee youth, this challenge is even more pronounced.





Institutional and structural barriers

Countries with rigid employment structures and limited ALMPs have higher levels of discouraged young jobseekers (Assmann & Broschinski, 2021). Young people in Greece, Italy, and Romania frequently report bureaucratic hurdles, limited vocational pathways, and insufficient support services, all of which contribute to withdrawal from the labour market.

Socioeconomic inequalities

Low-income youth, rural youth, and migrant youth face layered disadvantages, including long travel distances to services, financial hardship, and limited exposure to diverse career options (Council of Europe, 2023; UNHCR, 2024). These factors significantly shape how young people access both sport and employability support.


Mental health and trauma

Many NEET youth—especially refugees, migrants, and young people with histories of poverty or family instability—experience trauma-related symptoms that affect cognitive functioning, emotional regulation, and trust in group environments (UNHCR, 2024; sportanddev, 2025). Symptoms such as hypervigilance, fear of failure, or emotional shutdown can hinder participation in sports or training activities.

This makes trauma-informed coaching essential: youth need environments that feel predictable, safe, non-judgmental, and relationally supportive.

2.1.3. Implications for sports-based employability programmes

Given these barriers, sports-based programmes must be designed with:

- **Low-threshold access (e.g., free sessions, flexible attendance)**
 - **Trauma-aware facilitation**
 - **Clear structure and routine**
 - **Positive, strengths-based coaching**
 - **Embedded skill-building opportunities**
 - **Support with transport, equipment, or communication tools**
 - **Bridges to employers, mentors, or training providers**
- 

A growing body of evidence suggests that **team sports can foster resilience, social belonging, leadership, and collaboration**, offering an effective pathway to re-engage NEET youth (Gozzoli et al., 2023). However, this potential is only realised when programmes intentionally address the structural and psychosocial barriers described above.

2.2. Priority Groups in TEAM

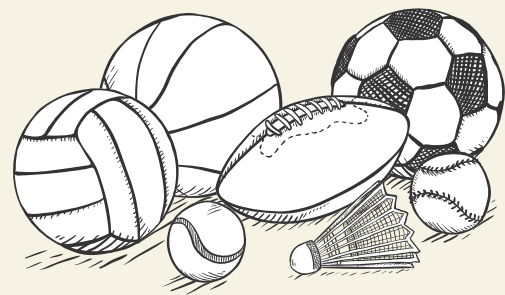
The TEAM project prioritizes youth who are underrepresented in both sport and employment pathways. These include young people who, due to socioeconomic status, migration or displacement, gender norms, disability, rurality, or disengagement from school and work (NEET), face layered barriers to participation and progression. Understanding who these priority groups are—and the obstacles they face in **both** sport and employability support—helps us design inclusive and effective interventions (Assmann & Broschinski, 2021; Eurostat, 2024).



2.2.1. Who are the Priority Groups?

- **NEET youth:** NEET young people are heterogeneous, spanning unemployed jobseekers, discouraged workers, youth with care responsibilities, and those out of the labour force due to disability or other reasons. Their profiles vary by national institutional arrangements (e.g., ALMPs, family services, labour-market regulations) (Assmann & Broschinski, 2021; Eurostat, 2024; Pennoni & Bal-Domańska, 2022).
- **Migrant youth:** First- and second-generation migrants can face language barriers, status-related administrative hurdles, and discrimination. Evidence suggests that community sport—when designed intentionally—can build belonging, social networks, and trust (Council of Europe, 2023; sportanddev, 2025).
- **Refugee and asylum-seeking youth:** Displacement often involves trauma, loss, and prolonged uncertainty. When safe and intentional, sport can contribute to psychosocial wellbeing and inclusion; however, participation can be restricted by structural (costs, facilities) and socio-cultural (language, norms, discrimination) barriers (UNHCR, 2024; Council of Europe, 2023).
- **Low-income youth:** Economic hardship constrains access to equipment, transport, and programme fees, which depresses both sport participation and engagement in employability services (Council of Europe, 2023; UNHCR, 2024).

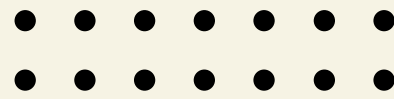
- **Rural youth:** Scarcity of facilities, services, and public transport in rural areas limits sustained participation in regular sport sessions and access to training and employer networks (Council of Europe, 2023; UNHCR, 2024).
- **Young women and girls:** Participation is shaped by safety concerns, gender norms, and a lack of girl-friendly environments or role models. Gender-responsive design is therefore foundational (Council of Europe, 2023; International Sport and Culture Association [ISCA], 2025).
- **Youth with disabilities or health conditions:** Barriers include inaccessible facilities, lack of adaptive equipment, and insufficient coach preparation for inclusive practice (Council of Europe, 2023; UNHCR, 2024).



2.2.2. Barriers to participation in sport

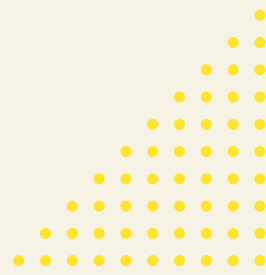
- **Structural barriers:** Costs (fees, equipment, transport) and facility access are primary obstacles for low-income, migrant, and refugee youth; rural youth also face distance and weak transport links (UNHCR, 2024; Council of Europe, 2023).
- **Socio-cultural barriers:** Language differences impede comprehension and social connection for migrant/refugee youth, while gender norms can restrict girls' participation and family approval. Experiences of xenophobia or racism further discourage engagement (sportanddev, 2025; Council of Europe, 2023).
- **Interpersonal barriers:** Limited social networks and prior negative experiences with institutions reduce willingness to join group activities; fear of judgement can be acute among youth who have experienced school failure, unemployment, or discrimination (Paabort et al., 2023; sportanddev, 2025).
- **Personal barriers (including mental health):** Anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem—prevalent among NEET youth—downshift motivation and attendance; for displaced youth, trauma can trigger hypervigilance or withdrawal in competitive or high-arousal sport settings (Gunnes et al., 2025; UNHCR, 2024).





2.2.3. Barriers to employability support

- **Information and awareness:** Many NEET youth are disconnected from institutional pathways and unaware of opportunities or supports, necessitating proactive outreach and navigation assistance (Paabort et al., 2023; Eurostat, 2024).
- **Skills and literacy gaps:** Rapid digitalisation raises the bar for cognitive and digital skills. Evidence indicates NEETs are overrepresented in repetitive, lower-skill roles and show lower digital skill utilisation, magnifying disadvantage (Smoter & Szymczak, 2024). Employers simultaneously report persistent gaps in soft skills (communication, teamwork, punctuality, problem-solving) that are central to workplace performance (Goudas et al., 2015; Theeboom et al., 2021).
- **Administrative and institutional hurdles:** Complex documentation (especially for migrants/refugees), rigid entry requirements, and limited ALMPs are associated with higher shares of discouraged NEETs in Southern Europe (Assmann & Broschinski, 2021; Pennoni & Bal-Domańska, 2022).
- **Psychological and motivational barriers:** Long-term unemployment and social exclusion contribute to hopelessness and low self-efficacy, reducing engagement with training or job search (Gunnes et al., 2025; Paabort et al., 2023).



2.2.4. Why priority groups need tailored sports-based programmes

- **Skill-building in approachable contexts:** Team sports are accessible entry points to develop transferable skills (teamwork, communication, leadership, emotion regulation) in experiential, low-stakes environments (Gozzoli et al., 2023; Theeboom et al., 2021).
- **Belonging and social capital:** Inclusive sport settings help rebuild networks and trust, particularly for displaced and migrant youth, reducing isolation and supporting integration (sportanddev, 2025; Council of Europe, 2023).
- **Routine and structure:** Predictable sessions reinforce attendance habits and time management, which are essential for employability (Paabort et al., 2023; Gozzoli et al., 2023).
- **Mental health support:** Physical activity and positive coach relationships can buffer stress and support self-esteem—provided sessions are psychologically safe and trauma-aware (UNHCR, 2024; ISCA, 2025)



2.3. Principles of inclusive sports-based training

Inclusive sports-based employability training is grounded in **equity, safety, accessibility, and relevance**. For TEAM partners, this means creating learning environments in Basketball, Football, and Volleyball that **welcome** diverse youth (including NEET, migrant, refugee, rural, low-income, girls and young women, and youth with disabilities), **remove barriers** to participation, and **intentionally build transferable skills** that matter in local labour markets (Council of Europe, 2023; UNHCR, 2024).

Below, we translate international guidance and research into **practical principles and adaptations** you can apply immediately in sessions, clubs, schools, and community programmes (Gozzoli et al., 2023; Theeboom et al., 2021).

2.3.1. Core inclusion principles

Non-discrimination and equity

Every session should be designed and delivered so that no young person is excluded or disadvantaged on the basis of gender, migration status, ethnicity, disability, religion, or socioeconomic status. This includes **zero-tolerance** for harassment and racism, **clear behaviour codes**, and **consistent enforcement** to protect all participants (Council of Europe, 2023; UNHCR, 2024).

Accessibility by design

Accessibility must be the default—physically (venues, entrances, toilets), financially (no/low fees, equipment lending), linguistically (plain language, translated materials, visuals), and cognitively (clear instructions, chunked tasks). Proactive accessibility maximizes reach among NEET and displaced youth who encounter multiple barriers (UNHCR, 2024; Council of Europe, 2023).





Gender-responsive practice

Girls and young women benefit from safe spaces, female role models, tailored kit guidance, and options for women-only or mixed formats depending on local norms and participant preference. Programmes should reduce gendered risk (e.g., harassment, unwanted attention), track gender parity in recruitment/retention, and ensure decision-making power for girls in programme design (Council of Europe, 2023; International Sport and Culture Association [ISCA], 2025).

Trauma-aware facilitation

Many priority-group youth carry stress, loss, and traumatic experiences that can affect concentration, arousal, and trust. Trauma-aware coaching focuses on predictability, choice, collaboration, and empowerment, with carefully paced warm-ups, non-shaming feedback, and escalation-avoidant communication. Coaches are not therapists; they create psychologically safe environments and use referral pathways when needed (UNHCR, 2024; Council of Europe, 2023).

Participation and co-creation

Inclusion improves when youth co-design session formats, rules, and goals. Co-creation strengthens motivation, relevance, and ownership—key drivers of attendance among NEET youth (Gozzoli et al., 2023; Theeboom et al., 2021).

Employability alignment

Sessions should intentionally map drills and team tasks to transferable skills—communication, teamwork, problem-solving, punctuality, leadership, resilience—with explicit reflection at the end of practice so participants can name and transfer what they learned to job or training contexts (Gozzoli et al., 2023; Theeboom et al., 2021).





2.3.2. Trauma-aware coaching: Practical Guide

Trauma and chronic stress can surface in sport through **hypervigilance, withdrawal, conflict, or avoidance**. The following practices help coaches create **safe and engaging** sessions (UNHCR, 2024; Council of Europe, 2023):

Predictable structure: post a simple session plan; open and close the same way each time.

Choice & voice: offer small choices (roles, drills, stations); invite input on difficulty.

Grounding & pacing: start with low-arousal warm-ups; gradually increase intensity; normalize breaks.

Non-shaming feedback: focus on effort and strategies, not outcomes; use calm tone and private corrections.

De-escalation scripts: agree team phrases for “pause/reset/breathe”; model respectful conflict resolution.

Peer safety norms: co-create team values (e.g., “We listen,” “We include,” “We call out disrespect”).

Referral pathways: know local mental health, social services, and protection contacts; secure consent and follow safeguarding procedures for any referral.

2.3.3. Practical adaptations to maximize inclusion

Language & communication

Use **plain language** and **visual demonstrations**; avoid jargon.

Check understanding with **show-me** tasks rather than verbal Q&A.

Provide **multilingual** welcome sheets and safety rules; pair newcomers with a “buddy” (UNHCR, 2024; Council of Europe, 2023).



Scheduling & attendance

- Offer **flexible schedules** (evenings or weekends), **shorter blocks**, and **drop-in options** to accommodate unstable routines, shift work, caring duties, or transport constraints common among NEET and migrant youth (UNHCR, 2024; Council of Europe, 2023).
- Build **micro-commitments** (e.g., 4-week cycles) to reduce anxiety about long commitments.

Fees, equipment, and kit.

- Minimize costs; provide **loaner equipment** and **transport assistance**.
- Clarify **dress code** options (e.g., modest kits or headscarves) and offer **girls-only** sessions where culturally appropriate (Council of Europe, 2023; ISCA, 2025).

Physical and sensory access

- Check **ramps, toilets, lighting, sound**; provide **quiet zones and opt-out** choices for high-arousal drills.
- Adapt drills to allow seated, standing, or low-impact participation (UNHCR, 2024; Council of Europe, 2023).

Role models and staffing

- Recruit **female, migrant/refugee**, and **disabled** assistant coaches/mentors to mirror participant diversity and normalize inclusion (Council of Europe, 2023; ISCA, 2025).
- Provide **coach CPD** on inclusive methods, trauma awareness, and safeguarding (Theeboom et al., 2021; Gozzoli et al., 2023).



2.3.4. Designing sessions that build employability



Use sport **intentionally** to cultivate workplace-relevant skills. The following **plan-deliver-reflect** structure is effective (Gozzoli et al., 2023; Theeboom et al., 2021):

1. **Plan:** Select **1–2 skills of the day** (e.g., communication + punctuality).

2. **Deliver:**

- **Communication:** “silent” passing drills requiring non-verbal cues; rotate captains to practice concise instructions.
- **Teamwork:** cooperative challenges (e.g., keep-ball with shared goals); award points for assist behaviours (calling, covering, encouraging).
- **Leadership:** micro-lead roles (warm-up lead, equipment lead); rotate every session.
- **Problem-solving:** scenario drills (down a player, time-pressure plays) with group huddles to choose tactics.
- **Punctuality & reliability:** start on time; recognize on-time teams; link punctuality to “job-readiness.”

3. **Reflect:** End with a **2–3-minute debrief:**

- “Where did we use concise communication?”
- “Which behaviours showed teamwork?”
- “How does this look in a workplace?”
- Capture 1 sentence per player in **a skills passport.**

Evidence suggests that **explicit reflection** helps youth transfer on-court behaviours to **work settings** more reliably than implicit learning alone (Gozzoli et al., 2023; Theeboom et al., 2021).

2.3.5. Inclusive assessment and feedback

Assessment should be **growth-oriented**, brief, and practical. Suggested tools:

- **Attendance & punctuality tracker** → review patterns privately every 2–3 weeks.
- **Skills passport** → youth and coach co-record observed behaviours (e.g., clear instructions, calming a conflict, supporting a teammate).
- **Self-rating cards** (1–5) on confidence, communication, and stress management; revisit monthly.
- **Short employer-language badges** (e.g., “Reliable teammate,” “Clear communicator”) to use in CVs and mock interviews (Theeboom et al., 2021; Gozzoli et al., 2023).

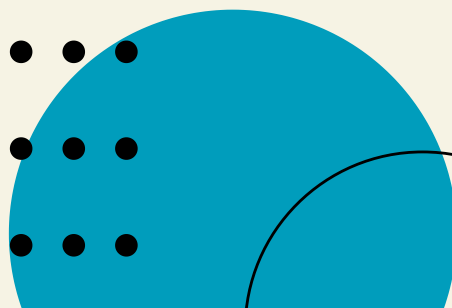
Where possible, align indicators with local **employer expectations** (e.g., timekeeping, teamwork, initiative), which increases credibility when youth transition to job trials or apprenticeships (Gozzoli et al., 2023; Theeboom et al., 2021).

2.3.6. Building bridges: From court to career

Sustained outcomes improve when programmes **connect sport to real opportunities**:

- **Invited employer sessions** (soft-skills clinics; “day-in-the-life” talks).
- **Job shadowing after consistent attendance** (e.g., 6–8 sessions).
- **Career centre partnerships** for CV workshops, interview practice, and digital literacy.
- **Referral agreements** with public employment services and NGOs for wrap-around support (Paabort et al., 2023; Council of Europe, 2023).

This **whole-ecosystem** approach reflects international consensus that multi-component, employer-linked programmes produce better employability outcomes for disadvantaged youth (Paabort et al., 2023; ISCA, 2025).



2.3.7. Minimizing harm and maximizing safety

Sport is not automatically “good”—risks include **bullying, discrimination, emotional or physical harm**, and **power abuses**. Strong **safeguarding, clear codes of conduct**, and **complaints procedures** are non-negotiable (Council of Europe, 2023; UNHCR, 2024). See Section 2.4 for detailed safeguarding protocols.

2.3.8. Quick implementation checklist (Coach/Club)

- **Access:** Fees waived? Transport options? Loaner kit available? (UNHCR, 2024)
- **Safety:** Code of conduct posted? Incident reporting known to youth? (Council of Europe, 2023)
- **Trauma-aware:** Predictable structure? Quiet space? Choice in drills? (UNHCR, 2024)
- **Gender & culture:** Girl-friendly sessions? Female coach present? Dress options? (ISCA, 2025; Council of Europe, 2023)
- **Language:** Visuals + demos? Multilingual handouts? Buddy system? (UNHCR, 2024)
- **Employability:** Skill-of-the-day set? End-of-session reflection? Skills passports? (Gozzoli et al., 2023; Theeboom et al., 2021)
- **Bridges:** Employer/ PES/ NGO partners looped in? Next step after 6–8 sessions? (Paabort et al., 2023)





2.4. Safeguarding and Wellbeing

Safeguarding is the foundation of inclusive sport-for-employability practice. It ensures that every participant—and especially those from TEAM’s priority groups (NEET, migrant and refugee youth, girls and young women, youth with disabilities, low-income and rural youth)—can engage in sport **safely, with dignity, and without fear of harm** (Council of Europe, 2023; UNHCR, 2024). Robust safeguarding is not only an ethical obligation; it is also a **programme quality** and **participation** driver: youth are more likely to attend, stay engaged, and grow when they feel safe and respected (Council of Europe, 2023; International Sport and Culture Association [ISCA], 2025).

Below are practical standards and tools you can adopt across clubs, NGOs, schools, and municipal settings delivering TEAM activities.

2.4.1. What safeguarding means in youth sport

Safeguarding comprises the policies, procedures, and culture that protect young people from **abuse, neglect, exploitation, discrimination, and harm**—including physical, emotional/psychological, and sexual harm; bullying and hazing; online harms; and misuse of power by adults or peers (Council of Europe, 2023; UNHCR, 2024). Effective safeguarding is **proactive** (prevention by design) and **reactive** (clear reporting and response), and it must be tailored to local context and laws (Council of Europe, 2023; UNHCR, 2024).

Key implications for TEAM countries:

- **Mixed legal frameworks** and service landscapes across Italy, Greece, Romania, and Cyprus mean organisations should **adapt** procedures to national standards while maintaining **minimum international norms** (Council of Europe, 2023).
- Displacement and migration add specific risks (e.g., documentation hurdles, camp/housing vulnerabilities, language barriers), requiring **context-aware** safeguarding and **trusted referral pathways** (UNHCR, 2024).



2.4.2. Core safeguarding principles

- **Do no harm and non-discrimination:**

Design sessions and interactions to avoid re-traumatisation; ensure equal protection regardless of gender, ethnicity, migration status, disability, religion, or socioeconomic status (Council of Europe, 2023; UNHCR, 2024).

- **Participation and dignity:**

Involve youth in setting ground rules; respect their choices and perspectives; ensure privacy and confidentiality are protected in line with local data protection rules (UNHCR, 2024; ISCA, 2025).

- **Proportionality and accountability:**

Put in place measures proportionate to risk (e.g., changing rooms supervision, safe transport, digital communication rules) and maintain clear lines of accountability from coaches to safeguarding leads and organisational leadership (Council of Europe, 2023; UNHCR, 2024).

2.4.3. Consent, boundaries, and power dynamics

- **Informed consent & assent:**

- Obtain **written informed consent** from legal guardians and **assent** from youth (where applicable).
- Use simple, translated forms with visuals when needed; review verbally so participants understand what they are agreeing to (UNHCR, 2024; Council of Europe, 2023).


- **Professional boundaries:**

- Define acceptable coach–participant interactions (no private closed-door meetings; avoid one-to-one communication on personal accounts; never transport youth alone without prior consent and logging).
- Prohibit gifts, favouritism, and any romantic/sexual interactions with participants (Council of Europe, 2023; UNHCR, 2024).

- **Power awareness:**

- Acknowledge the **inherent power** of adult staff and more experienced peers; adopt transparent communication, share decision-making where safe, and rotate roles to reduce power imbalances (UNHCR, 2024; ISCA, 2025).






2.4.4. Safe recruitment, training, and supervision

- **Safer recruitment:**
 - Use **structured interviews, reference checks**, and (where permissible) **criminal record checks** for all staff and regular volunteers.
 - Require signed **Codes of Conduct** and commitment to safeguarding policy before starting (Council of Europe, 2023; UNHCR, 2024).
- **Induction & ongoing Training:**
 - Provide induction on safeguarding policy, **trauma-aware practice, cultural/gender sensitivity, and referral steps**.
 - Refresh training annually; include scenario-based drills (Council of Europe, 2023; UNHCR, 2024).
- **Supervision & Ratios:**
 - Maintain appropriate **adult-to-youth ratios** in line with national guidance; avoid isolated 1:1 situations; require two-adult presence for higher-risk activities (UNHCR, 2024; Council of Europe, 2023).

2.4.5. Safe environments: physical, digital, and event-related

- **Facilities & equipment:**
 - Conduct risk assessments for venues (lighting, exits, changing rooms, accessible toilets, first aid kits, AED if available).
 - Design gender-safe and access-friendly arrangements (e.g., separate changing options, privacy screens) (Council of Europe, 2023; UNHCR, 2024).
 - **Digital safeguarding:**
 - Use official channels (club email, moderated groups); set hours for communication; no direct private messaging between coaches and youth on personal accounts.
 - Prohibit sharing youth images without consent; blur faces if necessary; follow data protection laws (UNHCR, 2024; Council of Europe, 2023).
 - **Transport & trips:**
 - Pre-approve travel plans; use consent forms; keep attendance and contact lists; set curfews and rooming rules with same-gender supervision (Council of Europe, 2023; UNHCR, 2024).
- 

2.4.6. Responding to concerns: reporting and referrals

- **Clear, multilingual procedures:**

- Display a **step-by-step flowchart** in training areas: Recognise → Record → Report → Refer.
- Provide **anonymous reporting** options and a **named safeguarding lead** with contact details (UNHCR, 2024; Council of Europe, 2023).

- **How to respond in the moment:**

- **Listen and believe**; do not promise confidentiality—explain you must share with the safeguarding lead; record verbatim statements, date, time, context.
- Avoid investigating yourself; **report within 24 hours** (or immediately if urgent) (UNHCR, 2024; Council of Europe, 2023).

- **Referral pathways:**

- Maintain an updated map of **local services** (child protection, police, healthcare, psychosocial and GBV/SEA services, refugee legal aid).
- For displaced youth, ensure partners can navigate documentation and language needs; use **trusted interpreters** (UNHCR, 2024; Council of Europe, 2023).

2.4.7. Psychosocial support and wellbeing in practice

- **Trauma-aware day-to-day:**

- Start with predictable routines and **choice** (select roles, drills).
- Use **non-shaming** feedback; build a **team charter** (values, inclusive language).
- Provide **quiet zones** for self-regulation; normalize breaks and water (UNHCR, 2024; Council of Europe, 2023).

- **Psychological First Aid (PFA) basics (for coaches/youth workers):**

- Ensure **Safety** (calm tone, remove from crowd if needed).
- Offer **Comfort** and **practical support** (water, a seat, contact a trusted adult).
- Connect youth to **further help** where indicated; document and **report** (UNHCR, 2024; ISCA, 2025).

- **Monitoring wellbeing:**

- Check-ins at session start (“traffic-light” cards), brief end-of-session pulse (“one word I leave with”), and private monthly chats for those struggling; escalate if risk indicators emerge (Council of Europe, 2023; UNHCR, 2024).



2.4.8. Minimum policy package for TEAM providers

Each delivery organisation should maintain and annually review:

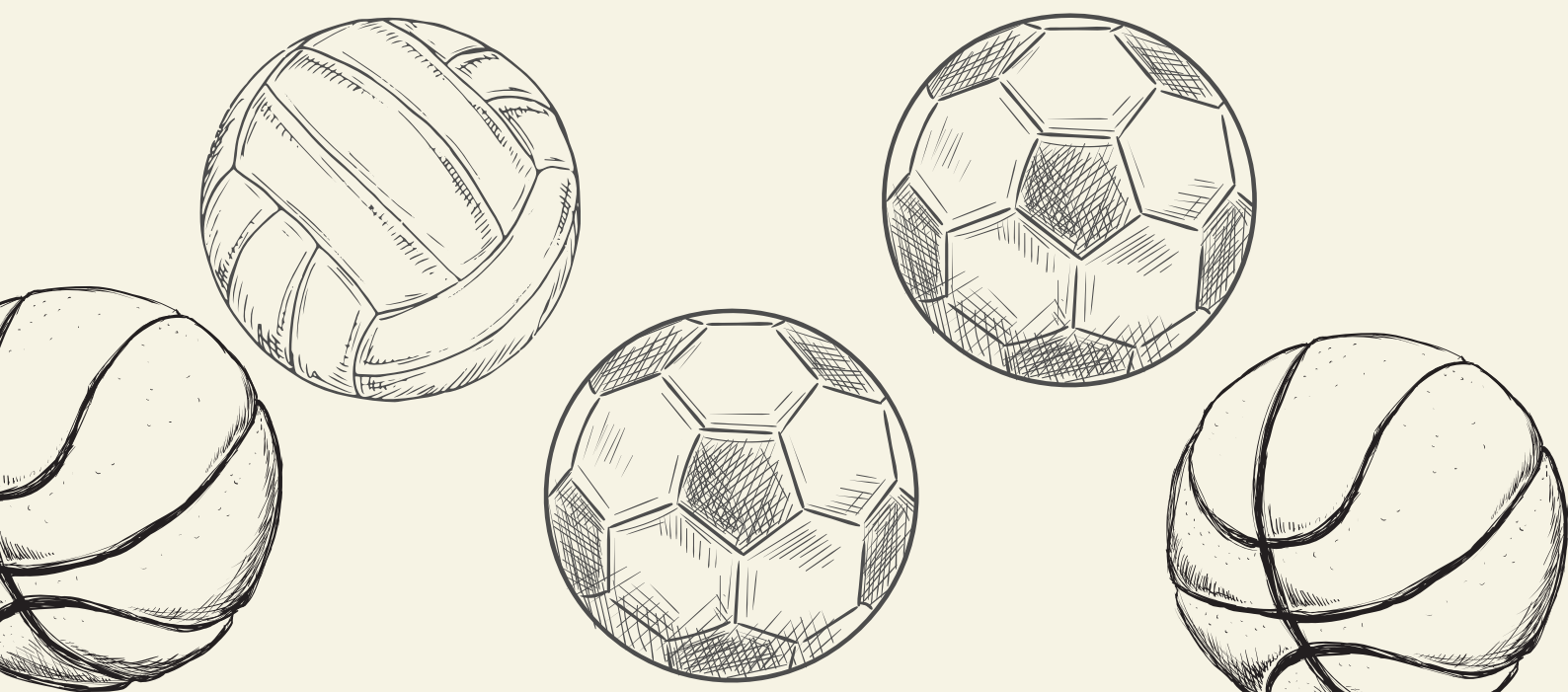
1. **Safeguarding/Child Protection Policy** (scope, definitions, roles, procedures)
2. **Code of Conduct** (staff/volunteers/participants; anti-bullying & anti-harassment)
3. **Safer Recruitment Policy** (vetting, induction, training)
4. **Incident Reporting & Case Management SOP** (forms, timelines, confidentiality)
5. **Risk Assessment SOP** (venues, trips, equipment, severe weather, medical)
6. **Digital Safety & Media Consent Policy**
7. **Data Protection & Record-Keeping SOP**
8. **Partnership & Referral Agreements** (with public services, NGOs, mental health/GBV services)

(Council of Europe, 2023; UNHCR, 2024; ISCA, 2025)

2.4.9. Quick coach checklist (every session)

- **We uphold the code of conduct** and call out disrespect.
- **Two-adult rule** observed; ratios adequate.
- **Space check complete** (exits, hazards, first aid).
- **Consent & media list verified**; no unauthorized filming.
- **Clear plan posted**; quiet zone identified.
- **End-of-session debrief** includes how to **ask for help** and who to contact.
- **Incident log** ready; all concerns reported **same day** to the safeguarding lead.

(UNHCR, 2024; Council of Europe, 2023)





*TEAM TRAINING
FRAMEWORK &
METHODOLOGY*

Sport has always taught people things that go far beyond the game itself. Persistence, trust, composure under pressure, the ability to read a situation and act quickly: these are qualities that every employer values, and they are qualities that team sports naturally demand. The TEAM project builds on this simple truth. Rather than teaching soft skills through lectures or worksheets, it puts young people into structured sport sessions where those skills are genuinely required, and then it makes the learning visible through guided reflection and explicit connections to working life.

This chapter describes the full training framework behind TEAM. It explains the four principles that shape every activity, the reasoning behind the choice of sports, the competence model that gives the programme its learning structure, the training cycle that every trainer follows, and the session format used across all five partner countries. The framework is designed to be practical, consistent and replicable so that any organisation that picks it up can deliver it with confidence.

3.1 The Four Pillars of TEAM Methodology

The TEAM training methodology is built on four principles. These are not abstract values. They are practical commitments that shape decisions about what activities are chosen, who is invited to participate, how sessions are designed, and what happens when the project funding ends. Any trainer delivering a TEAM session should be able to see all four principles at work in what they are doing.



Pillar 1: Sports Based Learning for Employability

The starting point for TEAM is the well established evidence that sport is a powerful environment for developing transferable skills. The anthropologist Marcel Mauss described sport as a total social fact, a phenomenon that operates across multiple levels of society at once, from physical performance to social and economic life. This is not just a theoretical observation. In practice, it means that when a young person plays in a team, they are simultaneously practising communication, dealing with hierarchy, managing failure, trusting strangers and making decisions under pressure. Every one of those things has a direct equivalent in the workplace.

For nearly two decades, researchers and practitioners have been documenting the potential of sport based interventions to support young people's transition into employment. The European University Sports Association's handbook on skills for youth through sport identifies teamwork, discipline, resilience and leadership as the core competences that sport based programmes reliably develop, and notes that these are precisely the qualities that employers report as missing most often in young candidates (EUSA, 2023). What distinguishes TEAM from simply playing sport is the intentionality built into every session. Activities are not chosen because they are fun, though they should be enjoyable. They are chosen because they reliably generate the learning opportunities that trainers are looking for, and the debrief that follows every activity is where the sport becomes education.

The evidence on sport based interventions is also clear that they are particularly effective with young people who are already marginalised from formal education. Research summarised by McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) and updated more recently by Brown and colleagues (2020) shows that as more young people remain in formal education for longer, the relative value of qualifications alone as a route into employment has declined. Non formal approaches, including sport, are increasingly recognised as essential complements rather than alternatives to formal learning. TEAM sits firmly within this evidence base.

Pillar 2: Inclusion and Accessibility



TEAM is designed from the outset for young people who face the greatest barriers to employment. At least 50 percent of all participants across the project come from disadvantaged or under represented groups, including young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), migrants and refugees, young people from rural or low income backgrounds, and those with fewer opportunities due to disability or social exclusion.

Inclusion in TEAM is not simply a matter of inviting these groups to attend. It means designing the programme so that it actually works for them. Sessions are delivered in community spaces that are physically accessible. All written materials are produced in plain language and, where needed, in multiple languages. Sport activities are adapted so that participants with different physical abilities or fitness levels can take part meaningfully, not just symbolically.



Trainers receive guidance on facilitation techniques that work across language and cultural differences. The European Disability Forum defines accessibility as the removal of barriers that prevent people with disabilities from accessing environments, technology and information, while inclusion means ensuring they are genuinely welcomed and able to participate fully (EDF, 2024). TEAM takes both parts of this definition seriously, at every stage from recruitment through to follow up.

Partnerships with local youth centres, NGOs and schools are central to the recruitment strategy in each partner country. These organisations already have relationships with the young people TEAM wants to reach, and they are best placed to identify who would benefit most and to support participation throughout the programme.

Pillar 3: Business and Youth Connection



Learning employability skills in a sports session is valuable. Practising those skills alongside real employers, and seeing how they translate into actual workplace situations, makes the learning far more durable and meaningful. TEAM creates direct and structured contact between young participants and the business world through three main mechanisms: job shadowing placements, mentoring relationships, and networking and career development events.

Each of the five partner organisations engages at least five local businesses in the project. Across the partnership as a whole, more than twenty employers are actively involved. These are not passive supporters. They attend events, meet participants, offer shadowing opportunities, and in some cases commit to ongoing collaboration after the project ends. The SALTO Youth network's research on non formal learning and employability found that young people who have direct contact with employers during a structured learning programme report significantly higher confidence in job seeking and a clearer understanding of what employers actually expect from candidates (SALTO Youth, 2022).

The business connection in TEAM also runs in the other direction. Employers who engage with the programme gain early access to motivated young people who have been through a structured development experience. Several partner organisations have already established relationships with local businesses that are interested in this kind of early pipeline for recruitment. The project formalises and scales those relationships.

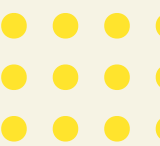
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Pillar 4: Digital Sustainability and Open Resources

Every material produced by the TEAM project is designed to be freely available, easy to use, and lasting. The training guidebook, session plans, video series and open access toolkit are all published online under open licences. This means that any organisation in any country can download them, adapt them and deliver their own version of the TEAM programme without needing additional funding or permission.

This is a deliberate response to one of the most common criticisms of EU funded projects: that their outputs disappear when the grant period ends. TEAM builds sustainability into its design rather than treating it as an afterthought. The European Commission's open education policy is clear that materials produced with public funding should be publicly available and reusable (European Commission, 2023). TEAM honours that commitment. The project website will host all resources and remain active after the 24 month project period. The Erasmus+ Knowledge Hub will provide an additional long term home for the open access toolkit.



3.2 Linking Sports to Employability Skills

TEAM uses three team sports: basketball, soccer and volleyball. Each was chosen because the natural demands of that sport create genuine opportunities to practise a specific cluster of workplace competences. The link between sport and skill is always made explicit. Trainers name it, participants discuss it, and the debrief after every session cements it. The goal is that by the end of the programme, a young person can not only play better but can also articulate what they have learned and explain how it applies to their working life.

Basketball: Leadership and Quick Decision Making

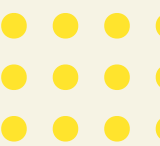
Basketball is a game of constant, rapid change. The situation on court shifts every few seconds, and players have to read it, decide what to do and act before they have time to overthink. This makes basketball an unusually direct training environment for leadership and decision making. There is no time to wait for someone else to take responsibility. Players learn to make calls, live with the consequences and adjust on the next possession.



Research by psychologist Angela Duckworth on grit and perseverance demonstrates that high pressure competitive sport builds the kind of **mental toughness** that allows people to keep performing when things are going wrong. Her work shows that perseverance is one of the strongest predictors of long term achievement in both professional and personal life (Duckworth, 2016). In competitive basketball, this quality is developed through repeated exposure to tight games, bad runs and the pressure of high stakes moments.

Competitive basketball also develops coachability, which is the ability to receive feedback, adjust and improve without becoming defensive. Forbes consistently lists coachability as one of the most sought after traits by employers at the point of hiring, because it indicates a willingness to learn and adapt rather than to protect one's ego (Forbes, 2023). In TEAM basketball sessions, trainers build feedback moments into every drill, modelling the kind of constructive exchange that participants will need to navigate in any workplace. Key skills developed through basketball in the TEAM programme include reading a situation and acting under time pressure, taking personal responsibility for decisions, encouraging teammates after setbacks, and recovering composure quickly after a mistake.





Soccer: Coordination, Problem Solving and Strategic Thinking

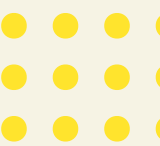
Soccer demands something different from basketball. The pitch is large, the game is long, and no single player can control it. Success depends on eleven people constantly adjusting their positions, reading each other's intentions and solving the problems that the opposition creates. This makes **soccer a natural environment for developing coordination, problem solving and strategic thinking.**

A review published in *Frontiers in Sports and Active Living* found that regular soccer training significantly improves executive brain functions in young people, including working memory, cognitive flexibility and planning ability.

The researchers note that these improvements transfer beyond the sport itself, supporting better performance in academic and professional contexts (Frontiers, 2025). The connection makes intuitive sense. A midfielder who has learned to scan the pitch, identify options and execute a plan under pressure has practised exactly the cognitive skills that a project manager or logistics coordinator needs every day.

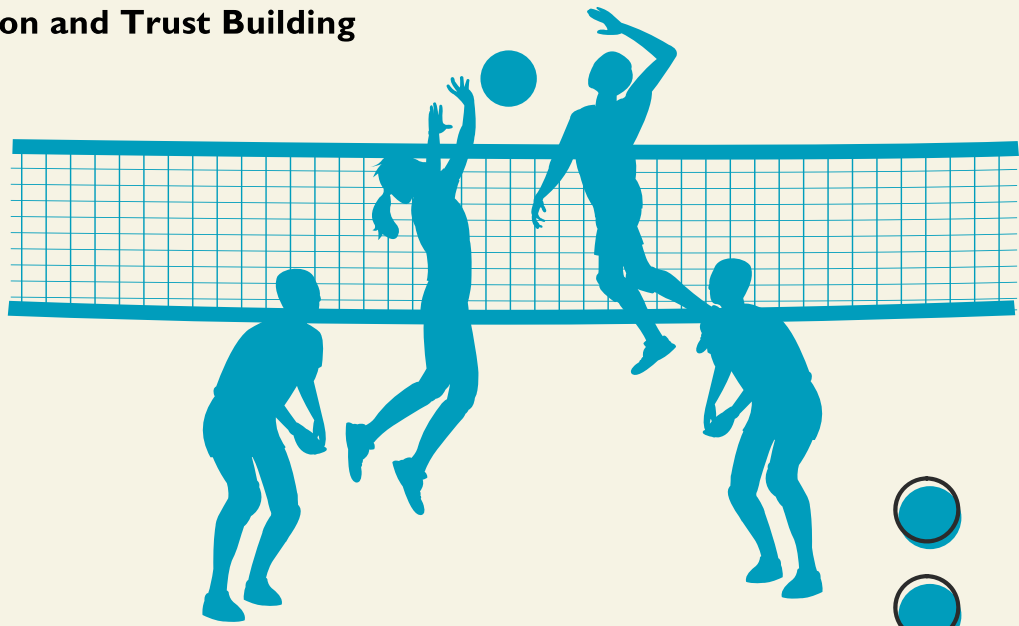
In TEAM soccer sessions, the focus is on making this connection visible. Participants do not just play; they are asked to observe what decisions their teammates are making, why those decisions succeed or fail, and how the same thought process applies to situations at work. The debrief after a soccer session often produces some of the richest discussions in the whole programme, because the sport gives participants a shared, concrete experience to draw on. Key skills developed through soccer in the TEAM programme include coordinating movement and effort across a group, identifying problems in real time and adapting the plan, thinking strategically about how to use available resources, and persisting through difficulty without giving up.





Volleyball: Communication and Trust Building

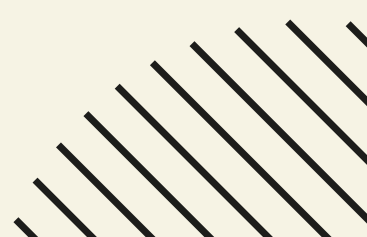
Volleyball has a structure unlike either basketball or soccer. Every point requires a sequence of three contacts, and that sequence only works if each player knows what the others are going to do. No one player can dominate a rally the way a basketball player can take over a game.



No one player can dominate a rally the way a basketball player can take over a game. **Volleyball is, by its very nature, a sport of communication and trust.** If the three players involved in a rally are not reading each other and signalling clearly, the sequence breaks down.

The Harvard Business Review has reported consistently that strong communication under pressure, giving clear signals, listening actively and adjusting quickly, is one of the most frequently cited gaps that managers identify in new employees (HBR, 2022). Volleyball practises exactly this. Players develop the habit of calling for the ball, signalling their intentions and reading their teammates' body language, all in real time, at speed. They also learn what it feels like to have a teammate they can rely on, and what it takes to become that kind of teammate for someone else.


In TEAM volleyball sessions, trainers highlight these dynamics deliberately. After a rally that worked well, they ask participants to describe what communication happened. After one that broke down, they ask what was missing and what each player could have done differently. The goal is to build a language around communication and trust that participants can carry into their professional relationships. Key skills developed through volleyball in the TEAM programme include verbal and non verbal communication in real time, reading a teammate's intentions without needing to ask, building trust through consistent and reliable action, and giving and receiving clear signals without ego.



3.3 Competence Model

TEAM develops five core competences. These were selected because they appear consistently in employer surveys and workforce development research as the soft skills most needed in the modern labour market, and because they are directly observable and measurable within team sport contexts. The competence model gives trainers a clear framework for planning sessions and gives participants a shared vocabulary for talking about their own development.

| Skill | What it means | Observable behaviours |
|-----------------|---|---|
| Teamwork | Working together with other people to achieve a shared goal, sharing both the effort and the outcome. | Helps teammates without being asked. Listens when others speak. Shares credit. Steps up when someone needs support. Raises problems without blaming others. |
| Leadership | Guiding and motivating a group to perform well, especially when things are uncertain or difficult. | Takes initiative. Gives clear direction. Stays composed under pressure. Makes decisions and owns the result. Encourages others rather than criticising. |
| Communication | Sharing information clearly, listening well, and adjusting how you speak and listen depending on who you are with. | Explains ideas in plain language. Asks questions to check understanding. Gives feedback without causing conflict. Picks up on non-verbal signals from others. |
| Problem Solving | Identifying what is going wrong, thinking of possible ways to fix it, and choosing the best available option. | Spots issues early. Stays calm rather than panicking. Suggests practical solutions. Tests ideas and adjusts when they do not work. |
| Decision Making | Evaluating options quickly and committing to a course of action, even when the information available is incomplete. | Acts rather than freezing. Weighs risks and benefits in real time. Commits to a plan and adjusts as new information arrives. Takes responsibility for the result. |



These five competences do not develop in isolation. A single session will typically activate several of them simultaneously. A basketball drill practises decision making and communication at the same time. A volleyball exercise develops both trust and non verbal communication. The competence model helps trainers plan deliberately and helps participants name what they are experiencing, which is the first step towards being able to apply it consciously in a new context.

Throughout the programme, participants are asked to reflect on their own progress against each of these five areas. The pre and post session self assessments described in section 3.4 use the same five competences as their framework, giving a consistent thread from the first session to the last.

3.4 Training Cycle in TEAM

TEAM uses a five step cycle that turns a sport session into a genuine learning experience. The cycle is grounded in established non formal education practice and is consistent with the reflective learning models recommended by the European Commission and Erasmus+ for youth employability programmes. Every TEAM trainer follows this cycle for every session, regardless of which sport is being used or which partner country is hosting.

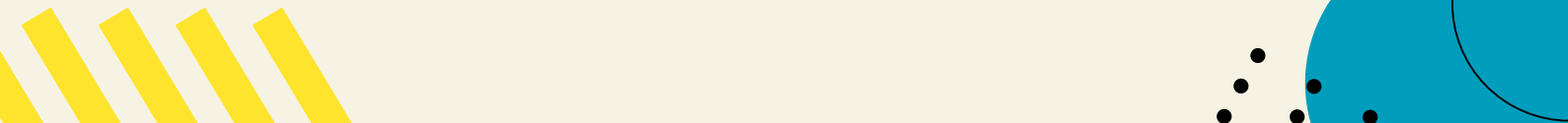
Step I: Needs Analysis

Before designing any session, trainers gather basic information about the group they are working with. This includes the participants' backgrounds, their previous experience with sport, the skills they most want to develop, any access or language needs, and any relevant personal circumstances that might affect how they engage with the programme.



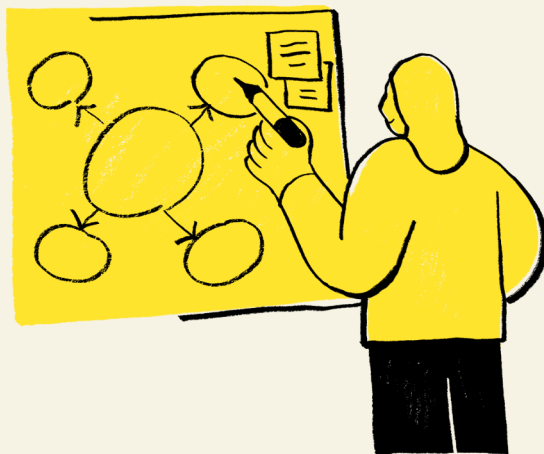
This information is collected through a short pre programme self assessment questionnaire, which participants complete at or before their first session, and through an informal group conversation during the opening session itself.

The needs analysis serves two purposes. First, it allows trainers to tailor their session design to the actual group in front of them rather than delivering a generic programme. Second, it gives participants an early opportunity to articulate their own goals, which increases their sense of ownership over the learning and their motivation to engage with it seriously.



Step 2: Session Design

Using the needs analysis as a guide, trainers select sport activities that will naturally generate the target skills for that session. This is not simply a matter of choosing a popular drill. It requires thinking carefully about what the activity demands, what behaviours it will produce and what the debrief opportunity will be. Trainers also plan their debrief questions in advance, identify the workplace connection they want to draw out, and prepare the action planning prompt participants will use at the end.



Good session design is preparation, not improvisation. Trainers who arrive with a clear plan, including a prepared set of observation prompts to use during the activity, deliver consistently better debriefs and more meaningful learning experiences.

Step 3: Delivery

Sessions follow the structured format described in section 3.5. The trainer's role during delivery is to facilitate rather than to lecture. This means creating the conditions for learning rather than providing all the answers, observing participant behaviour closely during the activity, and resisting the temptation to intervene too quickly when things go wrong. Struggling is part of the learning process. A group that figures out a coordination problem during a volleyball drill has learned something far more durable than a group that was told the solution before it became an issue.



Trainers are also responsible for managing the group dynamic so that every participant feels safe to try, make mistakes and contribute. This is especially important in groups that include participants from very different backgrounds, with different physical abilities or different levels of confidence in sport.

Step 4: Reflection

Immediately after the sport activity, participants debrief as a group. The trainer guides this conversation using open questions prepared during the session design phase. Typical questions include: what did you notice about how the team communicated during that activity? What made the difference between the moments that worked and the moments that did not? Where have you seen a situation like that in a work or school context? What would you do differently next time?



The debrief is the most important part of the entire session. It is where the sport becomes education. Participants also complete a short post session self assessment at this stage, rating their own confidence on each of the five competences and noting one specific thing they noticed about their own behaviour during the activity. These ratings are compared with their pre session baseline over time to generate a picture of individual progress.

Step 5: Follow Up



Between sessions, trainers review the self assessment data and adjust future plans based on what they are seeing. If a particular competence is consistently rated low across the group, the next session should include an activity that specifically targets it. If individual participants are struggling with a particular skill, trainers can offer additional one to one support or connect them with a mentor from the business network.

At the beginning of each session, trainers ask participants to report back on the action they committed to at the end of the previous one. This follow up creates continuity and accountability across sessions and signals to participants that their personal commitments are taken seriously. At the end of the full programme, the pre and post programme self assessments are compared and shared with participants so they can see their own growth in concrete terms.

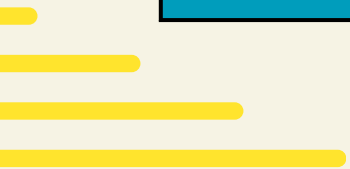


3.5 Basic Session Structure: 90 Minute Outline

Every session follows the same four phase structure. This consistency is intentional. It means that participants always know what to expect, that trainers from different partner organisations can observe each other's sessions and immediately understand what is happening, and that the programme can be delivered reliably across five different countries with different sports cultures, languages and resources.

The 90 minute format was chosen based on evidence from sports science and non formal education practice. It is long enough for participants to reach a productive physical and cognitive state, to complete a meaningful activity and to go through a proper debrief without feeling rushed. It is short enough to maintain focus and energy throughout and to fit into the schedules of young people who may also be balancing job searching, part time work or family responsibilities.

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Time | 0 to 10 min |
| Phase | Warm Up |
| What Happens | Light jogging, dynamic stretches (leg swings, arm circles, lateral shuffles) and two or three short sprints at increasing intensity. The goal is to raise the heart rate, warm the muscles and focus the group before the main activity begins. |
| Trainer Notes | Keep energy high and inclusive. If anyone has a physical limitation, offer an adapted version of each movement. |



| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Time | 10 to 35 min |
| Phase | Core Sports Activity |
| What Happens | A structured drill or small-sided game chosen specifically because it generates the target skill for that session. For example: a 3v3 basketball possession game for decision making, a passing sequence in soccer for coordination, or a serve and receive drill in volleyball for communication and trust. |
| Trainer Notes | Do not intervene too quickly. Let the group struggle a little. That difficulty is where the learning happens. Observe behaviour closely for the debrief. |

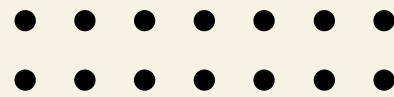
| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Time | 35 to 55 min |
| Phase | Skills Debrief |
| What Happens | A guided group conversation. The trainer uses open questions to draw out what participants noticed: what worked, what was hard, what they would do differently. The key moment is when someone connects what just happened on the court or pitch to a situation they have faced, or might face, at work. |
| Trainer Notes | Prepare three or four questions in advance. Do not rush this phase. Silence is fine. Give people time to think before they speak. |



| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Time | 55 to 75 min |
| Phase | Workplace Link and Action Planning |
| What Happens | The trainer makes the connection between the sport activity and professional life explicit. Participants then write one personal action for the coming week using the skill they practised. The action should be specific: not 'I will communicate better' but 'I will ask my manager one clarifying question before starting any new task this week.' |
| Trainer Notes | Written actions are far more likely to be followed through than spoken ones. Collect them and refer back to them at the start of the next session. |

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Time | 75 to 90 min |
| Phase | Wrap Up and Self Assessment |
| What Happens | Participants complete a short post-session checklist rating their own confidence on each of the five competences. The trainer summarises the key learning point of the session in one sentence and previews what is coming next time. |
| Trainer Notes | Compare these ratings with the pre-session ratings over time. Share progress back to participants so they can see their own growth. |

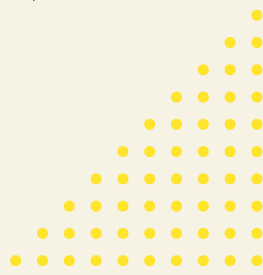


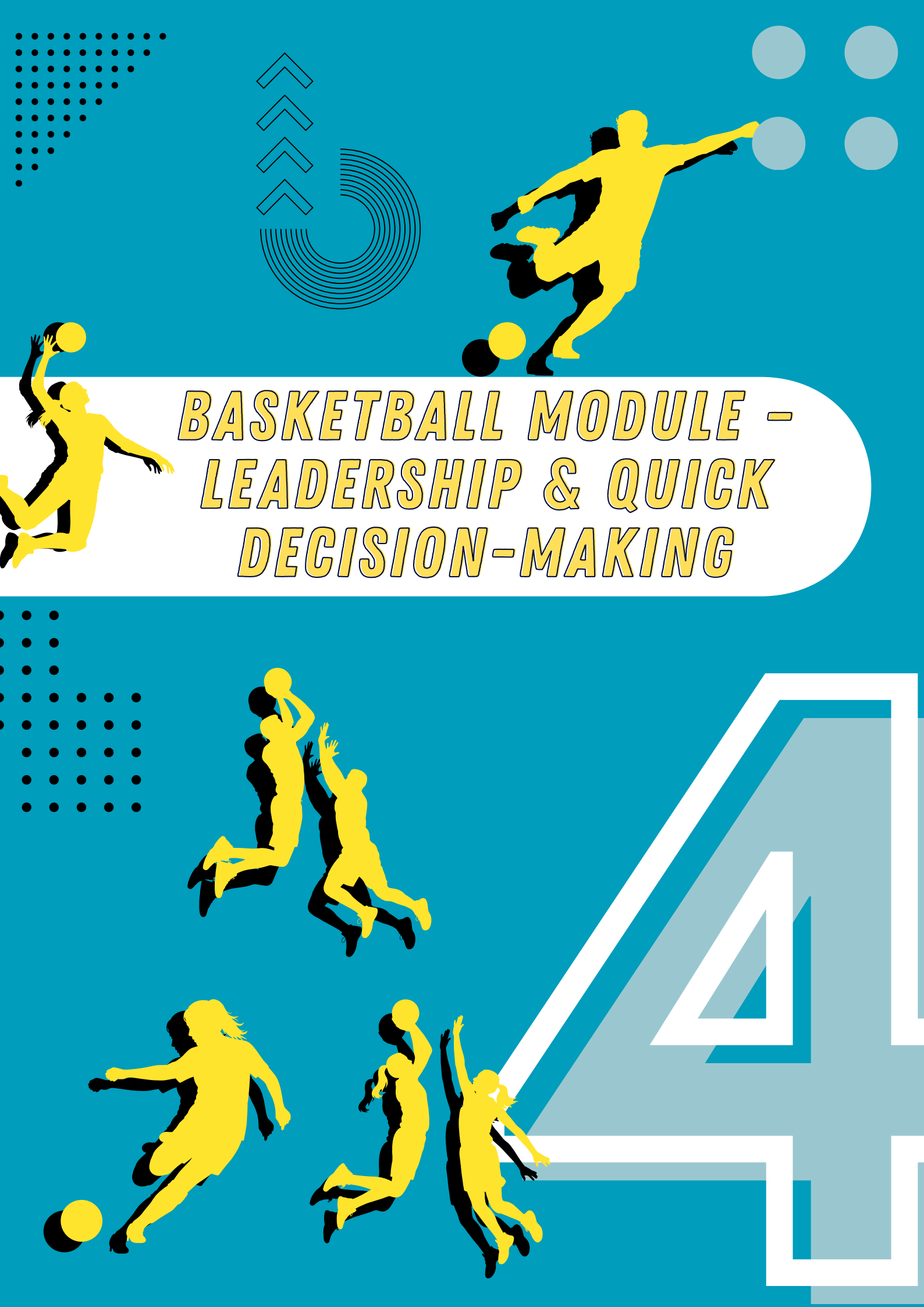


Practical Notes for Trainers

Several practical points are worth highlighting for trainers delivering TEAM sessions for the first time.

- **The warm up is not optional.** It reduces the risk of injury and, just as importantly, it begins to build group energy and shared focus before the main activity starts. A group that has warmed up together is more likely to communicate and trust each other during the core activity.
- **The debrief is the most important phase.** Participants who enjoy the sport but never reflect on what it taught them will not carry the learning into their working lives. Trainers should invest as much preparation time in their debrief questions as they do in the sport activity itself.
- **Action planning should be specific.** Research by Peter Gollwitzer on implementation intentions shows that people are far more likely to follow through on a goal if they specify exactly when, where and how they will pursue it (Gollwitzer, 1999). A participant who writes 'I will ask my manager one clarifying question before starting any new task this week' is much more likely to act than one who simply says 'I want to communicate better.'
- **The format can be adapted.** Sessions can be shortened to 60 minutes if needed, or extended to 120 minutes for more intensive workshops. However, whatever the total time available, the four phase structure should always be preserved. Cutting the debrief or the action planning phase to make more time for sport defeats the purpose of the programme.
- **Observe and record.** Trainers should use the observation checklist during the core activity phase to note specific behaviours they see. These notes make the debrief richer, give trainers objective data to complement participant self assessments, and support the programme evaluation.





***BASKETBALL MODULE -
LEADERSHIP & QUICK
DECISION-MAKING***

4.1 Why Basketball for Employability?

Basketball is a highly effective sport for employability training because it reflects the pace, complexity, and interpersonal dynamics of modern working environments. It requires participants to remain constantly engaged, make fast decisions, and collaborate closely with others in order to succeed. These characteristics make basketball an ideal experiential learning tool for developing leadership and quick decision-making skills in young people.

The sport offers an action-based learning environment where participants do not simply talk about skills such as initiative or responsibility, but actively practice them. Through structured activities and guided reflection, basketball helps translate on-court behaviors into competencies that are directly relevant to education, employment, and everyday professional life.

Key Characteristics That Make Basketball Relevant for Employability

- **High pace and decision-making under pressure**

Basketball is played at a rapid tempo, requiring players to make decisions within seconds. Participants must assess situations quickly, choose appropriate actions, and adjust when circumstances change. This constant time pressure closely resembles workplace environments where employees are expected to react efficiently, prioritize tasks, and make informed decisions without delay.

- **Role flexibility and shared responsibility**

Players frequently shift between different roles during a game, leading an attack, supporting a teammate, or focusing on defence. This fluidity helps participants understand that leadership is not limited to formal positions. In a professional context, this translates into the ability to take initiative when needed, collaborate effectively, and contribute to team success regardless of one's role.

- **Visible consequences and accountability**

In basketball, decisions lead to immediate and visible outcomes. Successful teamwork results in scoring, while poor communication or hesitation can lead to mistakes. These clear consequences encourage participants to take responsibility for their actions, reflect on performance, and learn from errors, key behaviors expected by employers in any sector.



- **Strong communication demands**

Effective basketball play relies on clear verbal communication and quick non-verbal cues, often in noisy or stressful situations. Participants learn to express themselves clearly, listen to others, and coordinate actions in real time. These communication skills are directly transferable to workplace settings where teamwork and clarity are essential.

- **Natural leadership opportunities**

Basketball creates frequent situations where leadership emerges organically, such as organizing a play, motivating teammates, or making strategic decisions. Participants experience leadership as a practical behavior rather than a title, helping them build confidence and understand how leadership can be demonstrated in everyday work situations.


Connection to the Labor Market

The skills developed through basketball align closely with those sought by employers across Europe, including teamwork, adaptability, initiative, communication, and the ability to perform under pressure. Through reflection sessions and guided discussions, participants are encouraged to identify how their behavior on the court relates to real job situations, such as meeting deadlines, collaborating with colleagues, or solving problems quickly.

By linking sports-based experiences to employability outcomes, basketball becomes a bridge between informal learning and the labour market. Employers benefit from young people who have practiced these skills in realistic, demanding environments, while participants gain a clearer understanding of their own strengths and how to present them in educational or professional contexts.

Why Basketball Works Well with Disadvantaged Youth

Basketball is an accessible and inclusive sport that resonates strongly with many young people, regardless of their educational background or previous work experience. Its simplicity and adaptability allow participants to engage quickly, build confidence, and experience success through effort and teamwork. For young people, this creates a positive learning environment where they feel valued, capable, and motivated to develop new skills.



From an employer and company perspective, basketball-based training offers a way to observe and develop competencies that are often difficult to assess through traditional methods alone. Participants demonstrate real behaviors, such as cooperation, leadership, resilience, and problem-solving, that are essential in the workplace. This makes basketball a valuable tool not only for youth empowerment, but also for supporting companies and organizations in identifying and nurturing future talent.

4.2. Key Skills Trained

Basketball creates an active learning environment where employability skills are developed through experience rather than theory. The fast pace of the game, the need for constant interaction, and the shared responsibility for outcomes allow participants to practice key competencies in realistic and engaging situations. This module focuses on strengthening leadership, initiative, quick decision-making, focus under pressure, and communication, while helping participants recognize how these skills apply beyond the sports context.

Leadership and Initiative

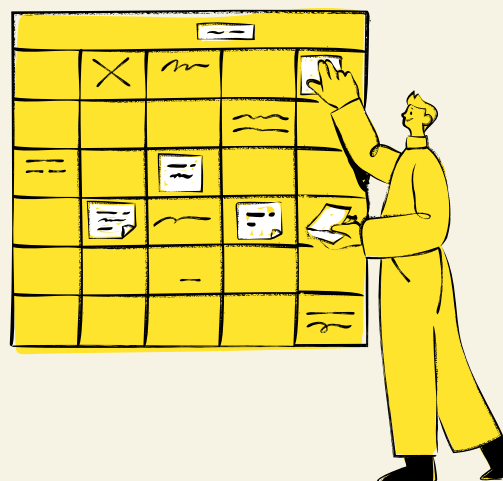
Basketball encourages participants to take initiative naturally during play. Players are often required to organize teammates, call for the ball, direct movement, or make strategic decisions without external guidance. Through these moments, young people learn that leadership is not limited to formal authority but is demonstrated through action, responsibility, and awareness of team needs. Taking initiative on the court helps participants build confidence in their ability to influence situations positively, a quality that is highly valued in educational and professional environments.



Leadership in basketball also includes supporting and motivating others. Encouraging teammates after mistakes, maintaining focus during challenging moments, and contributing to a positive team atmosphere all reflect leadership behaviors expected in the workplace. These experiences help participants understand leadership as a shared responsibility that contributes to collective success.

Quick Decision-Making

Basketball requires players to constantly observe their surroundings, interpret information, and act within seconds. Participants must decide whether to pass, shoot, reposition, or defend, often under pressure from opponents. This strengthens their ability to process information quickly and choose appropriate actions, mirroring workplace situations where timely decision-making is critical.



Through repeated exposure to these situations, participants learn to balance confidence with responsibility. They begin to recognize when it is appropriate to take risks and when collaboration or caution leads to better outcomes. This understanding supports more thoughtful and effective decision-making in professional and everyday life contexts.

Focus and Performance Under Pressure

The intensity and continuous nature of basketball demand sustained concentration. Participants must remain focused despite distractions, fatigue, or previous mistakes. This helps develop mental resilience and the ability to maintain performance under pressure, an essential skill in environments with deadlines, expectations, and performance demands.



Basketball also exposes participants to emotional highs and lows in a controlled setting. Learning to manage frustration, stay calm, and continue contributing positively after setbacks helps young people develop emotional regulation and stress management skills that are directly transferable to work and education.

Communication and Team Collaboration

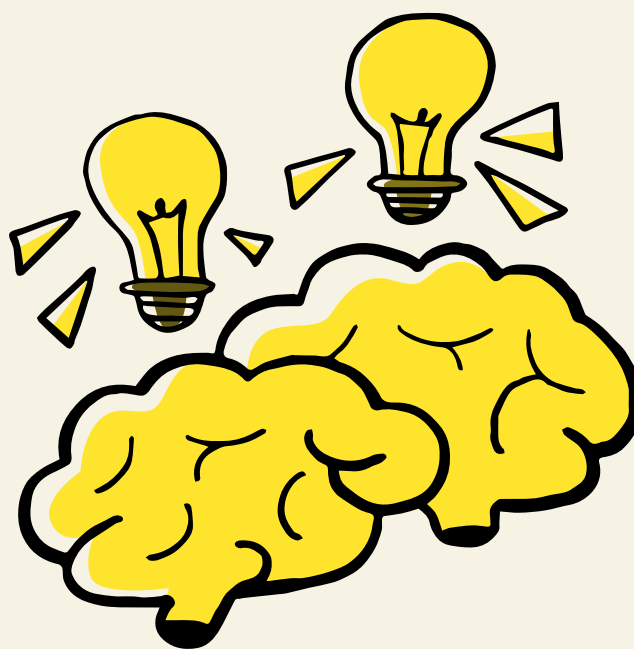
Effective communication is essential in basketball, where quick exchanges of information guide movement, strategy, and coordination. Participants learn to communicate clearly and assertively, using both verbal instructions and non-verbal cues. They also practice listening and responding to others, reinforcing mutual understanding and cooperation.



Team collaboration is central to success in basketball. Players quickly realize that individual performance alone is not sufficient and that shared goals require trust, coordination, and respect for different roles. These experiences reflect the collaborative nature of most workplaces and help participants develop behaviors that support effective teamwork.

Self-Awareness and Transfer of Learning

Through structured reflection and guided discussion, participants are encouraged to analyze their behavior during sessions. They learn to recognize personal strengths, identify areas for improvement, and understand how their actions affect others. This self-awareness is a key employability skill that supports personal development and lifelong learning.



By explicitly linking basketball experiences to job-related situations, participants gain a clearer understanding of how skills developed through sport apply to employment and education. This process strengthens their ability to articulate competencies such as leadership and decision-making, supporting confidence in interviews, training programs, and early career experiences.

4.3. Sample Sessions Plans

Session 1: Taking initiative under time pressure

| Element | Description |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Aim | To develop initiative and confidence in making decisions quickly under time pressure. |
| Target group & duration | Young people aged 18–30; 60–75 minutes. Suitable for mixed-gender and mixed-ability groups. |
| Materials & set-up | Basketballs, cones, stopwatch or visible timer, half or full court. Small-sided teams (3v3 or 4v4). |
| Step by step instructions | Start with a dynamic warm-up using quick passing and movement drills. Move into small-sided games where play restarts immediately after scoring or turnovers. Introduce a time constraint (e.g. 10 seconds to shoot) to increase pressure. Encourage players to act without waiting for instructions. The facilitator observes moments of initiative and decision-making. |
| Debrief questions – Job connection | When did you decide to act quickly? What helped or blocked your decision? How does this relate to responding to unexpected tasks or deadlines at work? What happens when no one takes initiative in a team? |
| Variations / Adaptations | Reduce time pressure and simplify rules for beginners. Increase constraints (limited dribbling, fewer passes) for advanced groups to intensify decision-making. |





Session 2: Leadership through action

| Element | Description |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Aim | To explore leadership as behavior through communication, organization, and support for others. |
| Target group & duration | Young people aged 18–30; approximately 60 minutes. |
| Materials & set-up | Basketballs, cones, half court. Small teams with rotating responsibilities. |
| Step by step instructions | Begin with a warm-up focused on communication (calling names, signaling passes). During gameplay, assign one player per team as a temporary organizer (offense or defense). Rotate this role frequently. Introduce a rule where teams gain recognition for positive leadership actions, such as encouragement or organization after mistakes. |
| Debrief questions – Job connection | How did it feel to lead without being “the boss”? What leadership behaviors helped the team most? How is this similar to leading a task or supporting colleagues at work? |
| Variations / Adaptations | Remove assigned leaders to allow natural leadership to emerge. Increase tactical challenges for advanced groups to test leadership under complexity. |





Session 3: Decision-making and accountability

| Element | Description |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Aim | To strengthen decision-making skills and understanding of responsibility and consequences. |
| Target group & duration | Young people aged 18–30; approximately 60-75 minutes. |
| Materials & set-up | Basketballs, cones, marked zones on court to influence decisions. |
| Step by step instructions | After a short warm-up, introduce a game where specific decisions have clear consequences (e.g. risky pass = turnover, team-based play = bonus point). Avoid frequent interruptions. Allow participants to experience the outcomes of their choices. |
| Debrief questions – Job connection | Which decisions helped or harmed the team? How did you react to mistakes? How does this relate to taking responsibility for decisions at work or in training? |
| Variations / Adaptations | Simplify decision rules for less experienced groups. Add more complex scoring or tactical options for advanced players. |





Session 4: Performing under pressure

| Element | Description |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Aim | To develop focus, communication, and emotional control in high-pressure situations. |
| Target group & duration | Young people aged 18–30; approximately 60 minutes. |
| Materials & set-up | Basketballs, stopwatch, scoreboard or visible score tracking, half or full court. |
| Step by step instructions | Warm up with short, intense drills. Move into timed games or challenges where teams must achieve goals within limited time. Gradually increase pressure through countdowns or competitive scoring. Observe reactions, communication, and teamwork under stress. |
| Debrief questions – Job connection | How did pressure affect your decisions and communication? What helped you stay focused? How is this similar to job interviews, deadlines, or high-responsibility tasks? |
| Variations / Adaptations | Reduce competitive elements for anxious groups. Increase time pressure and complexity for advanced participants to deepen learning. |





4.4. Tips for Coaches and Youth Workers

Coaches and youth workers play a central role in ensuring that basketball sessions move beyond physical activity and become meaningful employability learning experiences. Their approach, attitude, and facilitation style strongly influence how participants engage with leadership and decision-making opportunities. The focus should be on creating a safe, inclusive, and reflective environment where young people feel encouraged to take initiative, make mistakes, and learn from experience.

Creating a Learning-Oriented Environment

Rather than focusing solely on technical performance or winning, facilitators should emphasize learning outcomes related to behavior and teamwork. Participants should understand that mistakes are a natural and valuable part of the process. When young people feel safe to experiment, they are more likely to take initiative and demonstrate leadership.

Clear expectations at the beginning of each session help set the tone. Explaining that the goal is skill development for life and work, not just sport, supports engagement and helps participants take reflection seriously. Coaches may find inspiration in short motivational sports videos or athlete interviews that highlight leadership, resilience, and learning from failure, which can be used as brief discussion starters.

Managing Dominant Players

In some groups, more confident or skilled participants may dominate play and decision-making. While these individuals often show leadership potential, it is important to ensure balanced participation so that all players can develop employability skills. Facilitators can introduce rules that encourage sharing responsibility, such as limiting ball possession time or rotating leadership roles.

During reflection, dominant players can be encouraged to think about how their behavior affects team performance and inclusion. This helps them develop empathy and collaborative leadership. Podcasts or short video clips featuring professional athletes discussing teamwork and humility can support these discussions and provide relatable role models.



Engaging Less Confident or Disengaged Participants

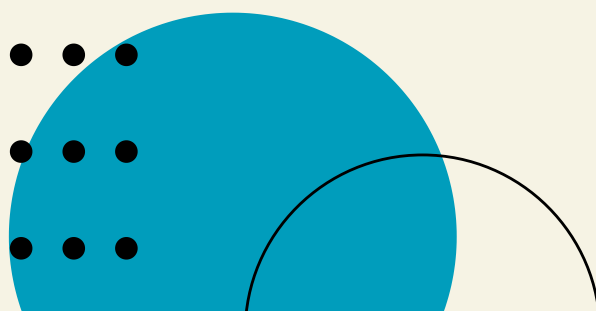
Some participants may be hesitant to take initiative due to lack of confidence, previous negative experiences, or fear of making mistakes. Coaches and youth workers should actively recognize small positive actions, such as good communication or effort, rather than focusing only on outcomes like scoring.

Gradual exposure to responsibility is effective. Starting with low-pressure tasks and increasing complexity over time allows participants to build confidence. Using short audio and video stories from former athletes or young professionals who overcame challenges can help participants relate and feel motivated. A very good movie to showcase which is based on true story is **“Rise”**. The movie is based on the real-life story of Giannis Antetokounmpo and his family that produced the first trio of brothers to become NBA champions in the history of the league. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt11242162/>



Handling Conflict and Emotional Reactions

Basketball's competitive nature can sometimes lead to frustration or conflict. These moments should be treated as learning opportunities rather than problems to be avoided. Facilitators should remain calm, neutral, and supportive, helping participants reflect on what triggered emotions and how situations could be handled differently.



Post-session debriefs are particularly important after tense moments. Linking emotional regulation on the court to workplace situations, such as dealing with feedback, stress, or disagreement, helps participants see the relevance of these experiences. Short podcasts on emotional intelligence in sports or leadership can complement these discussions.

Encouraging Reflection and Transfer to Employment

Reflection is the key element that transforms sport into employability learning. Coaches and youth workers should consistently ask open-ended questions that encourage participants to connect their basketball behavior to real-life situations. Keeping reflections short, practical, and interactive helps maintain engagement.

Facilitators may also recommend optional video content or podcasts that explore leadership, decision-making, and teamwork through sports and business perspectives. Short video interviews with professional basketball players or coaches discussing leadership, resilience, and handling pressure (such as content published by international basketball federations, Olympic channels, or sports education platforms) can help participants relate sporting experiences to real-life challenges. In addition, podcasts focusing on leadership and teamwork in high-performance environments, particularly those featuring athletes, coaches, or business leaders, can support reflection on topics such as decision-making under pressure, communication, and accountability. These resources reinforce learning and demonstrate to both young people and employers that the skills developed through basketball are recognized and valued well beyond the court.





Do's and Don'ts for Facilitators

Facilitators play a key role in translating basketball activities into meaningful employability learning. Their behavior sets the standard for inclusion, fairness, and cooperation, reflecting core European values such as equal opportunity, respect for diversity, and active participation. The following do's and don'ts support facilitators in creating impactful and inclusive learning environments.

Do's for Facilitators

- **Do promote inclusion and equal participation**

Ensure that all participants, regardless of gender, cultural background, skill level, or previous experience, are actively involved. This aligns with European youth work principles that emphasize accessibility and social inclusion. For example, mixed-gender teams and rotating roles help break down stereotypes and encourage mutual respect.

- **Do link sport explicitly to employability skills**

Make learning visible by clearly connecting basketball behaviors to workplace competencies such as leadership, teamwork, and decision-making. This approach reflects the European emphasis on non-formal learning, where skills are acquired through experience and reflection rather than formal instruction.

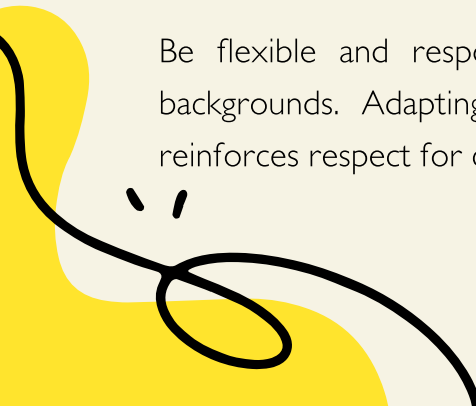
- **Do encourage reflection and self-expression**

Use open-ended questions and group discussions to help participants reflect on their experiences. Giving young people space to express their views supports active citizenship and critical thinking, both of which are priorities in EU youth strategies.

- **Do model the behaviors you expect**

Demonstrate clear communication, fairness, and calm decision-making. Facilitators serve as role models, and their behavior strongly influences how participants interact with one another. This mirrors workplace expectations across European professional environments. Do adapt activities to local and cultural contexts.

Be flexible and responsive to the needs of participants from different regions or backgrounds. Adapting language, examples, or intensity levels ensures relevance and reinforces respect for cultural diversity across Europe.



Don'ts for Facilitators

- **Don't focus exclusively on performance or winning**

Overemphasis on competition can discourage less confident participants and undermine learning outcomes. In line with European youth work approaches, the focus should remain on learning, cooperation, and personal development rather than results alone.

- **Don't allow dominance or exclusion to go unaddressed**

Ignoring situations where certain participants dominate play can reinforce inequality. Facilitators should intervene constructively, using inclusive rules or rotating responsibilities to ensure balanced participation.

- **Don't over-direct or solve problems for participants**

Excessive instruction reduces opportunities for independent thinking and leadership. Allowing participants to experience challenges and find their own solutions supports autonomy and responsibility, key employability skills recognized across EU labor markets.

- **Don't ignore conflict or emotional reactions**

Conflict should not be avoided but managed constructively. Addressing disagreements through discussion and reflection helps participants develop emotional intelligence and conflict-resolution skills relevant to both civic and professional life in Europe.

- **Don't assume all learning is obvious**

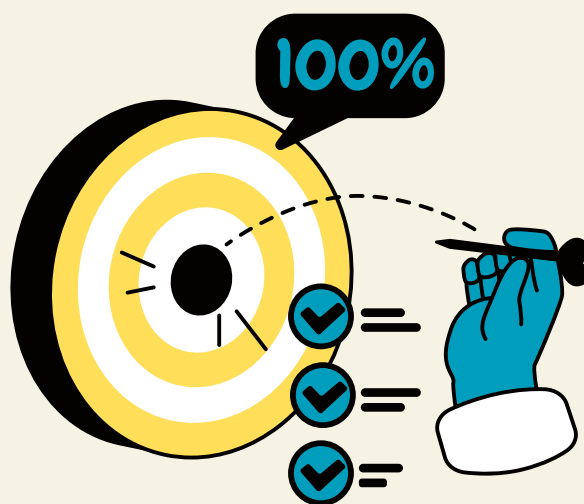
Without reflection, participants may not recognize the skills they are developing. Facilitators should avoid assuming that learning happens automatically and instead guide participants to articulate and understand their competencies, supporting recognition processes such as Youthpass or CV development.



From the Court to the Workplace

This basketball-based module demonstrates how sport can be a powerful non-formal learning tool for developing leadership and quick decision-making skills that are essential in today's European labor market. Through structured activities, reflection, and guided facilitation, young people experience real-life situations that require responsibility, collaboration, and adaptability. Basketball becomes more than a physical activity; it serves as a practical environment where employability skills are practiced, observed, and strengthened.

For young people, particularly those facing social or economic barriers, the module offers an accessible and engaging pathway to recognize their own potential. By taking initiative on the court, managing pressure, and working with others toward shared goals, participants build confidence and self-awareness. These experiences help them better understand their strengths and prepare them to articulate their competencies in education, training, and employment contexts.



From an employer and organizational perspective, the module reflects the competencies increasingly sought across Europe, such as teamwork, communication, accountability, and leadership without hierarchy. Sports-based learning provides authentic situations where these skills are demonstrated in action, supporting a more holistic understanding of young people's capabilities beyond formal qualifications. This approach aligns with European efforts to strengthen skills recognition and improve school-to-work transitions.

Finally, the basketball module supports broader European youth and education strategies by promoting inclusion, active participation, and lifelong learning. When facilitated effectively, it contributes to social cohesion, employability, and civic engagement, reinforcing the idea that sport can play a meaningful role in shaping confident, capable, and work-ready young people across Europe.



***SOCCER MODULE -
TEAM COORDINATION
& PROBLEM-SOLVING***



5.1. Why soccer for employability?

Soccer is a powerful learning environment for developing professional skills because it replicates many typical work-related dynamics.


- Clear and interdependent roles, similar to a corporate team.
- Continuous coordination and communication between team members.
- Real-time strategy and decision-making in changing situations.
- Managing uncertainty and unexpected events (mistakes, tactical changes, pressure).

For coaches, this module allows them to transfer the skills learned on the sports field to the world of work and training.

Becoming a soccer coach therefore represents a concrete career opportunity for young people for several reasons, linked both to a passion for the sport and the development of transversal skills, as well as the high demand in youth sectors.

This career path offers job opportunities:

- **High demand in youth sectors:** Soccer clubs, from professional to amateur soccer schools, are constantly seeking coaches for youth teams, providing opportunities.
- **Development of transferable soft skills:** Coaching teaches valuable skills in any professional environment, such as leadership, team management, effective communication, problem solving, and emotional intelligence.
- **Professional training and certifications:** Through FIGC (Coaching School) courses, young people can acquire official qualifications (UEFA B, UEFA C, etc.) that enhance their professional profile.
- **Earning opportunities even in amateur soccer:** In addition to professional clubs, it is possible to find employment in amateur teams, with salaries that in some cases can supplement income.
- **Educational and training experience:** The coach is seen as a mentor, teacher, and organizer, a role that requires responsibility and offers significant personal growth.

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- **Variety of roles:** In addition to head coach, young people can specialize as technical assistants, athletic trainers, goalkeeping coaches or individual technique instructors (individual sessions).

In short, the coaching program allows young enthusiasts to turn their love of soccer into a profession, while also acquiring skills recognized in the workplace, such as the ability to manage complex dynamics and lead a team.

5.2. Key Skills Trained

Soccer coaches develop several key skills. These aren't just "theory" skills; they become the practical tools for managing the locker room and winning matches. A modern young coach is a mix of a strategist, a manager, and an educator.

Key skills in the soccer context:

1. Team Coordination: The Alchemy of the Group

Coordination transforms 11 individuals into a single organism.

- On the pitch: Synchronize movements (e.g., the defensive line moving up together to prevent offside).
- Off the pitch: Create fluid communication. The coach must ensure that each player knows where their teammate is without having to look.
- Objective: Reduce collective reaction times.

2. Strategic Planning: The "Game Plan"

Before kick-off, there's a lot of planning.

- Analysis: Study the opponent's strengths and weaknesses.
- Role Definition: Assign specific tasks (man-marker, corner kicker, wall-kicker).
- Planning: Manage workloads throughout the week to arrive on Sunday in top form.

3. Problem Solving: Split-Second Decisions

Soccer is a game of constant mistakes and corrections.

- **Under Pressure:** Resolving a team's mental blackout after conceding a goal.
- **Creativity:** Finding a tactical solution if the opposing attacker is having a bad day (e.g., improvising double marking).
- **Crisis Management:** Knowing how to handle a sending off or injury in the opening minutes.





4. Adaptability: Reading the Game

A rigid coach is a losing coach.

- **Changes on the fly:** If plan A doesn't work, switch to plan B or C without sending the team into a panic.
- **Variable Conditions:** Adapting your style of play to the weather (heavy pitch), the size of the pitch, or the hostile climate of the stadium.
- **Evolution:** Ability to change tactical formation during the match to respond to the opposing coach's moves.

5. Respect and Inclusion: The Foundation of Respect

Without a culture of respect, the team fractures at the first sign of difficulty.

- **Valorization of Diversity:** Integrate players of different nationalities, religions, or socioeconomic backgrounds, transforming differences into tactical and human enrichment.
- **Fair Play:** Teach respect for the referee and the opponent.
- **Technical Inclusion:** Make even those on the bench feel important ("25 players win, not 11").


5.3. Samples Sessions Plans

In a modern training manual, the soccer field is not just a place for physical exercise, but a laboratory for **cognitive and relational skills**. The objectives to be achieved transform players from mere "executors" to informed "decision makers."

Here is a detailed description of these three key objectives:

I. Shared Strategy and Planning

The goal is to move from a top-down strategy (the coach decides everything) to a participatory strategy. When players contribute to the action plan, their sense of responsibility and ability to read the game increases.

- **In Soccer:** This means involving the team in analyzing the opponent and choosing the "match plan" (e.g., deciding together where to start pressing).
 - **Skill Developed:** Ownership (sense of belonging) and critical thinking. Players don't just follow an order, but understand the "why" behind every move.
- 

- **Practical Application:** Interactive video analysis sessions and pre-training briefings where the team proposes tactical solutions to a problem posed by the coach.

2. Role Rotation

This objective aims to break down early specialization to create versatile athletes and, above all, those with **tactical empathy**.

- **In Soccer:** A defender who experiments with the role of attacker will better understand the timing of the opponent he will have to mark on Sunday. A midfielder who plays in goal will understand the importance of not obscuring his goalkeeper's view.
- **Skill Developed:** Adaptability and systemic vision. Understanding teammates' difficulties reduces conflict and improves interdepartmental collaboration.
- **Practical Application:** "Inverted sector" drills during themed games, where defenders are required to score and attackers are required to defend the goal in emergency situations.



3. Managing the Unexpected (Playing with Constraints)

Soccer is the sport of the unexpected par excellence. The goal is to train cognitive resilience by placing players in conditions of "controlled chaos."

- **In soccer:** Introduce constraints that force an instantaneous change in thinking. The "constraint" is not a limit, but a learning accelerator: if I take away your ability to speak, you have to refine your body language; if I take away your space, you have to refine your technique.
- **Skill Developed:** Rapid problem solving and stress management. You learn not to be paralyzed by mistakes or changing rules.
- **Practical Application:** "Small-Sided Games" exercises (matches in small spaces) with rules that change every 2 minutes (e.g., "now it's one-touch only," "a goal only counts if the entire team is beyond the halfway line," "deflated ball for the next 3 minutes").



Here's a proposal for **four structured training sessions** to transform the soccer field into a "gym" for soft skills.

Session I: Coordination and Synchrony (The "Metronome")

Objective: Develop team coordination and nonverbal communication.

- Target and Duration: U15-Adults | 25 minutes.
- Materials: 4 silhouettes (or poles), 1 ball, markers to mark out a 20x20m square.
- Setup: 4 players at the corners of the square, 1 ball. The silhouettes are placed in the center to form a diamond.
- Instructions: Players must pass the ball in a fixed sequence, but the receiver can only move toward the ball if another teammate "sprints" into the opposite space to balance the field. The movement must be simultaneous. If the rhythm is interrupted, the game starts again.
- Debriefing (Work): "What happens in a project when someone acts without alerting the team? How did we know when it was time to move without talking?" (Focus: Anticipating colleagues' needs).
- Variations: Add a second ball to increase cognitive saturation.



Session 2: Strategic Planning (The Chessboard)

Objective: Define roles and tactics before action.

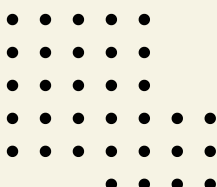
- Target and Duration: U17-Adults | 40 minutes.
- Materials: Tactics board, 2-color bibs, small goals.
- Setup: Field divided into three zones (Defense, Midfield, Attack).
- Instructions: Before starting, each team has 5 minutes to decide on a strategy: who can enter which zones? Who is the communication leader? The team can only score if all members have touched the ball in at least two different zones.
- Debriefing (Work): "Was the initial plan followed? Who made the decisions when the strategy didn't work? Were the assigned roles appropriate to the individual's skills?" (Focus: Delegation and clarity of objectives).
- Variations: Limit touches (max 2) for those in "direction" roles, forcing them to plan the next step.



Session 3: Problem Solving Under Pressure (The Emergency)

Objective: Find creative solutions in situations of numerical disadvantage.

- Target and Duration: All categories | 30 minutes.
- Materials: Balls, bibs, stopwatch.
- Setup: Penalty area or narrow space. 3 attackers vs. 5 defenders.
- Instructions: The attackers must score within 15 seconds. The defenders all start sitting or with their backs turned. At the whistle, the attacker receives the ball and begins the move. The defenders must organize themselves instantly to cover the gaps.
- Debriefing (Work): "In a company crisis situation, how do you manage the lack of resources? Is it better to act impulsively or take a second to coordinate even under stress?" (Focus: Stress Management and Priorities).
- Variations: Pro Level: If the defense recovers the ball, they have 5 seconds to throw it over a pre-established line (positive transition).



Session 4: Adaptability and Respect (The Chameleon)

Objective: Respond to sudden changes by valuing each member of the group.

- Target and Duration: U13-Adults | 35 minutes.
- Materials: Differently colored markers.
- Setup: 5-on-5 match on a small-sided pitch.
- Instructions: The coach calls out a color during the game. Each color corresponds to a new immediate rule (e.g., Yellow = left foot only; Blue = no running; Red = whoever scores must come out and the team is left with fewer players). Players must adapt without complaining.
- Debriefing (Work): "How does your approach change when the 'rules of the market' suddenly change? Did you support the teammate who was struggling with the new rule or did you criticize him?" (Focus: Resilience and Inclusion).
- Variations: Include a "wildcard player" with limited abilities (e.g., cannot run) that the team must protect and develop to win.



5.4. Inclusion through soccer

Inclusion through soccer is not just a social goal, but a teaching methodology that transforms the pitch into a space where diversity becomes a tactical advantage. For a coach, this means moving from managing a "typical team" to creating an **adaptive ecosystem**.

To make soccer accessible to all, the rules must be adapted:

- Smaller pitch for those with less stamina
- Free touches for those with mobility difficulties
- Flexible roles: player, referee, observer, or assistant coach
- Goals count with a decisive pass, not just a shot
- Mixed teams in terms of age, gender, and ability

Key principle: Not everyone has to play the same way to contribute to the same goal.

Making soccer inclusive for people with disabilities or disadvantaged situations means moving from the concept of "**integration**" (inserting someone into an existing system) to that of "**inclusion**" (changing the system to welcome everyone).

Soccer is a powerful tool because it is a universal language. Here's how to adapt it to break down physical, cognitive, and social barriers.

I. Adaptations for Physical Disabilities

The goal is to ensure independence of movement and active participation.

- **Powerchair Football:** Played on basketball courts with electric wheelchairs equipped with front bulkheads. The rules change: there is no offside rule and the game is 4-on-4.
- **Amputee Football:** Played with crutches (for outfield players) or one-armed (for goalkeepers). The pitch is smaller, and contact with the ball with crutches is considered a handball.
- **Rule Adaptations for "Mixed" Football:** If a player has limited mobility, their marker may be required to walk and not run.



2. Adaptations for Sensory Impairments (Blindness and Low Vision)

Soccer becomes a game of sounds and spatial orientation.

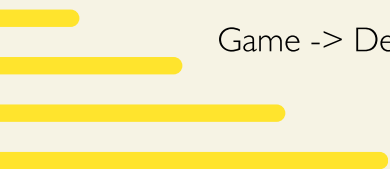
- **The Sound Ball:** Use of balls containing rattles inside. The silence of the crowd is essential to allow the players to perceive the position of the ball.
- **Guides and Signals:** In addition to the coach, there is a "guide" behind the opponent's goal who vocally indicates the position of the goal and the distance for the shot.
- **Side Walls:** The pitch is delimited by side walls that prevent the ball from going out laterally, ensuring continuity of action and orientation for the players.

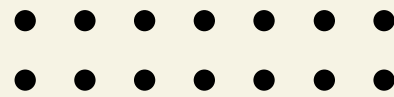


3. Adaptations for Intellectual-Relational Disabilities

Here, the focus is on simplifying communication and managing emotions.

- **Simplifying the Rules:** Eliminating complex rules (e.g., offside, technical fouls) to promote fluidity and enjoyment.
- **Positive Reinforcement:** The referee is not a judge, but a facilitator who explains the error and encourages resumption of play.
- **Routine and Stability:** Training sessions must follow a fixed structure (Warm-up -> Game -> Debriefing) to reduce performance anxiety and promote learning.





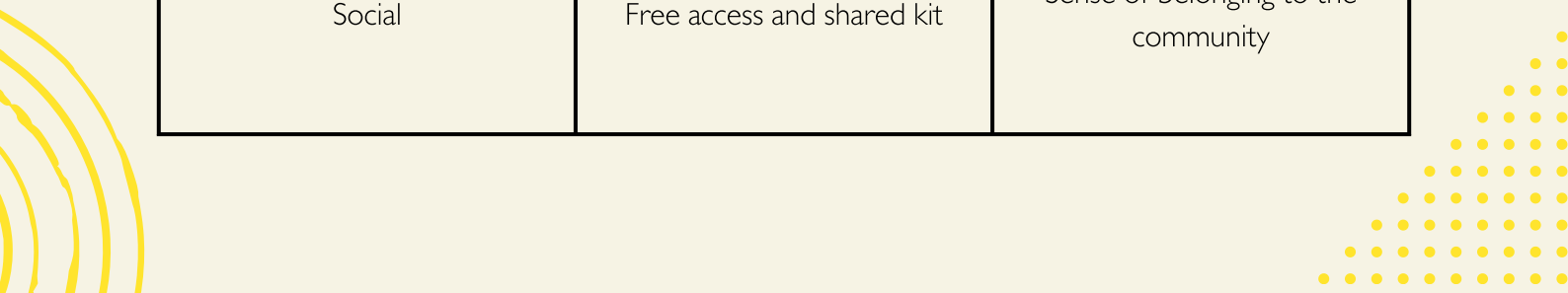
4. Strategies for Socio-Economic Disadvantage

Inclusion here means removing barriers to access.

- **Organized Street Soccer:** Bringing coaches into slums or parks, eliminating registration and logistics costs.
- **Kit Bank:** Creating a system for collecting and redistributing used shoes and sports equipment for those who cannot afford them.
- **Multicultural Tournaments:** Using team compositions to mix different ethnicities and backgrounds, rewarding "fair play" and cooperation rather than just numerical results.

Inclusive Tools Table

| Type of Disadvantage | Key Tool | Social Result |
|----------------------|----------------------------|--|
| Physical | Wheelchairs/Crutches | Recovery of motor self-esteem |
| Sensory | Sound Ball and Guides | Development of autonomy and confidence |
| Cognitive | Simplified rules | Insertion into a peer group |
| Social | Free access and shared kit | Sense of belonging to the community |



The idea of an inclusive "Third Half": At the end of each session, a moment of sharing without the ball is essential. Sitting in a circle and allowing each participant, in their own time and manner, to express how they felt is the final act that transforms a game into a life journey.

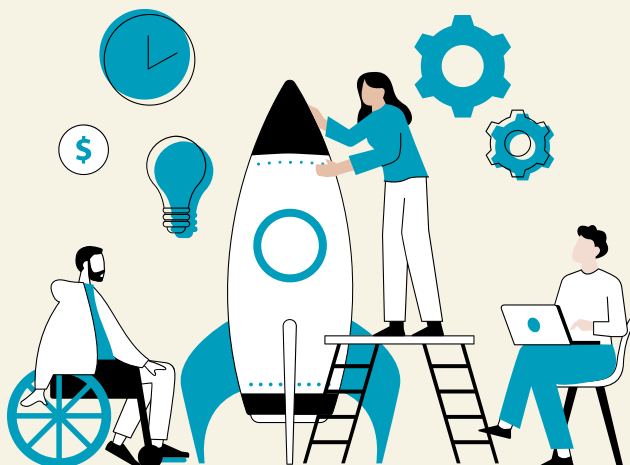
Inclusion in soccer, therefore, isn't simply about "letting everyone play together," but rather designing an environment where the rules level out disparities, transforming individual limitations into strategic opportunities for the group.

Here's how to adapt the game structure for mixed groups with different abilities and technical skills.

I. The "Specialized Roles" (Power-Up) System

Instead of forcing everyone to do the same thing, "powers" or "constraints" are assigned based on skill, making players with less technical proficiency **indispensable** to the outcome.

- **Protected Wildcard:** A player with limited mobility or less experience can be designated as a "Wildcard." When in possession, he or she cannot be physically pressured (defense at a distance of 2 meters).
- **Multiplier:** If a goal is scored after a pass received from a teammate with less technical skill, the goal is worth 3 points instead of 1. This incentivizes stronger players to actively include everyone in the play.
- **Immunity Zones:** Create areas of the pitch (e.g., the sidelines) where only certain players can operate, giving them time and space to decide their play without the anxiety of opposing pressure.





2. Adapting Technical Rules (Flexibility)

Modify the standard rules to lower the barrier to entry and reduce frustration.

- **Personalized Throw-ins:** Those who struggle with hand coordination can re-enter the game with their feet, or vice versa, without losing possession.
- **The "Second Attempt":** Allow those who are learning to repeat a technical move (such as a penalty kick or a throw-in) if the first attempt clearly fails due to inexperience.
- **No Offside:** Eliminating the offside rule dramatically simplifies tactical understanding for beginners and reduces disruptions to the game.

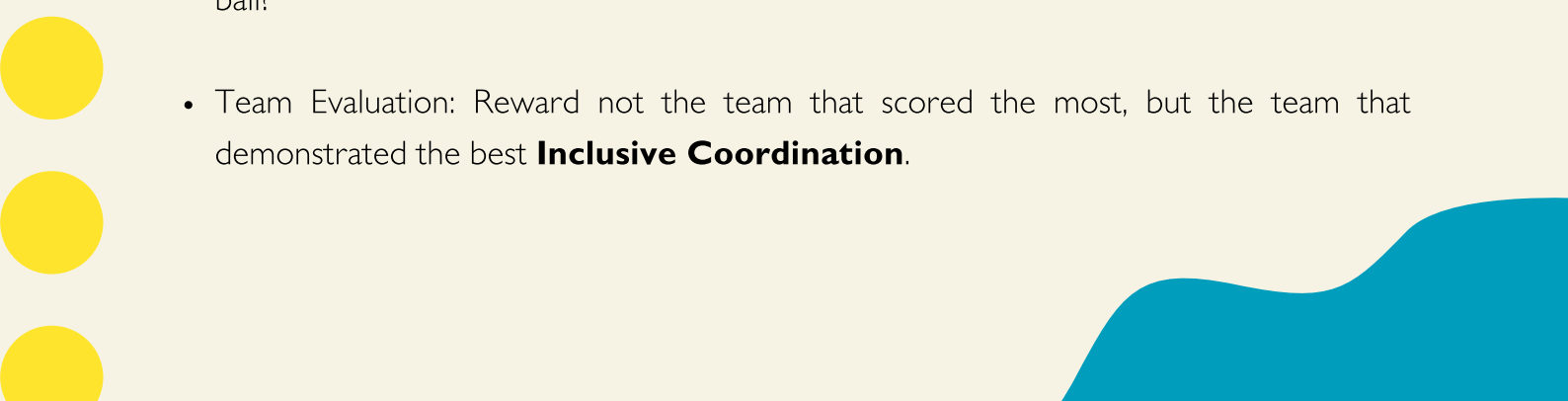
3. Space and Time Management

The physical environment must adapt to the group's physical capabilities to maintain high emotional engagement.

- **"Hourglass" Pitches:** Narrow the midfield and widen the areas near the goals. This facilitates defense and attack, reducing long runs that could exclude those with less stamina.
- **Inclusive Time-outs:** Allow short tactical breaks (every 10 minutes) during which teams must consult to integrate those who were left "on the sidelines" of the game in the previous round.

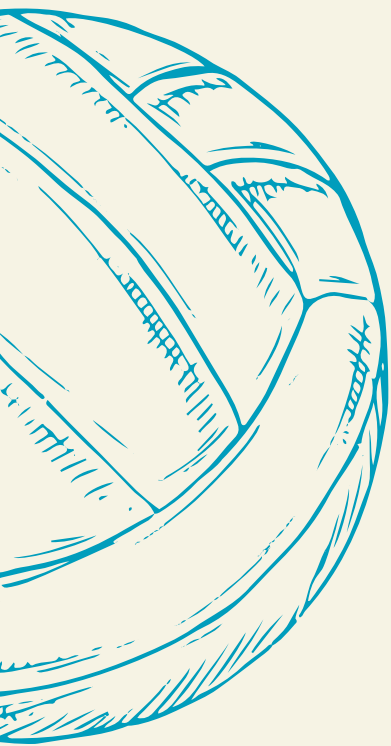
4. Debriefing and Reflection on Inclusion

After training, the analysis must shift from the technical result to the **social process**.

- Key Question: "Who managed to pass a ball to a teammate who hadn't yet touched the ball?"
 - Team Evaluation: Reward not the team that scored the most, but the team that demonstrated the best **Inclusive Coordination**.
- 

Inclusive Adaptations Table

| Challenge Encountered | Suggested Adaptation | Expected Outcome |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Physical disparity | Mandatory pressure distance | Safety and thinking time |
| Poor accuracy | Larger gates or multiple "Targets" | Greater gratification |
| Exclusion from the game | Bonus points for inclusive passes | Forced positive collaboration |
| Motor difficulties | Free zones (No-Pressing) | Active participation guaranteed |





***VOLLEYBALL MODULE:
COMMUNICATION &
TRUST-BUILDING***



6.1 Why Volleyball for Employability?

Volleyball is a team sport that naturally promotes communication, trust, and shared responsibility, making it a highly effective tool for employability-focused training. Research on sport-based youth development highlights that structured team sports can foster transferable life and employability skills when combined with guided reflection and facilitation (Coalter, 2013; Council of the European Union, 2018). Unlike other team sports, volleyball requires constant verbal and non-verbal communication between players, as the ball cannot be held and each action depends directly on the coordination of the entire team.

Each rally in volleyball involves rapid information exchange, clear role understanding, and mutual support. Players must call the ball, give instructions, anticipate teammates' actions, and respond immediately to changing situations. These processes closely mirror workplace dynamics, where effective communication, clarity of roles, and trust between colleagues are essential for successful collaboration. The development of such interpersonal and teamwork competences aligns with broader employability frameworks that emphasise communication and collaboration as key transversal skills (Yorke, 2006).

In addition, volleyball emphasizes collective responsibility rather than individual dominance. Errors are visible and shared, encouraging constructive feedback, emotional regulation, and resilience. This creates a safe environment for participants to practice expressing themselves, listening to others, and rebuilding trust after mistakes—skills that are directly transferable to professional settings. Evidence from sport pedagogy suggests that learning through structured team interaction enhances both social responsibility and self-regulation (Bailey et al., 2009).

For young people, particularly those from underrepresented or disadvantaged backgrounds, volleyball offers an inclusive and accessible learning environment. The sport can be easily adapted to different skill levels, physical abilities, and mixed-gender groups, allowing all participants to engage meaningfully. Through structured volleyball-based activities, participants learn how to communicate clearly, build trust within a team, and take responsibility for collective outcomes—core competencies for employability and social inclusion.





6.2 Key Skills Trained

Volleyball-based training within the TEAM project is intentionally designed to foster core employability skills through structured, experiential learning. The sport provides a dynamic environment in which participants actively practice communication, trust-building, and collaboration under real-time conditions. Through guided reflection and facilitation, these experiences are explicitly connected to professional contexts (Kolb, 1984; Coalter, 2013).

Communication (Verbal and Non-Verbal)

Effective communication is fundamental to both volleyball and the workplace. In volleyball-based activities, participants are required to communicate continuously through verbal calls, gestures, eye contact, and body positioning. Clear and timely communication is necessary to coordinate actions, avoid errors, and ensure collective success.


Through repeated practice, participants develop the ability to express information concisely, listen actively to others, and adapt their communication style to the needs of the group. In employability terms, these skills translate into clearer task instructions, improved collaboration with colleagues, and more effective participation in team meetings and work processes (Council of the European Union, 2018).

Trust and Mutual Support

Volleyball relies heavily on trust between team members, as each player depends on others to perform their roles accurately and consistently. Participants learn that trust is built through reliability, encouragement, and respectful interaction, particularly following mistakes or high-pressure situations.


By experiencing shared responsibility and mutual dependence, participants develop an understanding of psychological safety and supportive teamwork. These competencies are directly transferable to workplace environments where trust enhances cooperation, reduces conflict, and contributes to positive team dynamics and productivity (Edmondson, 1999).





Teamwork and Shared Accountability

In volleyball, individual performance is inseparable from team outcomes. Participants are encouraged to recognise how their actions affect the group and to take responsibility for collective performance rather than focusing solely on individual success.



This fosters a strong sense of accountability and interdependence, helping participants understand their role within a team structure. In professional settings, this competence supports effective collaboration, reliability in task completion, and commitment to shared objectives (Yorke, 2006).



Giving and Receiving Constructive Feedback

Volleyball training sessions create frequent opportunities for immediate feedback, both peer-to-peer and facilitator-led. Participants practice offering feedback in a constructive and respectful manner, focusing on behaviours and solutions rather than personal criticism.

Equally important, participants learn to receive feedback openly, reflect on it, and apply it to improve performance. These skills are essential for professional development, performance evaluation processes, and continuous learning in the workplace (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996).



6.3 Sample Session Plans

Session 1: Communication Under Pressure

Session Overview



Session title: Communication Under Pressure

Main employability focus: Clear communication, active listening, coordination under time constraints

Target group: Young people aged 18–30 (mixed skill levels)

Recommended duration: 90 minutes



Group size: 8–16 participants

Setting: Indoor or outdoor volleyball court (can be adapted to smaller spaces)

Aim of the Session

This session aims to enhance participants' ability to communicate clearly and concisely under time pressure, coordinate actions effectively through verbal and non-verbal signals, and recognise how communication patterns influence overall team performance. It also supports reflection on how individual communication styles affect collaboration, accountability, and stress management in professional workplace environments.

Materials and Set-Up

- Volleyball court or marked play area
 - 1–2 volleyballs
 - Cones or markers
 - Whistle or timer
 - Flipchart or notebook for reflection (optional)
- 
- 



Session I

I. Warm-Up: Communication Activation (15 minutes)

Activity: Call-and-Move Warm-Up

Participants move freely within the court. One ball is introduced and passed continuously. Before passing, the player must:

- call the name of the receiver clearly, and
- make eye contact.

After a few minutes, a second ball is introduced to increase cognitive load.

Facilitator focus:

- Observe clarity of calls
- Notice hesitation or confusion
- Encourage simple, loud, and direct communication
- Reinforce inclusion by ensuring all participants are involved

Purpose:

To activate communication awareness and prepare participants for coordination under increasing pressure.

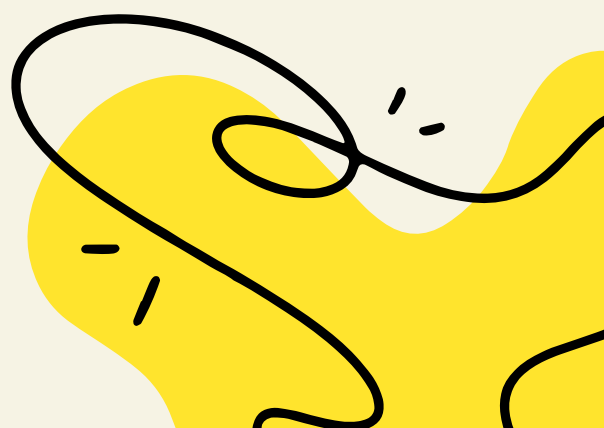
2. Core Activity I: Silent Volleyball (20 minutes)

Activity description:

Participants play short volleyball rallies where verbal communication is not allowed. Only gestures, eye contact, and positioning can be used.

Rules:

- No calling the ball
- Teams rotate after each rally
- Focus is on cooperation, not scoring





Facilitator role:

- Observe frustration, confusion, and adaptation
- Take notes on non-verbal communication strategies
- Intervene if exclusion or disengagement occurs

Debrief (5 minutes):

- What was difficult without speaking?
- How did the team try to compensate?
- Where did misunderstandings occur?

Employability link:

This activity highlights the limitations of unclear or absent communication and demonstrates the importance of non-verbal signals and shared awareness in workplace environments.

3. Core Activity 2: High-Pressure Communication Drill (30 minutes)

Activity description:

A modified volleyball game with **added pressure elements:**

- Time-limited rallies
- task constraints (for example, the team must complete three passes before sending the ball over the net)
- Rotating team leaders responsible for coordination

Rules:

- One player per round acts as communication leader
- The leader is responsible for encouraging clear communication, supporting team inclusion, and helping coordinate positioning and movement
- After each round, leadership rotates

Facilitator focus:

- Communication clarity under stress
- Leadership style and inclusiveness
- Team responsiveness





4. Reflection and Transfer to Work Life (20 minutes)

Guided group discussion questions:

- What types of communication worked best under pressure?
- How did stress affect the way you spoke or listened?
- What happened when communication was unclear or delayed?
- Can you think of workplace situations where similar pressure exists?

Facilitator input:

Explicitly connect:

- calling the ball → giving clear instructions
- listening to teammates → active listening at work
- mistakes under pressure → learning and adjustment in professional settings

Participants are encouraged to identify **one communication behaviour** they want to apply in a future work or study context.

Variations and Adaptations

- **Lower skill levels:** Reduce court size, allow ball catch before passing, slow down the pace.
- **Mixed-ability groups:** Assign supportive roles (observer, encourager, leader).
- **Inclusion focus:** Use mixed-gender and mixed-background teams, adapt rules to ensure equal participation.

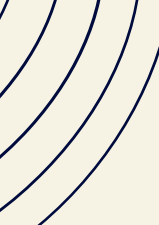
Key Facilitator Tips

- Reinforce positive communication behaviours immediately
- Avoid over-correcting technical volleyball skills
- Keep the focus on **how participants communicate**, not how well they play
- Monitor emotional dynamics and intervene early if tension rises
- Maintain a safe, respectful, and supportive learning environment

Link to Employability

This session demonstrates how communication quality directly affects team performance under pressure. Participants experience, reflect on, and translate these dynamics into workplace contexts, reinforcing communication as a core employability competence.





Session 2: Trust and Cooperation

Session Overview

Session title: Trust and Cooperation

Main employability focus: Trust-building, mutual support, cooperation, shared responsibility

Target group: Young people aged 18–30 (mixed skill levels)

Recommended duration: 90 minutes

Group size: 8–16 participants

Setting: Indoor or outdoor volleyball court (adaptable to limited spaces)

Aim of the Session

This session aims to strengthen participants' ability to build trust through consistent, supportive behaviours and to cooperate effectively in shared tasks. It encourages recognition of the role of reliability, mutual support, and interpersonal awareness in team performance, while promoting reflection on how trust-based collaboration contributes to effective functioning in workplace environments.

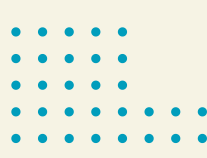
Materials and Set-Up

- Volleyball court or marked play area
- 1–2 volleyballs
- Cones or markers
- Blindfolds or soft eye covers (optional, for adaptations)
- Flipchart or notebook for reflection (optional)

Session Structure and Activities

1. Warm-Up: Paired Trust Activation (15 minutes)

Activity: Participants work in pairs. One participant performs controlled passes while the other focuses on positioning, encouragement, and readiness to receive the ball. After a few minutes, roles are switched so both participants experience giving and receiving support.





Facilitator focus:

- Observe encouragement and support
- Reinforce positive, confidence-building communication
- Emphasise consistency rather than speed or power
- Ensure both partners remain actively involved

Purpose:

To introduce trust as a foundation for cooperation and shared performance.

2. Core Activity 1: Cooperative Volleyball Challenge (25 minutes)

Activity description:

Teams are given cooperative challenges rather than competitive goals, such as:

- maintaining a rally for a specific number of passes, or
- ensuring each team member touches the ball before it crosses the net.

Rules:

- Success is measured collectively
- Mistakes reset the task, not the score
- Teams are encouraged to support rather than blame

Facilitator role:

- Highlight moments of mutual support
- Intervene if exclusion or frustration emerges
- Reinforce the idea that learning and cooperation are more important than technical performance

3. Core Activity 2: Trust Rotation Drill (25 minutes)

Activity description:

Participants rotate roles within the team (for example: setter, defender, caller, organiser) regardless of previous experience. This requires participants to rely on teammates while adapting to unfamiliar responsibilities.





Rules:

- Roles change every few minutes
- No “fixed” positions
- The focus remains on learning, cooperation, and trust rather than efficiency or winning


Facilitator focus:

- Observe reactions to uncertainty
- Encourage patience and reassurance among teammates

Facilitators should pause the activity briefly if participants become overly self-critical or frustrated, reminding the group that experimentation and adaptation are learning goals.

4. Reflection and Transfer to Work Life (25 minutes)

Guided discussion questions:

- When did you feel most supported by your team?
 - How did trust influence your willingness to try new roles?
 - What happened when trust was missing or weak?
 - How does trust affect teamwork in a workplace?
- 


Facilitator input:

Explicitly link:

- role rotation → flexibility at work
- mutual support → team reliability
- mistakes → learning and trust-building
- shared responsibility → accountability in professional teams

Participants are encouraged to identify one concrete action they can take to strengthen trust in a future work, education, or group setting (for example: offering help proactively, giving encouragement, following through on tasks).

Variations and Adaptations

- Lower skill levels: Reduce complexity, allow ball catch before passing.
 - Trust-focused adaptation: Use blindfolded guidance with verbal support (only if appropriate and safe).
 - Inclusion focus: Ensure equal role rotation and prevent dominance by experienced players.
- 



Key Facilitator Tips

- Model supportive behaviour at all times
- Discourage blame and negative language
- Reinforce collective success over individual performance
- Create a psychologically safe learning environment

Link to Employability

This session enables participants to experience how trust and cooperation improve collective outcomes. By translating these experiences into workplace contexts, participants understand trust as a core employability competence that enhances collaboration, adaptability, and long-term team effectiveness.

Session 3: Feedback and Emotional Regulation

Session Overview

Session title: Feedback and Emotional Regulation

Main employability focus: Constructive feedback, emotional regulation, self-awareness, adaptability

Target group: Young people aged 18–30 (mixed skill levels)

Recommended duration: 90 minutes

Group size: 8–16 participants

Setting: Indoor or outdoor volleyball court (adaptable to limited spaces)

Aim of the Session

This session aims to develop participants' ability to give and receive constructive feedback in a respectful and solution-focused manner, while strengthening emotional awareness during moments of pressure or mistakes. It supports the application of basic emotional regulation strategies in team situations and encourages reflection on how feedback, self-awareness, and emotional control contribute to professional communication and adaptability in workplace environments.



Materials and Set-Up

- Volleyball court or marked play area
- 1–2 volleyballs
- Cones or markers
- Emotion cards or simple emotion labels (optional)
- Flipchart or notebook for reflection (optional)

Session Structure and Activities

1. Warm-Up: Emotion Awareness Activation (15 minutes)

Activity: Participants stand in a circle and perform light passing. After each short rally, participants briefly share one word describing how they felt during the exchange (for example: calm, nervous, frustrated, focused).

Facilitators may introduce emotion cards or simple emotion labels to support participants who find it difficult to name feelings.

Facilitator focus:

- Normalise emotional reactions as a natural part of teamwork and performance
- Encourage respectful listening without interruption or judgement
- Reinforce the idea that emotions provide useful information about performance and stress

Purpose:

To build awareness of emotional states before introducing feedback.

2. Core Activity 1: Feedback-Focused Drill (25 minutes)

Activity description:

Participants work in small groups performing a simple volleyball drill. After each round, one participant provides feedback using a structured format:

- one positive observation
- one suggestion for improvement

Rules:

- Feedback must focus on behaviour, not personality
- Tone must remain respectful and supportive
- Roles rotate so everyone practices giving feedback



Facilitator role:

- Model effective feedback language (for example: “I noticed...” or “Next time you could try...”)
- Intervene if feedback becomes critical, personal, or unclear
- Reinforce balanced feedback that includes both strengths and improvement points

3. Core Activity 2: Pressure and Regulation Exercise (25 minutes)

Activity description:

A modified volleyball game introduces mild pressure elements such as:

- time limits,
- performance constraints,
- small challenges that require quick decisions.

Participants are encouraged to notice emotional reactions and apply simple regulation strategies such as:


- taking a deep breath,
- pausing briefly before responding,
- refocusing attention on the next action.

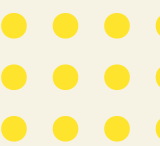
Facilitator focus:

- Observe emotional responses to errors
- Encourage pause and recovery, not immediate correction
- Reinforce effort and learning

4. Reflection and Transfer to Work Life (25 minutes)

Guided discussion questions:

- How did it feel to give and receive feedback?
 - What emotions came up after mistakes or pressure?
 - Which strategies helped you regain focus?
 - How are feedback and emotional regulation used in workplaces?
- 



Facilitator input:

Explicitly connect sports experiences to professional contexts:

- feedback drills → performance reviews and team feedback meetings
- emotional reactions → professional behaviour and emotional intelligence
- regulation strategies → stress management at work
- recovery after mistakes → adaptability and resilience

Participants identify:

- one feedback behaviour they want to improve (for example: being more specific or more supportive), and
- one emotional regulation strategy they want to use in professional situations.



Variations and Adaptations

- Lower skill levels: Reduce pressure elements and simplify drills.
- Emotion-sensitive groups: Allow written or symbolic feedback instead of verbal.
- Inclusion focus: Ensure equal participation and protect psychological safety.

Key Facilitator Tips

- Reinforce learning over performance
- Keep feedback specific and actionable
- Validate emotions without escalating them
- Maintain a respectful, supportive atmosphere

Link to Employability

This session enables participants to practice constructive feedback and emotional regulation in real time. These competencies support professional growth, teamwork, and resilience in workplace environments where feedback and pressure are part of everyday functioning.

Session 4: Integrated Teamwork and Employability Simulation

Session Overview

Session title: Integrated Teamwork and Employability Simulation Main employability focus: Integrated teamwork, communication, trust, feedback, adaptability

Target group: Young people aged 18–30 (mixed skill levels)

Recommended duration: 90 minutes



Group size: 8–16 participants

Setting: Indoor or outdoor volleyball court (adaptable to limited spaces)

Aim of the Session

This session aims to integrate communication, trust, and feedback skills within a realistic team-based scenario, enabling participants to collaborate effectively under changing conditions. It promotes adaptability, shared responsibility, and coordinated decision-making, while encouraging reflection on how team dynamics influence performance and problem-solving in professional environments.

Materials and Set-Up

- Volleyball court or marked play area
- 1–2 volleyballs
- Cones or markers
- Scenario cards or task cards (optional)
- Flipchart or notebook for reflection (optional)

Session Structure and Activities

I. Warm-Up: Team Alignment Exercise (10 minutes)

Activity: Team Agreement Circle

Teams briefly discuss and agree on simple working rules for the session, including:

- how they will communicate during play,
- how they will support one another,
- how feedback will be given during the simulation.

Agreements should be short, clear, and verbal. The facilitator may write key points on a flipchart if helpful.

Purpose:

To establish shared expectations, similar to team briefings in work environments.



2. Core Activity 1: Integrated Volleyball Simulation (40 minutes)

Activity description: Teams play a modified volleyball game where multiple employability-related challenges are introduced progressively. The simulation is designed to require communication, cooperation, adaptability, and shared decision-making.

Simulation elements may include:

- rotating leadership roles
- sudden rule changes (e.g. limited touches, new objectives)
- time pressure
- problem-solving tasks between rallies

Rules:

- Teams must adapt collectively
- Communication and cooperation are prioritised over scoring

Facilitator focus:

- Observe team dynamics
- Note communication patterns and adaptability
- Identify examples of effective employability behaviours

3. Core Activity 2: Team Reflection in Action (15 minutes)

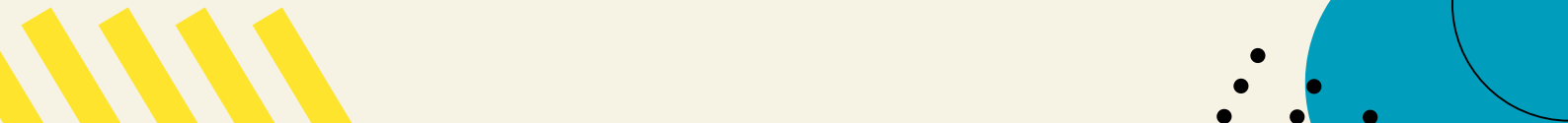
Activity description: Mid-session pause where teams reflect briefly on:

- what is working well
- what needs adjustment
- how roles and communication can improve

Teams then re-enter play applying agreed changes.

Purpose:

To practice reflection and adjustment, mirroring workplace team reviews.



4. Final Reflection and Transfer to Work Life (25 minutes)

Guided discussion questions:

- How did your team adapt to changing conditions?
- Which behaviours helped the team perform better?
- How were communication and trust maintained under pressure?
- How does this reflect teamwork in professional settings?

Facilitator input:

Explicitly connect simulation experiences to workplace realities:

- team agreements → workplace norms and codes of conduct
- leadership rotation → shared responsibility and situational leadership
- adaptation → organisational change and flexibility
- problem-solving under pressure → workplace decision-making

Participants are encouraged to identify one employability skill they feel more confident using after completing the volleyball module and explain how they will apply it in real-life contexts.

Variations and Adaptations

- **Lower skill levels:** Simplify rules and reduce pace.
- **Advanced groups:** Increase complexity and decision-making demands.
- **Inclusion focus:** Ensure balanced participation and role rotation.

Key Facilitator Tips

- Keep employability outcomes visible throughout the session
- Encourage reflection without disrupting flow
- Reinforce positive behaviours immediately
- Avoid overemphasis on competition

Link to Employability

This final session consolidates learning from the volleyball module by immersing participants in a realistic teamwork simulation. Participants experience how communication, trust, feedback, and adaptability interact in dynamic team environments and reflect on how these competencies directly transfer to professional settings.

6.4 Working with Mixed-Level Groups

Purpose of this section

This section provides in-depth guidance for coaches and youth workers on delivering volleyball-based employability training to mixed-level groups. It addresses differences in skills, confidence, physical ability, communication styles, and prior experiences, with a strong emphasis on inclusion, psychological safety, and meaningful participation for all learners. The aim is to ensure that diversity within groups becomes a learning asset rather than a barrier.

Understanding Mixed-Level Groups in Employability Contexts

Mixed-level groups are a defining characteristic of youth employability programmes, particularly those targeting NEETs, migrants, young people from low-income or rural backgrounds, and participants with fewer opportunities. Differences may relate not only to sporting ability, but also to:

- confidence in group settings,
- communication and language skills,
- prior exposure to structured learning environments,
- emotional readiness and self-esteem.

In the TEAM volleyball module, facilitators are encouraged to view these differences as reflective of real workplace teams, where individuals with varied backgrounds and competencies must collaborate effectively toward shared goals.

Prioritising Employability Outcomes over Technical Performance

When working with mixed-level groups, the primary focus should remain on employability skills rather than volleyball technique. Technical perfection is neither expected nor required. Instead, facilitators should design and adapt activities so that communication, cooperation, trust, and responsibility remain central learning objectives.

This approach ensures that participants with limited sporting experience are not marginalised and that more experienced players are encouraged to develop leadership, empathy, and supportive behaviours.



Practical Adaptation Strategies

Facilitators can enhance inclusion and participation by applying the following strategies:

- **Rule adaptations:**

Allowing a catch before a pass, increasing the number of touches per team, or reducing court size to slow the pace of play.

- **Task simplification:**

Focusing on cooperative objectives (e.g. maintaining a rally) rather than competitive scoring.

- **Progressive difficulty:**

- Gradually increasing complexity as group confidence and cohesion improve.

These adaptations lower entry barriers while preserving the employability focus of the session.

Role Assignment and Rotation as a Learning Tool

Assigning and rotating non-technical roles within volleyball activities is a powerful method for managing mixed-level groups. Roles may include:

- communication leader,
- coordinator,
- encourager,
- observer or feedback provider.

Role rotation:

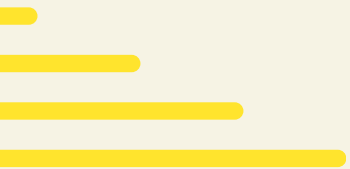
- prevents dominance by highly skilled participants,
- ensures equal contribution,
- reinforces transferable skills such as leadership, accountability, and communication.

This mirrors workplace dynamics, where individuals often assume different responsibilities depending on task demands.

Managing Group Dynamics and Preventing Exclusion

Facilitators should actively monitor group interactions to prevent exclusion, withdrawal, or frustration. Particular attention should be given to:

- participants who disengage after mistakes,
- dominant behaviours that limit others' participation,
- non-verbal signs of discomfort or anxiety.





Early intervention through encouragement, re-framing of mistakes as learning opportunities, and explicit reinforcement of supportive behaviours helps maintain balanced participation and positive group dynamics.

Psychological Safety and Emotional Inclusion

Psychological safety is essential for learning in mixed-level groups. Facilitators should:

- normalise errors as part of skill development,
- discourage blame and negative language,
- model respectful communication and emotional regulation.

This is especially important for participants who may have experienced failure, exclusion, or criticism in previous educational, sporting, or work settings. A supportive environment enables participants to take risks, express themselves, and engage fully in the learning process.

Linking Mixed-Level Experiences to Workplace Reality

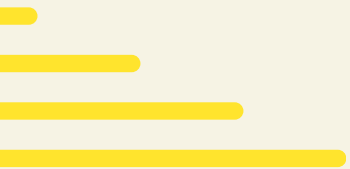
Working in mixed-level groups closely resembles professional environments, where teams are composed of individuals with diverse skills, experiences, and personalities. Facilitators should explicitly highlight this parallel during reflection, helping participants recognise that:

- diversity strengthens team performance,
- adaptability is a key employability skill,
- inclusive communication supports collaboration and productivity.

By making this connection explicit, participants are better able to transfer learning from the volleyball court to real workplace situations.

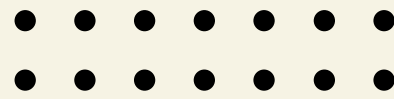
Key Takeaways for Facilitators

- Focus on employability outcomes, not sporting ability
- Use adaptation and role rotation to ensure inclusion
- Actively manage group dynamics and emotional safety
- Treat diversity as a learning resource
- Explicitly connect mixed-level teamwork to workplace contexts





*INCLUSIVE RECRUITMENT,
MOTIVATION & GROUP
MANAGEMENT*



Why this chapter matters: TEAM's outcomes depend on whether underrepresented young people actually find you, feel safe enough to attend a first session, come back the following week, and stay long enough to build skills that matter for life and work (Council of Europe, 2023; UNHCR, 2024).

What this chapter gives you: You will get (a) recruitment tactics through **trusted “bridges”** (NGOs, schools, social workers, municipal youth offices), (b) message templates that avoid **employability jargon**, (c) barrier-removal playbooks for **costs, transport, timing, culture, family, disability, and confidence**, and (d) practical group-management tools that turn conflict into a learning moment linked to workplace behaviors—reflecting good practice from European sport-for-inclusion and safe-sport literatures (Sportanddev/STEP4Youth consortium, 2021; Sport Information Resource Centre [SIRC], 2025).

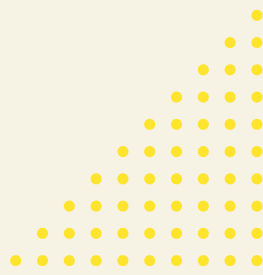
7.1. Recruitment strategies for underrepresented youth

7.1.1. Recruit through trusted bridges

Why this works: Underrepresented youth respond best to invitations traveling through **existing trust networks**—school counselors, youth NGOs, refugee services, Roma mediators, social workers, municipal youth offices—rather than generic advertising, a principle emphasized in European inclusion guidance and UNHCR programming notes (Council of Europe, 2023; UNHCR, 2024).

How to do it this month:

- **Map 12 local bridges:** Create a one-page directory with named contacts across schools/VET and municipal youth services; migrant/refugee, disability, women/girls NGOs; PES/employment counselors; faith/community hubs and intercultural centers—an ecosystem approach associated with stronger reach and conversion to first attendance in European practice mapping (Sportanddev/STEP4Youth consortium, 2021).
- **Co-recruit with partners:** Ask each to host a **30–45’ on-site taster**, nominate **two or three** youth for a **warm handover** (arrive with a staffer/peer), and share your posts through their channels; warm entry reduces first-day anxiety and improves retention in migrant/refugee and vulnerable cohorts (Council of Europe, 2023; UNHCR, 2024).



- **Provide a partner pack:** Include a simple script, a poster, two square tiles, a 20–30” captioned reel, a “what to expect” sheet, a safeguarding summary, and a **QR** to a two-question sign-up—clarity reduces last-mile friction (SIRC, 2025; Department for Culture, Media & Sport [DCMS], 2025).

KPI to track: Aim for **≥60%** of first-session participants entering via partner referral or warm handover; this aligns with inclusion guidance prioritizing the removal of social/procedural barriers at first contact (UNHCR, 2024).

7.1.2. Use simple, motivating messages (ditch employability jargon)

What the evidence says: NEET-focused reviews show institutional language (“pathways,” “competencies,” “activation”) depresses engagement, whereas messages foregrounding **belonging, fun, practical supports, and no-pressure entry** convert better (Paabort, Flynn, Beilmann, & Petrescu, 2023; Johnstone et al., 2024).

Message bank to copy:

- **Open invitation:** “Free football/volleyball/basketball. No trials. All levels welcome. We lend kit & help with bus tickets. Come with a friend. Wed 18:30, Municipal Gym (Bus 12/14). DM/WhatsApp +30 XXX.” (Paabort et al., 2023).
- **Girls-only session:** “Girls only, women coaches, friendly pace. Modest kit welcome. Thu 19:00. We can help with transport,” a gender-responsive format that increases uptake where norms and safety concerns are salient (Council of Europe, 2023; International Olympic Committee [IOC], 2025).
- **Skills without jargon:** “Play ball, make friends, build confidence for life and work—without sitting in a classroom. Free. Snacks included,” reframing employability as lived skills (Sportanddev/STEP4Youth consortium, 2021; Youth Research and Evaluation eXchange [YouthREX], 2024).

Do and don’t:

- **Do:** Always show day/time, location pin, bus lines, “kit provided,” “bring a friend,” and a named WhatsApp contact—concrete logistics reduce “intent → action” drop-off (DCMS, 2025).
- **Don’t:** Front-load forms; use a two-question form (name + WhatsApp) and finish registration on site, a low-friction flow that suits NEET outreach (Paabort et al., 2023).

7.1.3. Involve youth in recruitment (co-design and peer-to-peer)

Why co-design matters: Shared ownership improves authenticity, speeds iteration, and expands reach to peers who might self-exclude; youth-engagement frameworks recommend real roles, not token input (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2025; International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies [IFRC], 2024).


What to set up:

- A **micro-crew** (3–5 young people) to co-create reels, posters, and the welcome routine, with stipends or transport cards.
- A **peer-buddy invite**: Each returner invites one newcomer and **meets them at the door**; peer-led approaches increase emotional safety and participation (United Nations Children’s Fund [UNICEF], 2024; Bailey et al., 2024).

7.1.4. Your 30-day recruitment funnel (with metrics)

What to do each week:

- **Week 1:** Map partners; book two on-site tasters; produce partner packs; draft three posts and one captioned reel—an ecosystem approach supported in EU practice mapping and safe-sport communication guidance (Sportanddev/STEP4Youth consortium, 2021; SIRC, 2025).
- **Week 2:** Deliver tasters (school lunch + refugee NGO), publish posts, and circulate voice notes in partner WhatsApp groups; partner-led mobilisation improves show-ups (UNHCR, 2024).
- **Week 3:** Run the first open-court session with loaner kit and snacks; host a 10-minute welcome; complete barrier check-ins (see 7.2); assign buddies; run a 2-minute exit pulse; low-threshold entry and barrier analysis are evidence-aligned (DCMS, 2025; Hussey, Blom, Huysmans, Voelker, Moore, & Mulvihill, 2023).
- **Week 4:** WhatsApp non-returners (“We missed you—can we help with transport or kit?”), pilot a girls-only hour, and share consented photos; gender-responsive offers and visible identity signals support continuity (IOC, 2025; SIRC, 2025).



Monthly KPIs: Partner/warm-handover share $\geq 60\%$ (UNHCR, 2024); **show-up rate $\geq 65\%$** from sign-ups (DCMS, 2025); **return-to-week-2 $\geq 50\%$** (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2022).

7.2. Removing barriers to participation

Principle to remember: Most youths face a **bundle** of constraints (cost + transport + time + culture + confidence + disability/sensory + safety), and attendance improves when you remove **several small barriers at once**, not by offering one “perfect” solution—an insight from participation and safeguarding reviews (DCMS, 2025; SIRC, 2025).

7.2.1. Start with a barrier audit

How to run a one-minute check-in: In Week 1, ask privately: “How did you get here today? Any transport issues?” “What time works best next week?” “Do you need kit?” “Girls-only or mixed?” “Anything that would help you feel safer?” Then solve **one thing per person** (bus card, later slot, buddy, kit loan)—a context-specific approach aligned with displacement-context guidance and intercultural sport policy (UNHCR, 2024; Council of Europe, 2023).

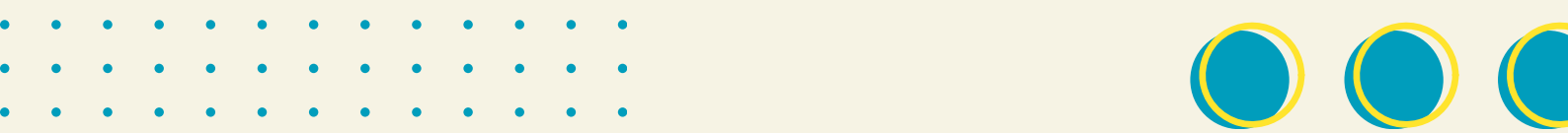
Mini-dashboard to review monthly: Barrier resolved by Week 2 $\geq 70\%$ (UNHCR, 2024); **on-time arrival** as a proxy for transport fit (DCMS, 2025); **return-to-Week-3 $\geq 50\%$** as a proxy for perceived value and safety (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2022).

7.2.2. Affordability: fees, kit, food

Why this matters: Fees, equipment, and “hidden” costs (transport, snacks) are top exclusion drivers for low-income and newcomer families (Pandya, 2021; Heal, Warner, Boissoneau, & Kerr, 2023).

What to implement now:

- **Fee-free entry + kit library:** Boots across sizes, shin guards, jerseys, tracksuit bottoms—visible readiness reduces first-week drop-off (Sportanddev/STEP4Youth consortium, 2021).
- **Snack table:** Fruit and water lower the “I came hungry” barrier and set a welcoming tone (DCMS, 2025).
- **Transport micro-grants/cards:** Keep a small pool of bus cards/fuel vouchers to allocate on the spot (UNHCR, 2024).



Budget tip: With ~€1,500, you can seed a kit pool, basic snacks for eight weeks, and 30–40 bus tickets—enough to support 25–30 youths through the fragile first month; EU practice notes highlight re-usable kit pools and flexible small funds (Sportanddev/STEP4Youth consortium, 2021).

7.2.3. Transport: location, timing, navigation

Why transport is decisive: Distance, route complexity, and mismatched session times break attendance chains, particularly for rural youth or those at the urban margins; participation studies flag transport access and timing as critical enablers (DCMS, 2025).

Solutions to deploy:


- **Choose venues on bus/tram lines** and publish a **photo wayfinding** from stop to door to reduce “I got lost” drop-offs (DCMS, 2025).
- **Clock sessions to public transport:** Start 15 minutes after frequent bus arrivals; end 10 minutes before the half-hour for safer returns—advice aligned with displacement-context inclusion notes (UNHCR, 2024).
- **Run pop-ups/satellites:** Bring sessions monthly to rural schools or community halls; intercultural guidance encourages place-making near where young people live (Council of Europe, 2023).

7.2.4. Time & life-load: flexibility beats perfection

Why flexibility wins: NEET youth often juggle casual shifts, appointments, caregiving, and fluctuating mental health; rigid schedules drive attrition (DCMS, 2025).

Practical adjustments: Offer **two time slots** (for example, Wed 18:30 and Thu 20:00) and **drop-in** attendance; track presence and progress, not absence (DCMS, 2025). Run **short blocks** (4–6 weeks): opt-in “sprints” reduce commitment anxiety and support re-entry, consistent with PYD retention insights (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2022).

7.2.5. Cultural & gender barriers: formats that fit



Why formats matter: Family expectations and safety norms can limit girls' participation; mixed-gender sessions, unfamiliar dress codes, and cultural mismatches deter newcomer families—European policy and UNHCR guidance both recommend **gender-responsive, culturally responsive formats** (Council of Europe, 2023; UNHCR, 2024).



What to offer:

- **Girls-only hours with women coaches**, explicitly allowing **modest kit**; IOC and EU resources highlight format adjustments as practical inclusion levers (IOC, 2025).
- **Family open nights** (30 minutes): Show the space; outline safety/reporting; display supervision ratios; answer questions about dress, photos, and travel, which increases parental confidence (UNHCR, 2024).
- **Translated welcome sheets** with visuals; multilingual information builds comprehension and trust at first contact (UNHCR, 2024).

7.2.6. Disability & sensory access: design by default

Why universal design: Inaccessible entrances/changing, harsh acoustics, and no quiet zone exclude youth with mobility, sensory, or neurodivergent needs; safe-sport/inclusion frameworks advise **universal design and choice** (SIRC, 2025; Council of Europe, 2023).

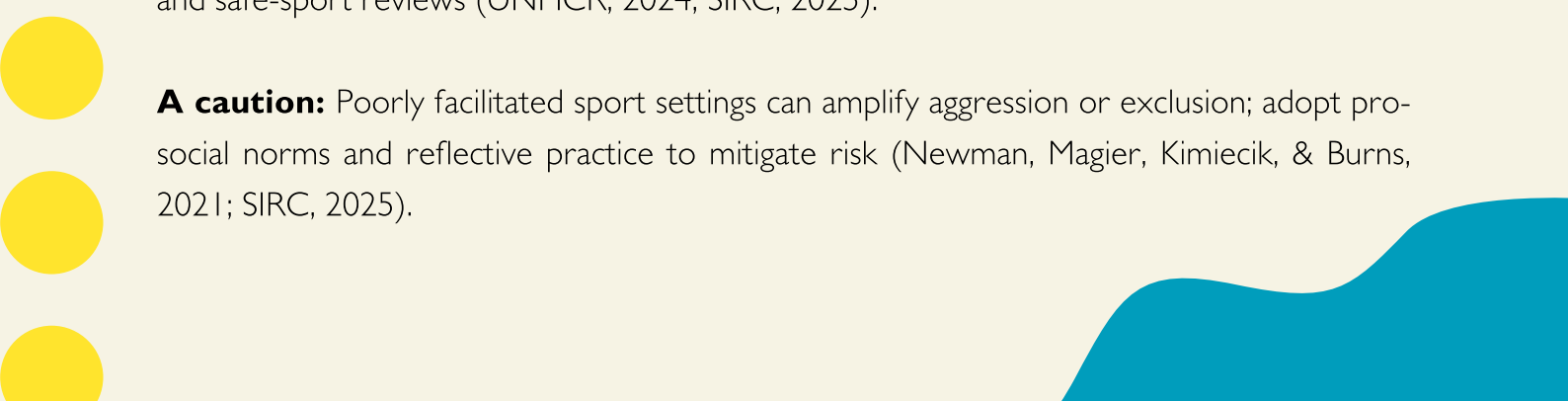
Checklist to apply: Ramps/door widths; accessible toilets; lighting; signage; a **quiet space**; seated/standing drill variants; lower-impact options; **visual cueing** for instructions; an **opt-out station** and non-playing roles (scoreboard, social media, equipment) to maintain belonging while minimizing arousal (SIRC, 2025).

7.2.7. Confidence, mental health & trauma: safety first

What the evidence advises: Anxiety, low self-esteem, and trauma (displacement, loss, discrimination, violence) can undermine motivation, concentration, and trust; trauma-informed youth-sport guidance converges on **predictability, choice, non-shaming feedback, and clear referral pathways** (Hussey et al., 2023; Campaign for Trauma-Informed Policy and Practice [CTIPP], 2024).

Design cues to use each week: Post a **simple plan**; open/close the same way; **start low-arousal**; use a shared **“pause & reset”** signal; assign buddies and micro-roles (welcome host, equipment lead); display who to contact for help (coach + safeguarding lead) with multilingual options—measures consistent with displacement-context guidance and safe-sport reviews (UNHCR, 2024; SIRC, 2025).

A caution: Poorly facilitated sport settings can amplify aggression or exclusion; adopt pro-social norms and reflective practice to mitigate risk (Newman, Magier, Kimiecik, & Burns, 2021; SIRC, 2025).





7.2.8. Communications that reduce friction

Make logistics concrete: Always include day/time, location **pin**, bus lines, “kit provided,” and a named WhatsApp contact; concrete details improve conversions and show-ups (DCMS, 2025).

Use visuals: Consent-cleared photos of **diverse** participants and **captioned reels** outperform text-heavy posts with NEET audiences (YouthREX, 2024).

Keep forms tiny: Use a **two-question form** (name + WhatsApp) and complete the rest on site, which reduces cognitive load for first attendance (Paabort et al., 2023).

7.2.9. Quick-use templates (copy-paste)

A) First-session barrier check (one minute): Ask the five questions listed in 7.2.1; this aligns with participation research and safe-sport practice (DCMS, 2025; SIRC, 2025; UNHCR, 2024).

B) Caregiver consent + welcome sheet (plain language): Explain what happens in sessions; supervision ratios; first aid; how to report concerns; media consent options; map + bus lines; dress code notes; and coach contacts—transparent practice recommended in safe-sport reviews (SIRC, 2025).

C) Partner outreach email (NGO/school): A short request to share materials, nominate two to three youths for a warm handover, and host a 30–45’ taster—partnership-based mobilisation is a proven enabler (Council of Europe, 2023; UNHCR, 2024; Sportanddev/STEP4Youth consortium, 2021).

7.2.10. Monitoring & learning (M&L) for barriers

Keep it light and useful: Review monthly (1) **barrier resolution rate by Week 2 $\geq 70\%$** (UNHCR, 2024), (2) **on-time arrival** and adjust start times to bus arrivals (DCMS, 2025), (3) **return-to-Week-3 $\geq 50\%$** and if low, revisit **safety signals** (girls-only hour, co-created norms) and **practical supports** (kit, bus cards) (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2022).



7.3. Keeping youth engaged

Why this section matters: Recruitment brings young people in the door, but **retention** is where transformation happens; consistent, long-term participation in sport-based programmes is associated with better physical, social, emotional, and cognitive outcomes, yet retention can lag even when barriers are reduced (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2022).

What drives engagement: Programs that intentionally build **belonging, recognition, progress visibility, choice/voice**, and **explicit skill transfer** to school/work settings achieve stronger returns (Gozzoli, Palumbo, & Zanoli, 2023; Theeboom, Coalter, Taylor, Commers, & Derom, 2021).

7.3.1. Build a “TEAM mindset” that drives belonging


- **Set shared values and visible norms:** Co-create a short charter in Week 1 (for example, “We listen,” “We include,” “We show up”), display it, and revisit weekly; intercultural sport practice and conflict-management literature show that explicit norms improve climate and reduce avoidable conflicts (Council of Europe, 2023; MSU Institute for the Study of Youth Sports, 2024).
- **Name the team and use small rituals:** A name, colors, and a two-minute opening/closing ritual (for example, green–amber–red check-in; three-clap close) strengthen identity and routine, which are linked to higher return rates in PYD sport (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2022).
- **Adopt inclusive roles from day one:** Rotate micro-roles (equipment lead, warm-up captain, welcome host, media assistant); youth-engagement frameworks recommend pairing responsibility with voice and choice to strengthen efficacy and commitment (UNESCO, 2025).

7.3.2. Use a 10-week engagement arc

Why a 10-week arc: Short, structured cycles reduce commitment anxiety, offer fresh starts, and let coaches layer skills; routine plus perceived progression is a known retention driver (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2022).

What to include each week: A skill-of-the-day (two after Week 3), one micro-lead role, and a three-minute reflect-to-work debrief; explicit reflection increases transfer to employability skills (Gozzoli et al., 2023).

- **Week 1 — Trust & orientation:** Clear calling + buddying; “Where would clear calling avoid mistakes at work?” (Gozzoli et al., 2023).
- **Week 2 — Reliability & routine:** Punctuality/attendance habits; start a skills passport; employers value reliability (Theeboom et al., 2021).
- **Week 3 — Teamwork under mild pressure:** Cooperative challenges; supportive language; retention correlates with perceived social responsibility and fitness (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2022).
- **Week 4 — Problem-solving & role clarity:** Scenario drills (down a player/time-pressure); explicit mapping to workplace tasks (Gozzoli et al., 2023).
- **Week 5 — Leadership in small doses:** Micro-leadership and concise instructions —low-risk leadership practice valued by employers (Theeboom et al., 2021).
- **Week 6 — Handling mistakes & feedback:** Non-shaming feedback; error-recovery routines; transfer is easier when coaches model language and tempo (Gozzoli et al., 2023).
- **Week 7 — Inclusion stretch:** Girls-only or mixed-format with safety cues; modest kit; quieter space/opt-out; gender-responsive formats improve retention (Council of Europe, 2023; IOC, 2025).
- **Week 8 — Conflict as a learning moment:** 90-second restorative “quick circles”; restorative models improve relationships and conflict skills (Hemphill, Janke, Gordon, & Farrar, 2018).
- **Week 9 — Transfer week with employers:** Short “day-in-the-life” talks; mock “shift briefings”; relevance drives persistence (Paabort et al., 2023; Theeboom et al., 2021).
- **Week 10 — Showcase & next steps:** Friendly matches/skill demos; badges; clear invitation into the next cycle (Gozzoli et al., 2023).



7.3.3. Use session plans that make skills visible

Plan-deliver-reflect: Name the target behavior, design drills that require it, and debrief with an explicit workplace link; structured reflection increases transfer (Gozzoli et al., 2023).

Example (60 minutes): Low-arousal warm-in + posted plan; communication circuit (silent passing; “three-word rule”); problem-solving scrimmage (constraint play + 30-second captain briefing); micro-lead handover; three-minute reflect-to-work debrief—structure supports psychological safety and learning (Hussey et al., 2023; Gozzoli et al., 2023).

Girls-only design cues: Women coaches, modest kit accepted, caregiver viewing windows; EU and IOC resources show these signals support safety, dignity, and sustained return (Council of Europe, 2023; IOC, 2025).

7.3.4. Create a lightweight recognition system


Why recognition matters: Small, credible artefacts keep focus on transferable behaviors without turning sessions into school; M&E guidance recommends low-burden, behavior-tied tools (Theeboom et al., 2021).

Micro-badges + skills passport: “Reliable teammate,” “Clear communicator,” “Problem-solver,” “Supportive voice,” “Calm reset,” tied to observable criteria and recorded in an A5 skills passport; documented behaviors translate to CV bullets and mock interviews (Gozzoli et al., 2023; Theeboom et al., 2021).

7.3.5. Design micro-leadership and peer roles

Why micro-leadership: Adolescents gain confidence through manageable, time-boxed leadership experiences; non-formal education models favor learning-by-doing (Gozzoli et al., 2023).

Four rotating roles: Warm-up captain; equipment lead; welcome host; media assistant—each connected to a badge criterion so recognition is immediate and behavior-based (Theeboom et al., 2021; UNESCO, 2025).



7.3.6. Embed trauma-aware, girl-friendly, and culturally responsive signals

Use predictable structure and choice: Post the plan, open/close the same way, create opt-out and quiet options, and use non-shaming feedback—core trauma-informed elements for sustaining participation (Hussey et al., 2023).

Offer girl-friendly formats: Women coaches, women-only hours, dress-code flexibility, explicit safety norms and reporting; European resources show format adjustments matter (Council of Europe, 2023; IOC, 2025).

Reduce language load: Demonstrate visually; use “show-me” checks; provide multilingual welcome sheets; visible safeguarding contacts—best practice in displacement contexts (UNHCR, 2024).

7.3.7. Connect sessions to real-world opportunities

Bring employers in lightly: A **15–20-minute** “day-in-the-life” talk and a mock “shift briefing” in Week 9 keeps relevance high without pressure (Paabort et al., 2023; Theeboom et al., 2021).

Create job-shadow tasters: Offer 2–4-hour shadows after eight consecutive attendances, using the skills passport as the ticket; this links recognition to opportunity (Theeboom et al., 2021).

Loop in PES/career services: Host CV and interview help in the sports venue right after sessions to reduce friction and demonstrate bridging to the labor market (Paabort et al., 2023).





7.3.8. Track engagement and adapt quickly

Lean indicators each week: Return-rate to next session (aim $\geq 50\%$, else revisit barriers and safety signals), punctuality/break-return times (align to buses), and badge distribution (add “quiet influence” badges if recognition clusters)—simple feedback loops that surface solvable issues early (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2022; DCMS, 2025; Theeboom et al., 2021).

Monthly pulse: Ask “What’s going well?” “What would you change?” “What would make it easier to attend next month?”—a light mechanism endorsed across youth participation research (DCMS, 2025).

7.3.9. Extended tools and templates

Ten-minute “TEAM mindset” routine: A 60-second check-in, 30-second skill naming, 6-minute constraint drill, and 2–3-minute reflect-to-work debrief; explicit reflection supports transfer (Gozzoli et al., 2023).

Micro-badge criteria (coach card): Observable criteria for reliability, communication, problem-solving, supportive voice, and calm reset; behavior-tied recognition is motivating and credible (Theeboom et al., 2021).

Skills passport one-pager: Five fields (communication, teamwork, reliability/punctuality, problem-solving, leadership) with one-sentence evidence per week and coach initials, translating to CV language (Gozzoli et al., 2023).

Employer mini-visit script: Four questions—typical shift, valued behaviors, first-week success, and “invite-back” criteria—so youth can hear employer language that maps to your badges/passports (Theeboom et al., 2021).

Social post cadence: Monday focus post; morning-of logistics post; post-session shout-outs with consented images; concrete logistics and positive identity cues sustain momentum (DCMS, 2025; YouthREX, 2024).



7.3.10. Troubleshooting guide

Attendance dips after Week 2: Align start times with buses, re-issue transport cards, offer a girls-only slot, increase peer-welcome duties (DCMS, 2025; UNHCR, 2024; Council of Europe, 2023).

A few confident youth dominate: Rotate micro-leadership; add “quiet influence” badges; use non-verbal communication drills to let quieter voices succeed (Theeboom et al., 2021).

Tension rises; drills derail: Use a pause-and-reset cue; run a 90-second restorative quick circle; revisit the charter and cooperative cues (MSU Institute for the Study of Youth Sports, 2024; Hemphill et al., 2018).

Girls stop attending after one visit: Women coaches, girls-only hour, modest kit policy, caregiver viewing window, explicit safeguarding signage (Council of Europe, 2023; IOC, 2025).

7.3.11. What success looks like at 10 weeks

Quantitative signals: Return-to-Week-3 $\geq 50\%$ and return-to-Week-10 $\geq 35\text{--}40\%$ (context-dependent), plus badge coverage $\geq 80\%$ so recognition is broadly distributed (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2022; Theeboom et al., 2021).

Qualitative signals: Youth can name two behaviors they improved and explain a work link (“I briefed clearly; I’d do that before the lunch rush”), and partners notice punctuality/communication/teamwork shifts—external validation reinforces relevance (Gozzoli et al., 2023; Theeboom et al., 2021).

7.4. Managing group dynamics

Why this section matters: Group dynamics are the engine of learning in team sports, and the same communication, conflict, and coordination patterns show up at work. When coaches structure the social climate intentionally, they can transform on-field tension into transferable, pro-social work behaviors while keeping participants safe. Evidence from youth-sport coaching and safe-sport literature shows that explicit norms, predictable routines, and skilled facilitation reduce harmful conflict and enable positive development (Storm, Larsen, & Henriksen, 2020; SIRC, 2025).



7.4.1. Foundations: culture, clarity, consistency

Start with culture on purpose: Post the team charter near the court, revisit it quickly each week, and make “how we play together” as visible as the technical plan. Organizational culture perspectives in youth sport highlight that shared norms and leadership behaviors shape the micro-climate where group dynamics unfold (Storm et al., 2020).

Make the invisible visible: Name the two or three social behaviors you are practicing in the session (for example, concision, turn-taking, de-escalation), and place them on the whiteboard alongside drills. This “intentional social curriculum” approach reduces ambiguity and improves climate (MSU Institute for the Study of Youth Sports, 2024; SIRC, 2025).

7.4.2. Early detection and prevention

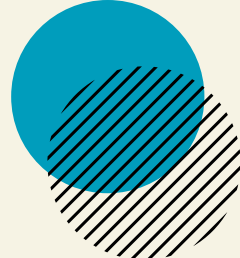

Scan for hotspots early: Watch the first five minutes for mismatches in skill or intensity, cliques, or youth who isolate; adjust teams and roles before frustration accumulates. Practical coaching notes emphasize that proactive adjustments prevent escalation and keep the focus on learning (MSU Institute for the Study of Youth Sports, 2024).

Normalize supportive talk: Adopt “assist behaviors” as scoreable actions (for example, a point for calling a cover or calming a teammate), because cooperative behaviors reduce the negative effects of competitive stressors (MSU Institute for the Study of Youth Sports, 2024).

7.4.3. A simple conflict playbook coaches can use on the court

Use a shared signal: Teach a visible **pause-and-reset** cue that every participant can invoke, and train the group to take one breath and “square up feet, soften voice” before speaking. Conflict education for coaches recommends simple shared scripts and cooperative behaviors to reduce escalation (MSU Institute for the Study of Youth Sports, 2024).





Coach's three-step script:

- **Name the behavior:** “Voices are up and we’re interrupting.”
- **State the impact:** “We’re missing calls and getting frustrated.”
- **Offer a reset:** “Thirty seconds to breathe; captains choose one change.”
- This aligns with guidance to emphasize specific behaviors and common goals over personal attributions (MSU Institute for the Study of Youth Sports, 2024).

Caution on unintended effects: Poorly facilitated team environments can also reinforce aggression, especially among boys in contact and high-stakes settings; set pro-social norms and reflective debriefs to mitigate this risk (Newman, Magier, Kimiecik, & Burns, 2021; SIRC, 2025).



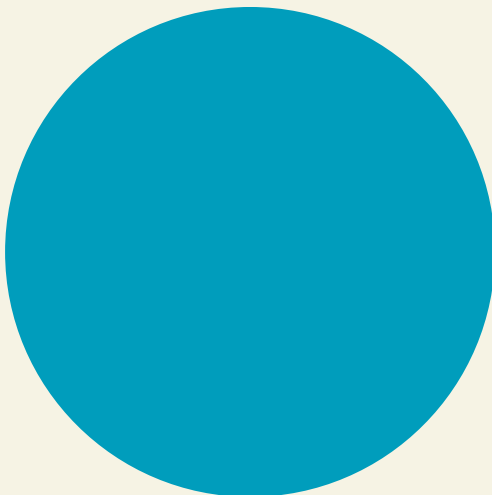
7.4.4. Restorative micro-circles for quick repair

Why restorative: Handling conflict as a relationship-repair opportunity builds perspective-taking, accountability, and cohesion. The Restorative Youth Sports model shows that brief, structured conversations strengthen relationships and reduce harm in youth-sport settings (Hemphill, Janke, Gordon, & Farrar, 2018).

Run a 90-second quick circle:

- **What happened?**
- **Who was affected?**
- **What do we need now?**
- **What is one repair step?**

Link repair steps to the team charter and resume play with a concrete action (for example, role swap, behavioral cue, time-out protocol) (Hemphill et al., 2018).



7.4.5. Make the work transfer explicit

Name the workplace behavior: After each incident, ask, “How would we handle this on a shift?” and map the same steps to time-critical service settings (briefing, listening, clarifying roles). Research on sport-to-work transfer indicates that explicit reflection enhances generalization of skills (Gozzoli, Palumbo, & Zanolli, 2023; Theeboom, Coalter, Taylor, Commers, & Derom, 2021).

Record one sentence: Capture a single sentence in the skills passport (“I repaired a conflict by naming impact and proposing a change”), which later becomes a CV bullet or interview example (Theeboom et al., 2021).

7.4.6. Supporting anxious or less confident participants


Design for predictability and choice: Post the session plan, open and close the same way, begin with low-arousal warm-ups, and provide opt-out roles and a quiet zone. Trauma-informed youth-sport research stresses predictability, agency, and non-shaming feedback to sustain participation (Hussey, Blom, Huysmans, Voelker, Moore, & Mulvihill, 2023; CTIPP, 2024).

Mind the power dynamics: Keep 1:1 interactions observable/audible, avoid private messaging on personal accounts, and rotate influence through micro-leadership roles. Safe-sport reviews and trauma-informed guidance warn about power imbalances and stress organizational accountability (SIRC, 2025; Centre for Sport and Human Rights, 2026).

Remember systemic trauma: Adopt top-down, organization-wide trauma-informed approaches (policies, training, environment) to prevent harm and support recovery, not just isolated coach skills (McMahon, McGannon, Zehntner, & Hämäläinen, 2025).

7.4.7. Safeguarding overlays you should never skip

Post your code of conduct and pathways to help: Display a multilingual “How to get help” poster with the safeguarding lead’s contacts, anonymous reporting options, and a simple “recognize → record → report → refer” flow. Safe-sport literature recommends proactive, visible reporting routes and clear accountability (SIRC, 2025).



Align with inclusion guidance in displacement contexts: Make barriers and protection concerns discussable from day one, and ensure referrals work with local services for health, psychosocial support, gender-based violence, and legal protection (UNHCR, 2024).

7.4.8. De-escalation language bank for coaches

Use short, non-shaming cues:

- “Pause and breathe, then try again.”
- “Say what you need in five words.”
- “What is one change we will try?”

Coaching briefs suggest concise, behavior-oriented language and cooperative frames reduce defensiveness and keep the session moving (MSU Institute for the Study of Youth Sports, 2024).

Redirect identity attacks:

- “We talk about actions, not personalities.”
- “Describe the play, not the person.”
- This reframing counters attribution errors that often inflame conflicts (MSU Institute for the Study of Youth Sports, 2024).


7.4.9. Risk scenarios and how to handle them

A small group monopolizes the ball and others stop calling: Pause and reset, rotate roles, and add a constraint that requires assists to score, which shifts attention to team coordination (MSU Institute for the Study of Youth Sports, 2024).

A hard foul triggers shouting and posturing: Use the group signal, run a 90-second quick circle, and re-enter play with a “repair action” (for example, captains call first three plays); restorative responses reduce harm and model repair (Hemphill et al., 2018).

A newcomer withdraws and avoids drills: Offer a buddy, a quiet observation role with a guaranteed re-entry point, and a low-arousal station; trauma-informed guidance prioritizes agency and gradual exposure (Hussey et al., 2023).

You suspect bullying or harassment: Follow the incident flow (recognize → record → report → refer), notify the safeguarding lead the same day, and do not investigate alone; this aligns with safe-sport standards (SIRC, 2025).



7.4.10. Monitoring and learning for group dynamics

Use three lean indicators:

- **Incidents per 10 hours** (brief de-escalations + restorative circles).
- **Repair completion rate** (percentage of conflicts with a stated repair step).
- **Perceived safety score** (simple 1–5 pulse at session end).

Safe-sport reviews encourage practical indicators that track climate and response quality rather than only counting severe incidents (SIRC, 2025).

7.4.11. A minimal staff training pathway

Train for three things:

- **Conflict basics** (cooperative frames, shared scripts, restorative micro-circles).
- **Trauma awareness** (predictability, choice, arousal management, referral).
- **Safeguarding** (codes of conduct, reporting, and boundaries in digital and in-person communication).

Structured, periodic training at the organizational level is central to trauma-informed safe-sport environments (CTIPP, 2024; McMahon et al., 2025).



Appendix A. Team charter template (one page for your venue wall)

Our values: We listen. We include. We show up.

What this looks like today:

- Communication: Short calls, no talk over.
- Effort: Everyone gets a touch; assists count.
- Safety: "Pause-and-reset" on conflict.
- If conflict happens: Quick circle → name impact → agree one repair → back to play.

(Aligns with guidance to make norms explicit and actionable.) (Storm et al., 2020; SIRC, 2025).

Appendix B. Conflict debrief card (90 seconds)

What happened?

Who was affected?

What do we need now?

What is one repair step?

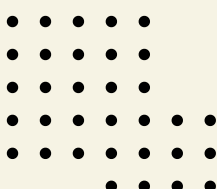
(Restoration modeled to support cohesion.) (Hemphill et al., 2018).

Appendix C. Incident reporting flow (for staff)

Recognize → Record → Report → Refer.

- Recognize: Concern or allegation.
- Record: Factual notes, date/time, exact words.
- Report: Inform safeguarding lead within 24 hours (immediately if urgent).
- Refer: Safeguarding lead activates external pathways as needed.

(Consistent with safe-sport standards.) (SIRC, 2025).



Appendix D. De-escalation language bank (coach pocket sheet)

Pause and breathe: “Let’s reset voices and posture.”

Describe behavior: “Say what you saw in five words.”

Offer change: “What is one adjustment we’ll try now?”

(Concise, behavior-focused cues support regulation.) (MSU Institute for the Study of Youth Sports, 2024).

Appendix E. Session plan overlay for dynamics

List the social skills of the day next to drills (for example, turn-taking; concision; repair).

Pre-assign micro-roles (welcomer; equipment lead; captain).

Plan a reflective question tied to workplace behavior.

(Explicit intent improves transfer and climate.) (Gozzoli et al., 2023; Theeboom et al., 2021).





*CONNECTING SPORTS
TO JOBS: WORKING
WITH EMPLOYERS*



8.1 Why Involve Employers?

Purpose of this section

This section explains the rationale for involving employers in sports-based employability programmes. It highlights the mutual benefits for young people and businesses and clarifies why employer engagement is a critical component of the TEAM methodology, rather than an add-on activity.

The involvement of employers is a core pillar of the TEAM project and a key factor in ensuring that sports-based learning translates into real employability outcomes. While team sports provide an effective environment for developing soft skills such as communication, teamwork, leadership, and resilience, the active participation of employers helps bridge the gap between skill development and labour market integration. Research on work-based learning and school-to-work transitions emphasises that direct engagement with employers significantly enhances employability pathways and labour market readiness (OECD, 2010; Cedefop, 2013).

Employers play a crucial role in validating the relevance of the skills developed through sports. By engaging with young participants, businesses are able to recognise how behaviours demonstrated on the sports field—such as collaboration, accountability, adaptability, and problem-solving—correspond directly to workplace expectations. This validation increases the credibility of the training in the eyes of both participants and the labour market, aligning with broader competence-based employability frameworks within the European context (Council of the European Union, 2018).



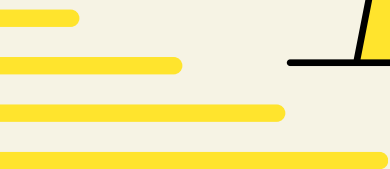


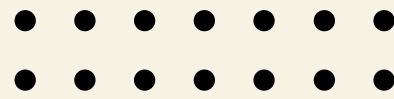
From the perspective of young people, especially those from underrepresented or disadvantaged backgrounds, direct contact with employers demystifies the world of work. Many participants have limited professional networks, lack confidence in formal recruitment processes, or have had little exposure to employer expectations. Employer involvement provides opportunities to gain insight into real workplace environments, understand recruitment pathways, and build confidence through informal interaction and experiential learning, factors shown to strengthen transition outcomes for young people (Schoon & Bynner, 2019).

For employers, participation in the TEAM project offers access to motivated young people who have already demonstrated key soft skills in a practical context. Sports-based activities allow employers to observe these skills in action rather than relying solely on CVs or interviews. This approach supports more inclusive recruitment practices and enables businesses to identify potential talent that may otherwise be overlooked.

Importantly, employer engagement within TEAM is not limited to recruitment outcomes. It also contributes to long-term collaboration between youth organisations, sports providers, and the business community. By fostering sustained relationships through job shadowing, mentoring, and networking activities, the project strengthens local employability ecosystems and promotes shared responsibility for youth inclusion and workforce development.

In line with the objectives of the Erasmus+ Sport Cooperation Partnerships, the involvement of employers enhances the sustainability and impact of the project. It ensures that sports-based employability training is aligned with real labour market needs and that the skills developed by participants remain relevant beyond the duration of the project.





8.2 Types of Collaboration with Employers

Purpose of this section

This section presents the main types of collaboration between youth participants and employers within the TEAM project. Each collaboration format is described in detail, outlining its objectives, structure, learning value, and contribution to employability outcomes. The aim is to provide practical guidance for youth workers and organisations on how to implement meaningful employer engagement activities.

8.2.1 Job Shadowing

Description and objectives

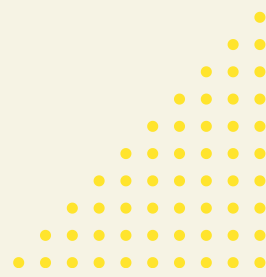
Job shadowing involves young participants spending a short, structured period observing employees in a real workplace environment. Within the TEAM project, job shadowing is designed to help participants understand daily work routines, organisational culture, and the practical application of soft skills developed through sports (OECD, 2010; Cedefop, 2013).


The main objectives of job shadowing are to:

- expose participants to real working environments,
- reduce anxiety and uncertainty related to employment,
- support informed career decision-making,
- strengthen the link between sports-based learning and professional practice.

Structure and implementation

Job shadowing activities are typically short-term (half-day or full-day) and focus on observation rather than performance. Participants are paired with a designated employee or mentor who explains tasks, roles, and workplace expectations.





To maximise learning outcomes, job shadowing should be:

- preceded by preparation sessions (clarifying objectives and behaviour expectations),
- guided by clear observation tasks (e.g. communication styles, teamwork, problem-solving),
- followed by reflection activities linking observations to employability skills.

Employability value

Job shadowing allows participants to see how communication, cooperation, responsibility, and adaptability are enacted in professional contexts. For many young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, this may be their first direct exposure to a workplace, making job shadowing a powerful confidence-building and motivational experience (Schoon & Bynner, 2019).

8.2.2 Company Visits

Description and objectives

Company visits offer a structured opportunity for groups of participants to visit an organisation, learn about its operations, and interact with employees and management. Unlike job shadowing, company visits are group-based and focus on broader organisational understanding.

The objectives of company visits include:


- familiarising participants with different sectors and roles,
- increasing awareness of employment pathways,
- promoting dialogue between youth and employers in an informal setting.

Structure and implementation

A typical company visit includes:

- an introduction to the organisation and its mission,
- a tour of the workplace,
- interactive discussions with staff about roles, skills, and career paths.

Facilitators should encourage participants to prepare questions in advance and actively engage during discussions. Reflection activities after the visit help participants connect what they observed to skills developed during sports-based sessions.





Employability value

Company visits broaden participants' understanding of the labour market and help them recognise the relevance of employability skills across different sectors. They also support career exploration and challenge stereotypes or misconceptions about certain professions (OECD, 2010).

8.2.3 Joint Events and Sports–Business Activities

Description and objectives

Joint events bring together young participants and employers through shared activities, often combining sports-based elements with networking or team-building exercises. These events aim to create informal, low-pressure environments where interaction occurs naturally.

The objectives of joint events are to:

- foster mutual understanding between youth and employers,
- allow employers to observe soft skills in action,
- promote inclusive and relationship-based engagement.

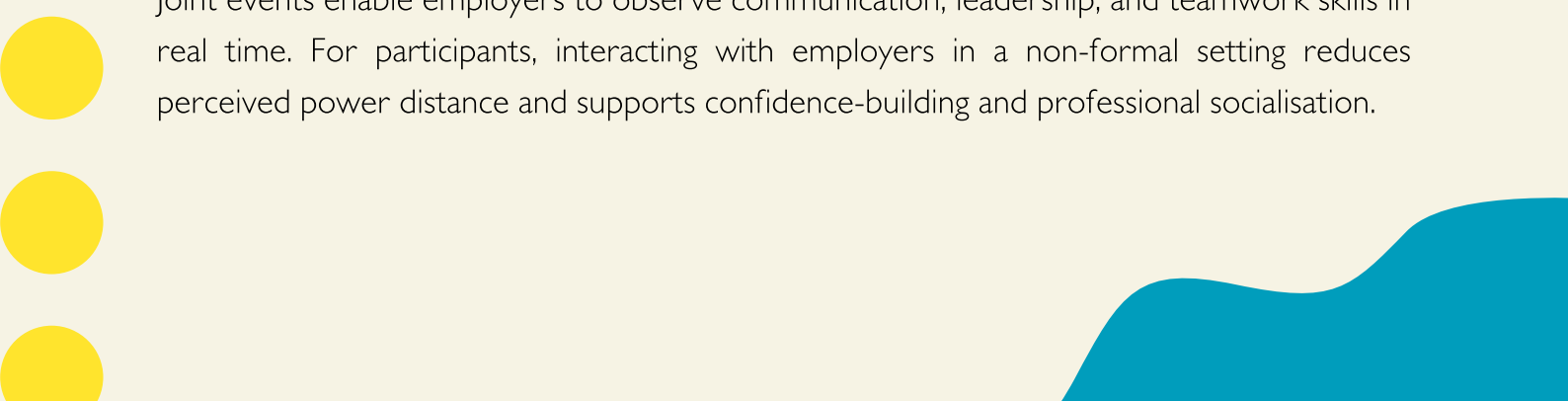
Structure and implementation

Joint events may include:

- mixed teams of youth and employers participating in sports activities,
- short challenges or cooperative tasks,
- facilitated reflection linking teamwork to professional collaboration.

These events should prioritise interaction and cooperation over competition, ensuring that all participants feel comfortable engaging.

Employability value



Joint events enable employers to observe communication, leadership, and teamwork skills in real time. For participants, interacting with employers in a non-formal setting reduces perceived power distance and supports confidence-building and professional socialisation.



8.2.4 Employers as Guest Speakers and Contributors

Description and objectives

Inviting employers to participate as guest speakers during training sessions allows participants to gain direct insight into labour market expectations, recruitment processes, and workplace realities.

The objectives of this collaboration format are to:

- provide realistic information about employment pathways,
- align sports-based learning with employer expectations,
- encourage dialogue and questions in a safe learning environment.

Structure and implementation

Employer contributions may include:

- short presentations on career journeys and organisational values,
- discussions on the importance of soft skills,
- Q&A sessions with participants.

Facilitators should brief employers in advance to ensure that contributions are accessible, inclusive, and aligned with the employability focus of the programme.

Employability value

Employer talks help participants better understand recruitment criteria and workplace expectations. They also reinforce the relevance of the skills developed through sports, increasing participants' motivation and engagement (OECD, 2010; Council of the European Union, 2018).

Key Considerations for Effective Collaboration

Across all collaboration formats, successful employer engagement requires:

- clear communication of roles and expectations,
- preparation of participants and employers,
- structured reflection to support learning transfer,
- alignment with inclusion and employability objectives.





8.3 Translating Sports Experiences into CVs and Interviews

Purpose of this section

This section provides detailed guidance on how to support young participants in translating sports-based experiences into language that is meaningful and recognisable in recruitment contexts. It focuses on helping participants articulate soft skills developed through team sports in CVs, cover letters, and job interviews, particularly for those with limited formal work experience.

8.3.1 Why Translation Matters for Employability

Many young people, especially those from disadvantaged or underrepresented backgrounds, possess strong transferable skills but struggle to communicate them effectively to employers. Participation in team sports often develops key employability competences, yet these are frequently undervalued or poorly expressed during recruitment processes (Yorke, 2006; Council of the European Union, 2018).

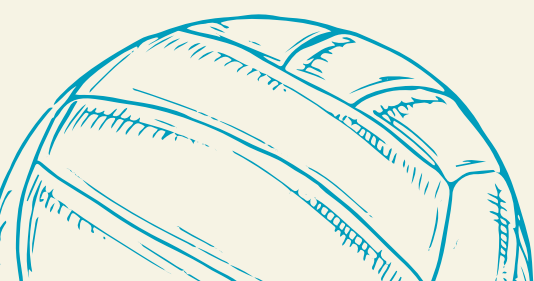
Within the TEAM project, translation is understood as a guided learning process that helps participants:

- recognise their own skills,
- name these skills using labour-market language,
- provide concrete examples drawn from sports-based experiences.

Without this translation step, the employability potential of sports-based learning risks remaining implicit and invisible to employers.

8.3.2 Identifying Employability Skills Developed Through Sports

Facilitators should first support participants in identifying the skills they have developed through TEAM activities. This process should be reflective and participatory, encouraging participants to analyse their own behaviour rather than passively receiving labels.





Examples of sports-based behaviours and corresponding employability skills include:

- Coordinating with teammates under pressure → **teamwork and collaboration**
- Calling the ball and giving instructions → **clear communication**
- Adapting to new roles or rules → **flexibility and adaptability**
- Supporting teammates after mistakes → **emotional intelligence and resilience**
- Taking responsibility for team outcomes → **accountability and reliability**

This step helps participants move from “what I did” to “what skill I used”.

8.3.3 Translating Sports Experiences into CV Language

Many participants lack formal work experience and may feel discouraged when preparing a CV. Sports-based employability programmes offer an opportunity to reposition sports participation as a legitimate source of skill development (Coalter, 2013; Yorke, 2006).

Facilitators should guide participants to:

- describe sports experiences using action-oriented language,
- focus on behaviours and outcomes rather than the sport itself,
- align descriptions with common employability competencies.

Example CV translations:

- “Participated in volleyball training” →
- “Developed teamwork and communication skills through structured volleyball-based training activities.”
- “Team captain during sports sessions” →
- “Demonstrated leadership and coordination by supporting team organisation and communication during group activities.”
- “Played in mixed teams” →
- “Worked effectively in diverse teams, adapting communication and collaboration styles to different group needs.”

By practising this translation, participants learn that employability is not defined solely by paid work experience.





8.3.4 Supporting Interview Preparation Using Sports-Based Examples

Interviews often require candidates to provide concrete examples of skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, or handling pressure. Sports-based experiences provide rich, authentic material for such responses, particularly when participants lack formal work histories.

Facilitators should support participants in structuring interview answers using simple frameworks (e.g. situation–action–result), drawing directly from sports activities.

Example interview prompts and responses:

Question: “Can you give an example of working in a team?”

Response:

“During a volleyball session, our team struggled with communication under pressure. I took responsibility for calling plays clearly and encouraging others. As a result, our coordination improved and we completed the task successfully.”

This approach builds confidence and coherence in self-presentation (Yorke, 2006).

8.3.5 Bridging the Gap Between Sports Language and Employer Expectations

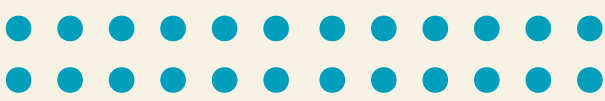
A key challenge for participants is understanding the difference between informal sports language and professional recruitment language. Facilitators play a critical role in helping participants adapt their vocabulary without losing authenticity.

This involves:

- replacing informal expressions with professional terminology,
- focusing on learning outcomes rather than performance,
- avoiding exaggeration while maintaining confidence.

For example, “We won the game” becomes “We worked collaboratively to achieve shared objectives under time constraints.”





8.3.6 Empowering Participants with Limited Work Experience

For participants with little or no employment history, sports-based experiences can become a central narrative of competence and growth. Facilitators should actively validate these experiences and counter deficit-based self-perceptions.

This process helps participants:

- recognise their existing strengths,
- reduce anxiety related to recruitment,
- approach job applications with greater self-efficacy.

Special attention should be given to NEET participants, migrants, and young people who may face structural barriers to employment, ensuring that translation activities are inclusive and empowering rather than evaluative (Schoon & Bynner, 2019).

8.3.7 Role of Facilitators and Employers in the Translation Process

Effective translation of sports experiences into employability outcomes requires collaboration between facilitators and employers. Employers can:

- validate the relevance of sports-based examples,
- provide feedback on CV language and interview responses,
- reinforce the connection between observed behaviours and workplace expectations.

Facilitators, in turn, ensure that this feedback is constructive, accessible, and aligned with participants' learning journeys.

Key Takeaways for Practice

- Translation is a core employability skill, not an optional activity
- Sports experiences must be made visible and legible to employers
- Structured reflection is essential for meaningful skill articulation
- Sports-based examples can compensate for limited work experience
- Facilitator support is crucial in building confidence and clarity



8.4 Running a Networking and Job-Shadowing Event

Purpose of this section

This section provides step-by-step guidance on how to design, implement, and follow up a networking or job-shadowing event within the TEAM project. It aims to support youth workers and organisations in creating structured, inclusive, and meaningful interactions between young participants and employers, ensuring that learning outcomes are maximised and directly linked to employability development.

8.4.1 Rationale and Learning Value

Networking and job-shadowing events are key moments where sports-based employability training connects directly with the labour market (OECD, 2010; Cedefop, 2013). These events provide participants with real-life exposure to professional environments and employer expectations, while allowing employers to engage with young people in a non-traditional, skills-focused context.

For participants, especially those with limited work experience, such events:

- reduce fear and uncertainty around employment,
- strengthen professional confidence,
- support the transition from training to real-world application.

For employers, these events offer opportunities to:

- observe employability skills in practice,
- engage with motivated young people,
- contribute to inclusive recruitment and local workforce development.

8.4.2 Preparation Phase: Before the Event

a) Defining objectives and format

Before organising the event, facilitators should clearly define:

- the purpose of the event (networking, job shadowing, mentoring, or a combination),
- the target group and number of participants,
- the level of employer involvement required.

Clear objectives ensure that the event remains focused on employability outcomes rather than becoming a purely social activity.



b) Preparing participants

Participant preparation is essential for meaningful engagement. Preparation sessions should focus on:

- clarifying the purpose of the event,
- discussing expected behaviours and professional conduct,
- revisiting employability skills developed through sports,
- practising self-introduction and basic communication with employers.

Special attention should be given to participants who may experience anxiety, language barriers, or low confidence. Preparation should be supportive and empowering, not evaluative.

c) Preparing employers

Employers should be briefed in advance on:

- the objectives of the TEAM project,
- the profile of participants,
- the role they are expected to play during the event.

Facilitators should emphasise that participants are learners, not job applicants, and that the focus is on dialogue, observation, and mutual understanding rather than assessment.

8.4.3 Implementation Phase: During the Event

a) Suggested agenda for a networking event

A structured agenda helps create a safe and productive environment:

1. Welcome and introduction to the TEAM project
2. Ice-breaking or sports-based activity (optional, to reduce formality)
3. Employer introductions and short presentations
4. Small-group discussions or guided networking
5. Reflection and closing remarks

Facilitators should actively support interaction, ensuring balanced participation and preventing domination by more confident individuals.





b) Suggested structure for job-shadowing activities

Job-shadowing activities should include:

- a clear introduction to the workplace,
- observation of daily tasks and routines,
- informal discussion with employees,
- time for questions and reflection.

Participants should be encouraged to observe communication styles, teamwork, problem-solving, and organisational culture, rather than technical details alone.

c) Role of facilitators during the event

Facilitators act as mediators and supporters. Their role includes:

- monitoring group dynamics,
- supporting participants who appear withdrawn or overwhelmed,
- ensuring respectful and inclusive interaction,
- keeping the focus on learning and employability.

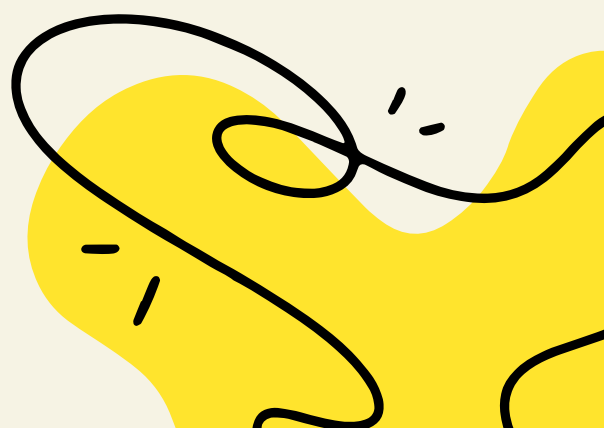
8.4.4 Reflection and Learning Transfer

Reflection is a critical component of both networking and job-shadowing events. Without structured reflection, learning risks remaining implicit (Kolb, 1984).

Facilitators should organise reflection activities that:

- help participants identify observed employability skills,
- link observations to their own sports-based experiences,
- encourage comparison between training and workplace environments.

Reflection can be conducted through group discussions, short written exercises, or one-to-one conversations, depending on group needs.



8.4.5 Follow-Up Phase: After the Event

a) Participant follow-up

After the event, facilitators should support participants in:

- summarising what they learned,
- updating CVs or personal profiles using new insights,
- identifying next steps (applications, training, mentoring).

This phase reinforces learning and supports longer-term employability outcomes.

b) Employer follow-up

Maintaining employer engagement is essential for sustainability. Follow-up actions may include:

- collecting employer feedback,
- sharing participant reflections and outcomes,
- exploring opportunities for continued collaboration (mentoring, internships, repeat events).

8.4.6 Inclusion and Safeguarding Considerations

Networking and job-shadowing events must be designed with inclusion and safeguarding in mind. Facilitators should:

- ensure accessibility of venues,
- address language or cultural barriers,
- establish clear boundaries and reporting mechanisms,
- ensure that participation is voluntary and supported.

Special care should be taken when working with vulnerable participants to ensure that experiences are positive and non-exploitative.



8.4.7 Measuring Impact and Documenting Outcomes

To support quality assurance and reporting, organisations should document:

- number and profile of participants,
- number of employers involved,
- qualitative feedback from participants and employers,
- examples of learning transfer or follow-up actions.

This information contributes to monitoring, evaluation, and dissemination activities at project level.

Key Takeaways for Practice

- Preparation is essential for meaningful engagement
- Events must be structured, inclusive, and learner-centred
- Reflection and follow-up are as important as the event itself
- Facilitators play a central role in mediating youth–employer interaction
- Sustainable impact depends on continued collaboration





*MONITORING,
EVALUATION AND
QUALITY IMPROVEMENT*



Monitoring and evaluation are essential components of sports-based employability programs such as TEAM. They ensure that activities are effective, inclusive, and aligned with their intended learning outcomes. Beyond measuring participation, evaluation helps facilitators understand how young people develop key competencies such as leadership, communication, and decision-making. It also supports continuous improvement, ensuring that training remains relevant to participant needs and labor market expectations.

This chapter provides practical tools and guidance for coaches, youth workers, and partner organizations to monitor progress, evaluate outcomes, and improve the quality of sports-based employability training. The approach is designed to be simple, accessible, and aligned with European non-formal education principles.

9.1. Why Evaluation Matters

Evaluation plays a critical role in understanding the impact of sports-based learning on youth employability and personal development. It helps facilitators and organizations assess whether activities are achieving their intended goals and provides evidence of learning outcomes for participants, stakeholders, and funding bodies.

In sports-based programs, learning often happens through experience rather than formal instruction. As a result, evaluation helps make these learning outcomes visible. Participants may develop leadership, teamwork, and communication skills without immediately recognizing them. Structured evaluation allows facilitators to guide reflection and help participants identify and articulate their competencies.

Evaluation also supports accountability and transparency. European youth and education programs emphasize quality assurance and measurable outcomes. By collecting relevant data, organizations can demonstrate the value of sports-based learning to employers, policymakers, and educational institutions. This strengthens the recognition of non-formal learning and supports young people in presenting their skills in job applications, interviews, and training opportunities.

Equally important, evaluation supports continuous improvement. It helps facilitators identify what works well and what can be improved. For example, if participants show low engagement in certain activities, facilitators can adapt session design, communication methods, or group structure. This ensures that the program remains responsive, inclusive, and effective.



Finally, evaluation empowers participants themselves. When young people reflect on their progress, they develop greater self-awareness and confidence. This supports lifelong learning and aligns with European priorities for active participation, employability, and social inclusion.

9.2. Tools for Coaches and Youth Workers

Effective evaluation does not require complex systems. Simple, practical tools can provide valuable insights into participant progress and program quality. The following tools are designed for easy use by coaches and youth workers in sports-based employability programs.

Pre- and Post- Self-Assessment Questionnaire

Self-assessment questionnaires help participants reflect on their skills and track their own development over time. These questionnaires are typically completed at the beginning and end of the program.

The purpose is not to test participants but to support self-reflection. Participants rate their confidence in areas such as leadership, communication, teamwork, and decision-making. Comparing pre- and post-program responses helps participants recognize their progress and helps facilitators assess overall impact.

Example Self-Assessment Areas:

| Skill Area | Example Question | Rating Scale |
|-----------------|--|--|
| Leadership | I feel confident taking initiative in group situations | 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree) |
| Decision-making | I can make decisions quickly when needed | 1–5 |
| Communication | I communicate clearly with others in a team | 1–5 |
| Teamwork | I contribute positively to team goals | 1–5 |
| Confidence | I feel confident in my abilities | 1–5 |

These questionnaires can be paper-based or digital and should take no more than 5–10 minutes to complete.



Observation Checklist for Soft Skills

Observation is one of the most effective ways to assess soft skill development in sports-based learning environments. Unlike written tests or surveys, observation allows coaches and youth workers to identify real behaviors demonstrated during activities such as drills, teamwork exercises, and game situations.

In the context of the TEAM project, observation focuses on employability-related behaviors such as leadership, initiative, communication, teamwork, and decision-making under pressure. These behaviors can be observed directly during basketball activities and provide valuable insights into how participants interact with others, respond to challenges, and contribute to team objectives.

The checklist below is designed as a practical tool that facilitators can use during or immediately after sessions. It focuses on observable actions rather than personal judgments. Facilitators are encouraged to take brief notes and record examples when specific behaviors occur.

Observation does not aim to “grade” participants but to support reflection, feedback, and continuous improvement of both the participants and the training sessions.

This method focuses on observable behaviors rather than subjective impressions.



How to use the observation checklist:

Facilitators can use this checklist in several ways:

- During basketball drills or games
- Immediately after activities while reflecting on participant behavior
- During debrief sessions to support discussion
- As part of ongoing participant monitoring across several sessions

It is recommended that facilitators focus on 3–5 participants per session to ensure meaningful observations.

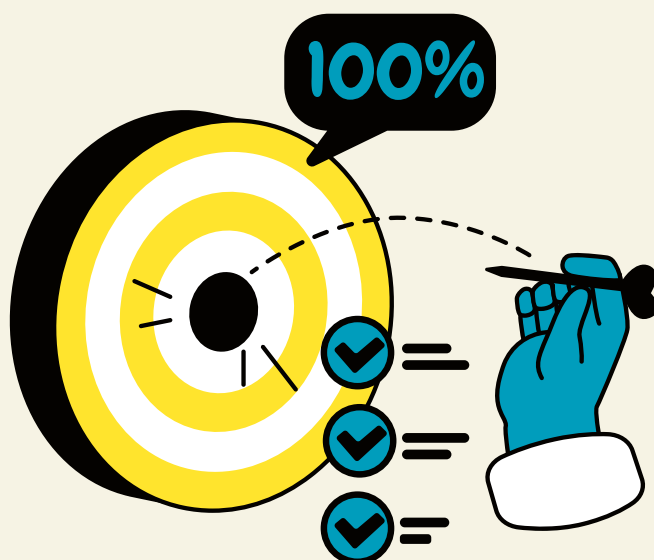
The checklist can also be used collaboratively when multiple coaches or youth workers are present.

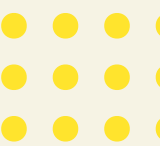
Reference framework

The observation approach presented in this checklist is informed by the following frameworks and methodologies:

- European Commission (2018). Key Competences for Lifelong Learning.
- Youthpass. Competence Framework for Non-Formal Learning in Youth Work.
- Kolb, D. (1984). *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*.
- Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio methods for competence observation.

These frameworks emphasize learning through experience, reflection, and behavioral observation, which align strongly with sports-based employability training.

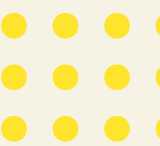




Example Observation Checklist:

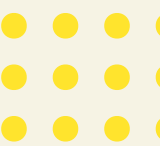
| Skill | Observable Behavior | Observed (Yes/No) | Comments |
|---------------|--|-------------------|----------|
| Leadership | Takes initiative during drills or games without being prompted. Organizes teammates by suggesting strategies or positions. Encourages others after mistakes. Demonstrates responsibility by helping coordinate team actions. Shows confidence when making decisions that affect the group. | | |
| Initiative | Volunteers to participate or lead an activity. Reacts quickly when an opportunity appears during play. Takes action instead of waiting for instructions from others. Demonstrates willingness to try new approaches or solutions during challenges. | | |
| Communication | Gives clear verbal instructions to teammates (e.g., calling plays, directing movement). Uses supportive language during the activity. Maintains eye contact and active listening during team discussions. Uses non-verbal communication such as gestures or signals effectively during play. | | |
| Teamwork | Cooperates with teammates to achieve shared goals. Shares the ball and involves others during gameplay. Shows respect for teammates' roles and contributions. Supports others when they struggle or make mistakes. Demonstrates trust and willingness to collaborate. | | |





| | | | |
|-------------------------|--|--|--|
| Decision-making | Makes quick decisions during gameplay (e.g., passing, shooting, defending). Chooses appropriate actions based on the situation. Demonstrates awareness of teammates and opponents before acting. Accepts responsibility for decisions made during play. | | |
| Focus and concentration | Remains attentive during drills and instructions. Maintains concentration despite distractions or pressure. Recovers quickly after mistakes and continues participating actively. Demonstrates consistent engagement throughout the session. | | |
| Emotional control | Manages frustration or disappointment in a constructive way. Responds calmly to mistakes or competitive pressure. Shows respect toward teammates and opponents even during challenging moments. Accepts feedback positively. | | |
| Problem-solving | Suggests solutions when the team faces challenges during activities. Adjusts strategies based on changing situations in the game. Reflects on mistakes and attempts alternative approaches. Demonstrates creativity in finding ways to overcome obstacles. | | |

This tool helps facilitators identify progress, support individual participants, and adjust session design if needed.



Attendance and Demographic Form


Attendance tracking helps monitor participation levels and identify patterns such as regular attendance, drop-out rates, or barriers to participation. Demographic information helps ensure inclusiveness and supports reporting requirements for European programs.

Example Attendance Form:

| No | Participant name | Age | Gender | Session Date | Attendance (Present/ Absent) |
|----|------------------|-----|--------|--------------|------------------------------|
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This information helps organizations understand who is participating and whether the program is reaching its intended target groups.





9.3. Collecting Stories and Qualitative Feedback

While quantitative tools provide structured data, qualitative feedback provides deeper insight into participant experiences and personal development. Stories, reflections, and testimonials help capture the human impact of the program.

Qualitative feedback helps answer important questions such as:

- How do participants feel about their progress?
- What changes have they experienced?
- How do they relate sports experiences to real-life situations?

Short Interviews

Short interviews with participants can provide valuable insight into their experiences. These interviews can be informal and conducted individually or in small groups.

Example Questions:

- What did you learn from participating in the basketball sessions?
- Can you describe a moment when you showed leadership?
- How has the program affected your confidence?

These interviews help participants reflect and help facilitators understand program impact.

Reflection Journals

Participants may be encouraged to record short reflections after sessions. This can be written, audio-recorded, or shared verbally.

Reflection prompts may include:


- What did I do well today?
- What challenged me?
- What did I learn about myself?

Reflection supports self-awareness and reinforces learning.

Photo and Video Testimonials

Visual documentation can be a powerful way to capture learning experiences. Photos or short video testimonials can illustrate participant engagement, teamwork, and leadership in action.

These materials can also support project dissemination and demonstrate impact to stakeholders, while respecting privacy and consent requirements under European data protection standards (GDPR).





9.4. Using Feedback to Improve Sessions

Collecting feedback is only valuable if it is used to improve program quality. Facilitators and organizations should regularly review evaluation results and use them to adapt their approach.

Continuous improvement ensures that the program remains effective, relevant, and participant-centered.

Improving Session Design

Evaluation may show that some activities are more effective than others. Facilitators can adjust drills, timing, or group structure based on participant engagement and observed outcomes.

For example:

- If participants struggle with decision-making, facilitators can introduce simpler exercises before increasing complexity.
- If engagement is low, facilitators can introduce more interactive or cooperative activities.

Improving Reflection and Learning

Feedback may indicate that participants do not fully understand the connection between sports and employability. Facilitators can improve debrief questions and reflection methods to strengthen this connection.

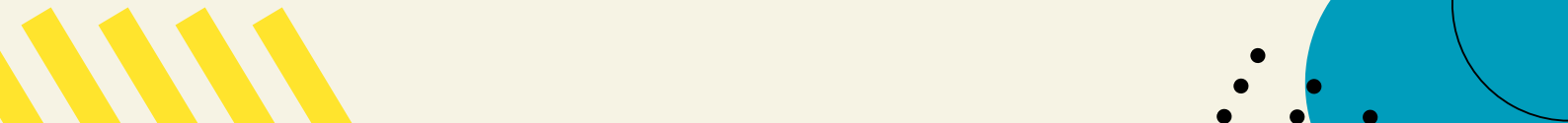
For example:

- Using more concrete examples from workplace situations
- Encouraging peer reflection and discussion
- Providing real-life scenarios relevant to participants

Improving Inclusion and Recruitment

Attendance and demographic data may reveal participation gaps among certain groups. Organizations can use this information to improve outreach strategies and ensure inclusive participation.

This may include:

- Partnering with local schools, youth centers, or community organizations
 - Adjusting session schedules
 - Providing additional support for participants facing barriers
- 

Supporting Organizational Learning and Quality Assurance

Evaluation also supports long-term program development. Organizations can use collected data to improve future programs, share best practices, and contribute to policy development.

This aligns with European quality standards for youth work and strengthens the recognition of sports-based learning as a valuable tool for employability and social inclusion.

Chapter Conclusion

Monitoring, evaluation, and quality improvement are essential for ensuring the effectiveness and sustainability of sports-based employability programs. Through simple and practical tools, coaches and youth workers can track participant progress, support learning, and continuously improve their practice.

Evaluation makes learning visible, supports participant development, and strengthens the credibility of sports-based education. By combining quantitative tools such as questionnaires and attendance tracking with qualitative methods such as interviews and reflection, organizations can gain a comprehensive understanding of program impact.

Ultimately, evaluation is not only about measuring outcomes but about supporting growth, improving quality, and empowering young people to recognize and develop the skills they need for their future education and employment.



*ANNEXES
REFERENCES*





This chapter contains all the practical tools that trainers, coaches and youth workers need to plan, deliver, monitor and document TEAM sessions. Each annex is a ready to use template. You do not need to adapt the format before using it. Fill in the relevant fields before each session, during delivery, or immediately after, depending on which document you are working with.

The annexes are designed to work together. A trainer who completes the session plan before a session, uses the observation checklist during it, and collects self assessment forms at the end has everything they need to track participant progress, identify who needs additional support and report accurately on the session to the wider project team. Each document is also useful on its own. An NGO partner running a one off event can use the consent form and the safeguarding checklist without needing the full session plan. A youth worker doing a quick reflection activity can use just the self assessment tool.

All templates in this chapter are blank so that they can be printed, photocopied and used repeatedly. Digital versions are available on the TEAM project website. The final annex in this chapter lists all key links and resources associated with the project, as well as a curated selection of external sources covering sports coaching, youth work, employability and safeguarding.





Annex I: Session Plan Template

Every TEAM session should be planned in advance using this template. A well prepared session plan is not a bureaucratic exercise. It is the difference between a session that has a clear learning intention and one that relies on whatever happens to emerge from the sport activity. The template follows the four phase structure described in Chapter 3: warm up, core activity, debrief and action planning. It prompts trainers to think through each phase before the session begins, including the debrief questions they will ask and the workplace connection they want to draw out.

Completing this template before each session also creates a record that can be shared with other trainers in the partnership, used for quality assurance purposes, and reviewed when planning future sessions. Over time, a collection of completed session plans becomes a practical resource library for the whole team.

The template should be completed by the lead trainer at least 24 hours before the session. If two trainers are co-facilitating, they should review it together beforehand so that both understand the plan and their respective roles. After the session, the coach notes section at the bottom should be completed while the session is still fresh. These notes do not need to be long. A few honest sentences about what worked, what did not and what needs to change next time is enough.





ANNEX I — SESSION PLAN TEMPLATE



Session Title:

Date:

Location:

Trainer / Facilitator:

Sport Module

Basketball Soccer Volleyball Mixed / Other:

Skill Focus (select all that apply)

Leadership Teamwork Communication Problem Solving Decision Making
 Trust Building Adaptability Other:

Session Aim

What should participants be able to do or understand by the end of this session?

Target Group and Group Size

Target group (e.g. NEET youth, migrants, mixed group):

Group size:

Any specific needs or considerations for this group:

1. Materials and Set Up

List all equipment, space requirements, cones, balls, markers, printed materials, etc.

2. Warm Up Activity (approximately 10 minutes)

Short description of the warm up and its purpose:

Steps





3. Core Activity or Drill (approximately 25 minutes)

Activity name:

Step by step instructions:

Variations and adaptations (for mixed abilities, limited mobility, low confidence, etc.):

Safety and inclusion notes:

4. Debrief and Employability Link (approximately 20 minutes)

Planned debrief questions:

Key workplace connection you want participants to make:





5. Action Planning

Action planning prompt you will give the group (e.g. 'This week I will...' relating to the skill practised today):

6. Trainer Notes (to be completed after the session)

What worked well?

What would you change next time?

Follow up required?

- Individual conversation with a participant
- Adjust difficulty or approach for next session
- Contact NGO partner or social worker
- Additional support needed

Notes:





Annex 2: Participant Self Assessment Tool

This self assessment tool is completed by participants themselves, once at the beginning of the programme and once at the end of each session. It is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers. Its purpose is to help participants reflect honestly on their own skills and to track how their confidence develops over time.

Trainers should explain this clearly before distributing the form for the first time. Some participants, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds or those with limited experience in formal education settings, may feel anxious about anything that looks like a test. Reassure them that only they and their trainer will see the results, that the form is a tool for their own growth and not a way of judging them, and that the most useful response is an honest one rather than the one they think the trainer wants to see.

The form is divided into six rated sections covering the five core TEAM competences plus a section on the connection between sport and real life. It also includes three open reflection questions at the end. These are the most valuable part of the form. A participant who can articulate what they enjoyed, what they found difficult and what they want to improve next time is already practising the reflective thinking that employers value highly. Trainers should read these responses carefully and use them to inform future session design and any individual support conversations.

The optional follow up section at the bottom is for the trainer to complete after reviewing the form. It is a brief note about whether any additional support or development opportunity would benefit that individual participant. This information should be treated with care and stored securely in line with the project's data protection policy.





ANNEX 2 — PARTICIPANT SELF ASSESSMENT TOOL



Participant Name:

Date:

Session Title:

Trainer / Coach:

Sport Module

Basketball Soccer Volleyball Mixed / Other:

Instructions: For each statement, circle the number that best matches how you see yourself today. There are no wrong answers. Be honest so we can track your progress over time.

Scale: 1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Not sure 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree

A. Confidence and Participation

I felt comfortable participating in the activities today. 1 2 3 4 5

I took initiative during the session. 1 2 3 4 5

I tried something new or challenging. 1 2 3 4 5

B. Communication Skills

I communicated clearly with others. 1 2 3 4 5

I listened actively to my teammates. 1 2 3 4 5

I expressed my ideas respectfully. 1 2 3 4 5

C. Teamwork and Collaboration

I worked well with my teammates. 1 2 3 4 5

I supported others when they needed help. 1 2 3 4 5

I contributed to the group effort. 1 2 3 4 5

D. Problem Solving and Decision Making

I stayed focused when facing challenges. 1 2 3 4 5

I made decisions quickly and responsibly. 1 2 3 4 5

I helped find solutions when the team had a problem. 1 2 3 4 5

E. Leadership and Personality

I felt capable of leading or guiding others. 1 2 3 4 5

I took responsibility for my actions during the session. 1 2 3 4 5

I encouraged others to participate. 1 2 3 4 5


F. Connection to Real Life and Work

I understand how today's activity relates to real life or work situations.

1 2 3 4 5

I can describe one skill I improved today. 1 2 3 4 5

I know how I can use these skills outside of sport. 1 2 3 4 5





G. Open Reflection

1. What did you enjoy most today?

2. What was challenging for you?

3. What would you like to improve next time?


4. One thing I will do differently or practise this week:

H. Trainer Follow Up (to be completed after reviewing the form)

- Participant would benefit from additional confidence support
- Participant is ready for leadership opportunities
- Participant needs help linking sport skills to employability
- No specific follow up required at this time

Notes:





Annex 4: Sample Consent Form and Basic Safeguarding Checklist


Every participant in a TEAM session must give their informed consent before taking part. For participants who are under 18 years old, consent must be given by a parent or legal guardian. The consent form in this annex serves two purposes. It gives the participant and their family a clear explanation of what the programme involves, and it gives the organising team a documented record that consent was freely given before any data was collected or any activity began.

Informed consent means that the person signing genuinely understands what they are agreeing to. The form should always be explained verbally before it is signed. For participants who have limited literacy, who are not comfortable in the language the form is written in, or who have any other reason for finding written forms difficult, a verbal explanation and verbal confirmation of consent is acceptable provided it is witnessed and noted. In all cases, participants should know that their consent can be withdrawn at any time without it affecting their right to continue taking part.

The photo and video consent section is separate from the activity consent section. A participant who does not wish to be photographed or filmed must still be able to participate fully. Trainers should make sure that this is respected in practice, not just on paper. If a session is being filmed and a participant has not given media consent, the camera operator needs to know this before filming begins.

The safeguarding checklist follows the consent form. It is completed by the lead trainer or youth worker before each session. Safeguarding in the context of the TEAM project means making sure that every participant is safe, respected and protected from harm throughout their time in the programme. The checklist is not a legal document. It is a practical reminder to check the basics before every session: the space is safe, the equipment is appropriate, the group knows the code of conduct, and the trainer knows what to do if something goes wrong.

If a participant discloses something during a session that raises a safeguarding concern, the trainer should not promise confidentiality, should not investigate the matter themselves, and should follow the reporting procedures of their own organisation and the local legal requirements in their country. Each partner organisation in the TEAM project should have a named safeguarding lead who trainers can contact in these situations.





ANNEX 4A — SAMPLE CONSENT FORM



Project Name:

Organisation:

Session or Activity:

Date:

Participant Information

Name of participant:

Date of birth:

Parent or guardian name (if participant is under 18):

Phone number:

Email (optional):

1. Purpose of the Activity

This activity is part of the TEAM project, an Erasmus+ Sport Cooperation Partnership. The programme uses basketball, soccer and volleyball as structured learning tools to help young people develop teamwork, communication, leadership and other skills that are relevant to employment and to life more broadly.

2. What Participation Involves

By signing this form, you confirm that you understand and agree to the following:

- Sessions involve physical sport activities adapted for different levels of fitness and ability.
- Participation is entirely voluntary and can be ended at any time without explanation or penalty.
- Trainers will ensure a safe, inclusive and respectful environment throughout.
- Photos or videos may only be taken with your explicit and separate consent (see section 5 below).
- Your personal data will be held securely and used only for the purposes described in this form.

3. Health and Emergency Information

Please note any medical conditions, allergies, injuries or physical limitations that trainers should be aware of:

Emergency contact name:

Emergency contact phone number:





4. Consent for Participation

- I consent to take part in the TEAM sports based training activities described above.
- If this form is signed by a parent or guardian: I consent for my child to take part.

Signature (participant or guardian):

Date:

5. Consent for Photos and Video (Optional)

- I consent to photos and videos being taken for project documentation and public communication.
- I consent only for internal reporting purposes and not for any public use.
- I do not consent to any photos or videos being taken.

Signature (participant or guardian):

Date:

6. Data Protection

Personal data collected through this form is used solely for participation, safety and internal project reporting. It will not be shared outside the TEAM project partnership and will be stored securely in line with applicable data protection law. You have the right to access, correct or request the deletion of your data at any time by contacting the organising team.





ANNEX 4B — BASIC SAFEGUARDING CHECKLIST

To be completed by the lead trainer or youth worker before each session.

Session Title:

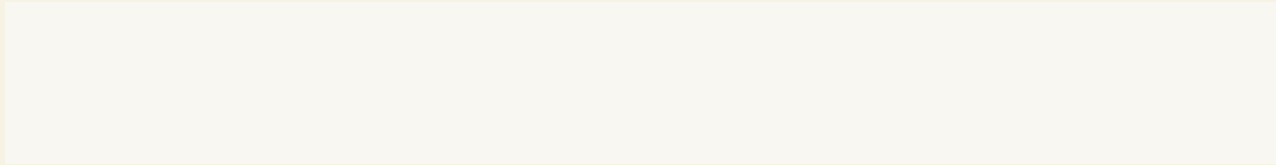
Date:

Coach or Facilitator:

1. Preparation and Safety

- Venue checked for hazards (floor surface, equipment, weather if outdoors).
- First aid kit available and accessible.
- Emergency contact list accessible.
- All equipment is appropriate, safe and in good condition.
- Clear rules explained to the group at the start (fair play, respect, safety).

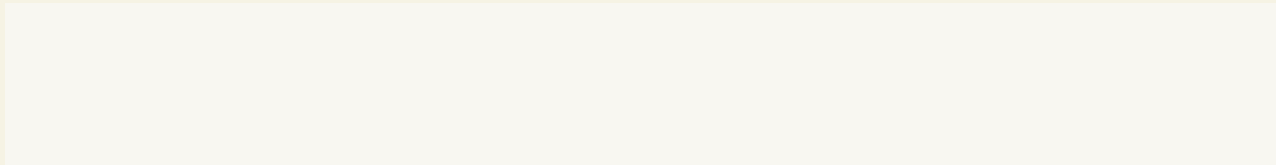
Notes:



2. Inclusion and Accessibility

- Activities adapted for different fitness levels and abilities.
- All participants can physically access the space and the equipment.
- No participant is excluded from any part of the session.
- Language used is plain, inclusive and easy to follow.

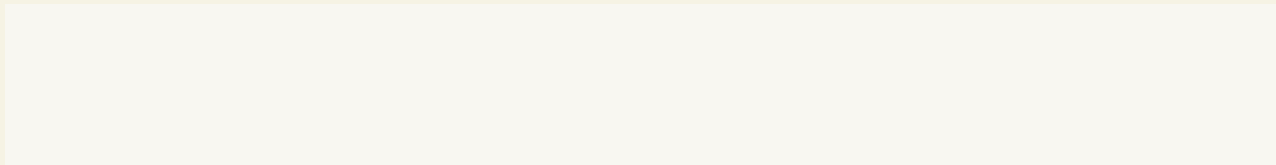
Notes:



3. Behaviour and Wellbeing

- Code of conduct explained (respect, no bullying, no discrimination).
- Participants know who to speak to if they have a concern or feel unsafe.
- Attention given to participants who seem anxious, withdrawn or uncomfortable.
- Breaks provided as needed and hydration encouraged.
- All physical contact during activities is appropriate and consensual.

Notes:





4. Reporting and Documentation

- Attendance list completed.
- Any incidents (injury, conflict, emotional distress) recorded immediately.
- Follow up actions identified and assigned to a named person.
- Photo and video consent checked before any filming begins.

Notes:

5. Sign Off

Coach or Youth Worker Name:

Signature:

Date:





Annex 5: Useful Links and Resources

This annex collects the key online resources that are relevant to the TEAM project and to anyone delivering sports based employability programmes with young people. The resources are organised by theme. Some are directly connected to the TEAM project itself. Others are broader reference points from the fields of sports coaching, youth work, non formal education, employability and safeguarding. All links were verified at the time of publication. If a link is no longer working, searching for the name of the organisation or document should locate the current version.

Trainers are encouraged to bookmark the resources in sections one and two before their first session. The TEAM project materials are the primary source for session planning and delivery. The coaching and sports federation resources in section two are useful for drill ideas and activity variations. The youth work and employability resources in sections three and four provide useful context for the debrief and action planning phases of sessions.

The safeguarding resources in section five are essential reading for all trainers and youth workers involved in the programme. Familiarity with these materials is not optional. Every person who facilitates a TEAM session has a responsibility to the participants in their care, and that responsibility begins with understanding what safeguarding means in practice. The tools in section six are practical additions that can make session planning, data collection and communication easier, particularly for smaller organisations that do not have large administrative teams.





2. Sports Based Education and Coaching Resources

Practical coaching and sport education resources for trainers planning sessions.

UNESCO Quality Physical Education Guidelines:

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000235409>

UK Coaching Skills Library: <https://www.ukcoaching.org>

NBA Jr Youth Basketball Drills: <https://jr.nba.com/drills/>

FIFA Grassroots and Coaching Resources: <https://www.fifa.com/technical/grassroots/>

FIVB Coaching Aids and Volleyball Drills: <https://www.fivb.com/en/development/coaches>

Frontiers in Sports and Active Living (open access journal):

<https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/sports-and-active-living>

3. Youth Work, Inclusion and Non Formal Education

Resources for youth workers and trainers on inclusive facilitation, non formal learning and youth development.

SALTO Youth Resource Centre: <https://www.salto-youth.net>

SALTO Inclusion and Diversity: <https://www.salto-youth.net/inclusion>

SALTO Training Toolbox: <https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/>

Council of Europe Compass (Human Rights Education Manual):

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass>

European Training Strategy Competence Model: <https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/ets/>

EUSA Skills for Youth through Sport Handbook:

https://www.eusa.eu/documents/eusa/media_library/Skills-for-You-th-through-Sport-Handbook.pdf

4. Employability Skills and Career Development

Resources on soft skills, competence frameworks and transitions from education to employment.

Europass Competence Frameworks: <https://europa.eu/europass>

ESCO Skills and Occupation Database: <https://esco.ec.europa.eu>

ILO Skills for Employment: <https://www.ilo.org/skills>

OECD Future of Skills and Employability: <https://www.oecd.org/skills/>

European Commission Youth Employment Resources: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1036>





5. Safeguarding, Child Protection and Wellbeing

Essential reading for all trainers and youth workers involved in the TEAM programme.

International Safeguards for Children in Sport:

<https://www.sportanddev.org/en/article/publication/international-safeguards-children-sport>

UNICEF Safe Sport Guidelines: <https://www.unicef.org>

WHO Physical Activity Safety Principles: <https://www.who.int/health-topics/physical-activity>

NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit: <https://thecpsu.org.uk>

6. Tools for Session Design, Assessment and Monitoring

Free digital tools that can support trainers with planning, data collection and communication.

Canva (templates for posters, worksheets and reports): <https://www.canva.com>

Mentimeter (real time reflection and group feedback): <https://www.mentimeter.com>

Google Forms (attendance lists, self assessments, evaluations): <https://forms.google.com>

Trello (session planning and task management): <https://trello.com>

Notion (session planning and documentation): <https://www.notion.so>

7. Inspiration for Inclusive Practice

Resources on adapting sport for participants with different abilities and backgrounds.

Sport and Development (Everyone Can Play resources): <https://www.sportanddev.org>

Special Olympics Coaching Guides (adapted sport drills):

<https://resources.specialolympics.org>

EU Guidelines on Gender Equality in Sport: <https://sport.ec.europa.eu>

European Disability Forum Accessibility Resources: <https://www.edf-feph.org>



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