



# SPORT AND PRISONS IN EUROPE



Sport policy and  
practice series

Gaëlle Sempé

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## Foreword by Stanislas Frossard, Executive Secretary of EPAS

**T**he Council of Europe has more than 30 years' experience in the field of sports policies and is the only intergovernmental organisation to address international co-operation in respect of sports policies at pan-European level. Today, co-operation on questions relating to sport is promoted by the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS) which, within the framework of an organisation based on values such as the Council of Europe, is committed to safeguarding and promoting the values of sport for all.

Given that sport is not managed exclusively by ministries of sport, EPAS also fosters dialogue between public authorities, sports federations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), with a view to making sport healthier and fairer through better governance, while respecting the autonomy of the private sports movement. Since 2009, EPAS annual conferences have provided a highly welcome opportunity to reflect and to pool ideas and experiences about the valuable outcomes for sport of efforts made to promote diversity and non-discrimination in and through sport, in order to push forward policy debates.

It is against this background that an expert seminar took place on 5 March 2013 in Strasbourg on the topic of "sport in European prisons". It was organised by EPAS in co-operation with the Council for Penological Co-operation (PC-CP) under the aegis of the Andorran Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. The seminar was followed on 16 and 17 June 2014 by a Pan-European Conference on Sport and Prison, co-organised by EPAS and the French National Olympic and Sports Committee (CNOSF), in co-operation with several French ministries: the Ministry of Justice, Ministry for Families, Children and Women's Rights, and the Ministry for Urban Affairs, Youth and Sport.

If I mention these institutional partners it is not only in order to pay tribute to their contribution to the process but also to emphasise that the question of sport in prisons can benefit from a broad network of different partnerships. The attention paid to these events by the PC-CP and its active help with identifying good practices have been very encouraging. It is my hope that this study will have laid the foundations for future co-operation between the justice and sports sectors.

In many countries, sport in prisons developed informally, as a result of personal initiatives. The scale of it now means that support is needed from institutional policies. In this context, I am convinced that the Council of Europe will be able to bring together competent experts in a network to promote dialogue and synergy between the sports movement and prison authorities at international level as regards developing prisoners' access to sport, co-operating with clubs and training sports coaches.

This study focuses on sport as a way of addressing the well-being and social skills of prisoners, as a way of enabling them to change their behaviour and attitudes, to develop their ability to work and to live together, to learn respect for others, including their opponents, and to obey rules, so that their reintegration into society is made easier. It is often said that sport conveys the values invested in it. This is especially important in prisons, and their role demands a high level of awareness of the values at stake.

I hope this publication will serve as a reminder of the relevance of sport in prisons, that it will provide the theoretical background and that it will help to identify aims as well as ways of guarding against undesirable side effects. Its aim is to support the development of evidence-based policies relating to sport in prisons. It is also a compilation of good practice, a toolkit for communication and a collection of practical advice for setting up or strengthening a coherent system.

## Foreword by Vivian Geiran, Chair of the PC-CP

**S**port is valued in all cultures, and rightly so. Not everyone likes all sports, but it is not unreasonable to think that there is a sport for everyone, be it an individual sport or a team sport. Sport is an important part of human activity in communities all around the world, and it ought to be the same in prison. Sport is also a valuable tool for socialisation purposes, for developing self-confidence and promoting good physical and mental health. Lastly, sport is not only a physical activity; sport is also a cultural and educational activity that can make an important contribution to breaking down interpersonal and other barriers, as well as being a pleasant way of passing the time.

It is well known that sport benefits both mental health and general well-being. It teaches respect for others and self-esteem, provides a positive outlet for reducing frustration and aggressive behaviour, develops personal skills and creates good life experiences. In addition, sport is a good “leveller”, insofar as everyone begins a sporting activity or event on an equal footing, and it is the honest sharing of the sporting effort with our fellow sportsmen and women that helps to keep us engaged. For prisoners, experiencing equality like this in a sports stadium may be a unique moment in their lives and can have a very positive impact on them. It may provide them with the alternative they need to put their criminal past behind them.

Sport in prison can influence many different categories of people: the young, older people, women, and people with all sorts and levels of skills. It may also further the pursuance of other goals, such as making good use of spare time, meeting new people, exercising self-control in order to achieve positive outcomes and staying “clean” from drugs and alcohol, as well as establishing and developing closer links with the community at large. Accordingly, sport can be beneficial for the positive management of sentences, and for preparing prisoners for their release. To have a greater impact, rather than being limited to closed or privileged groups in society or in prison, opportunities for sport should comprise the basic elements of a healthy, social activity for all prisoners who stand to benefit.

When we engage in sport, we compete with ourselves, against the limits we and others have set for ourselves. Above all, I think sport helps those taking part to build relationships, work as a team, and feel part of a group. As such, and just as it can help all of us, sport can help prisoners to lead a better and healthier life. I recommend this book as a useful resource for anyone who has anything to do with sport in prison, and I hope that it will encourage the continuing development of sport for all kinds of prisoners, so as to promote their good health and social skills, and so that they will turn their backs on crime and take up their place in society again.

## Preface

**A**s part of a pan-European study led by the Council of Europe and the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS) on the organisation and development of sport in prison, this publication signals the Organisation's desire to render sport in prisons more visible and to garner support for a pan-European institutional approach to prison sports policies. The study, conducted in four main phases, kicked off with a seminar on sport in European prisons organised on 5 March 2013 in Strasbourg by EPAS in co-operation with the Council for Penological Co-operation (PC-CP) under the auspices of the Andorran Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

These initial exchanges during the seminar led in a second phase to a questionnaire, drafted as a result of a collaboration project between the Council of Europe and the VUB University in Brussels (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), under the scientific leadership of Professor Marc Theeboom, who holds the Chair of Sport and Society at the VUB, with a view to analysing and identifying "good practices" in prison sports programmes in the member states of the Council of Europe.

In the third phase, the results of the questionnaire were presented during a Pan-European Conference on Sport and Prison co-organised by EPAS, the French National Olympic and Sports Committee (CNOSF), and the French ministries of Justice, Families, Children and Women's Rights and Urban Affairs, Youth and Sport on 16 and 17 June 2014 in Paris. As well as providing a platform for the researchers from the VUB University in Brussels to present the results of their questionnaire, the conference was also an opportunity to hear many first-hand accounts from stakeholders involved in sport in prison in different ways (political, administrative, scientific, educational), at different levels of their institutions and based on their differing experiences.

The fourth phase of this study looking at sport in prison is the publication of this report, which aims to serve several purposes. First of all, it sets out to map the different approaches to sport in prison in order to produce an overview of the situation throughout Europe. Then, in response to expectations on the part of the Council of Europe and its member states, it presents examples of sporting practices which are regarded by the different stakeholders involved in sport in prison as significant and/or relevant and are referred to as "good practices". Lastly, this report adopts a scientific and in particular a sociological perspective, a critical stance, which in the heuristic sense seeks to question practices and representations so as to pinpoint and highlight the profound challenges, obstacles and difficulties surrounding sport in prison.

Responsibility for the content of the report rests solely with the author, not with EPAS or with the people consulted. However, we would like to thank the Council of Europe, and in particular the EPAS Bureau, for trusting us enough to allow us to work alongside them on this new study. Our thanks also go to all those (fellow researchers, institutional partners, family and friends) who made helpful comments and suggestions on a draft of this report.

**Gaëlle Sempé**

*Lecturer, Rennes 2 University*

*Member of the VIP&S Laboratory*

*(Violence, Identities, Policies and Sports)*

# Introduction

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**T**o understand sport in prison, it has to be seen in connection with the social problems inherent in locking people up in our societies. Accordingly, a brief analysis of prison systems and detention conditions is essential for gaining a clear grasp of the challenges posed by sport in prison. This introduction describes the background to sport in prison from a socio-historical perspective. The aim is to highlight the challenges facing sport in prison against the backdrop of present-day conditions in European prisons, structural constraints and the role assigned to sport since its gradual introduction in prisons and prison policies. The typical features of European prison systems, the current conditions of detention and the philosophy of imprisonment all influence the introduction and subsequent development, and consequently the take-up, of sport in prison.

To understand prison, and sport, also means taking an interest in prisoners and those of them who engage in sport. Analysis has shown that the majority of prisoners are lacking in terms of education, employment, culture and identity, and thus are ultimately impaired in the way in which they regard themselves and others. Accordingly, a better understanding of the features that characterise the prison population could go some way at least to providing an answer to the questions “Why should sport be developed in prisons?” and “How can it be done?”

## I. The origins of corporal sentencing

A prison is a social institution. The way prisons are run and how they are structured reflect the dominant social and cultural values of the society in which they have been built, as well as changes affecting that society (Bourdieu, Chamboredon and Passeron 2005: 56). A historical approach is key to understanding the processes that explain how prisons have changed, why some features remain unchanged, and why they are still so complex some two centuries on from when public prisons were first established.

The history of punishment ... is a history of power, in which those it calls rebels indicate the dominant concepts of public order ... Viewed in this way, a political system can be understood by how it treats its deviants. It is a history of poverty and how it is managed, with the “bad pauper”, as described at the end of the Middle Ages, one of its most constant figures. (Perrot 2002: 13)

Understanding the origins of imprisonment and how prisoners are managed is a good lens through which to analyse our prison systems and, more generally, our societies which, so many policy makers and scientists believe, produce the criminals they deserve (Lacassagne 1913: 364). Thanks to its worldwide presence, its plural dimension, and the social, political, economic, biological and other functions assigned to it, sport can be considered a “total social phenomenon” (Mauss 1934/1989) and it remains a mirror of society and how our societies operate (Elias and Dunning 1986/1994).

## **A. The shame of inflicting punishment**

According to penal experts, from the end of the 18th century, when punishment was synonymous with arbitrariness and physical suffering, with the gradual end to torture up until the late abolition of the death penalty in a number of European countries, there were two styles of punishment: one coercive, and the other, over a century later, normalising. The setting up of a penal state in Europe was slow and ultimately recent.

From the 17th century onwards, there were many opponents of the use of torments and torture to obtain a confession from a convicted person, to dispense with the need for an investigation and trial. For over two hundred years many fought for an end to such practices. From Montesquieu to Voltaire and later Rousseau, all the Enlightenment philosophers were involved in this struggle. In 1764, Beccaria published his treatise "On crimes and punishments", which makes clear that punishment must never erase the crime but try to ensure it is not repeated. At that time, punishment mainly evoked fear on account of its very eloquent demonstrations of suffering. In 1773, Howard also joined the debate after making many visits to prisons throughout Europe. For him, work and religion had to be the basis of any form of punishment. The penal prison was already "a cosmopolitan dream. The Catholic Inquisition had experimented with it, but it was the 17th and 18th centuries in Europe that developed it in the primitive form of *maisons de force* ... The Englishman Howard made it fashionable, with his search for the ideal prison during his Grand Tour of Europe" (Petit, Faugeron and Pierre 2002: 56).

Foucault (1975) sees this long transformation as the redistribution of the economy of punishment, both in Europe and the USA. The end to torture and the advent of imprisonment reflected two main processes taking place, namely the disappearance of punishment as a public spectacle and the rationalisation of the penalty of imprisonment.

Several reasons drove these processes of change, including the gradual emergence "in the modern justice system and among those who mete out justice, of a shame of inflicting punishment" (Foucault 1975: 17). The human body was placed at the heart of the penological debates and ideas during these two centuries of change. This period marked the beginning of a move away from bodily punishment, specifically so that "[o]ne no longer touched the body, or at least as little as possible, and then only to reach something other than the body itself" (ibid.: 17). Avoiding pain or suffering, no longer acceptable in our democracies, gradually came to mean reaching criminals by some other, more acceptable, form of economy and governance, and in particular by keeping their bodies locked up behind bars.

The search for an alternative to physical punishment gave rise to a new "utopia of judicial reticence" where the aim was to "take away life but prevent the patient from feeling it". The goal was the same punishment for all, regardless of social status, "an execution that affects life rather than the body" (Foucault 1975: 18-19). Used until then as a real means of coercion for reinforcing the deterrent and expiatory effect of the penalty, corporal punishments gradually strayed from their original punitive dimension towards a goal of correction, particularly moral and social, as part of a

“civilizing process” (Elias and Dunning 1986/1994) which, although exemplified in prison, is not restricted to prisons and extends to all post-industrial societies.

Prisons accordingly take on “the general form of an apparatus designed to render individuals docile and useful by means of precise work upon their bodies” (Foucault 1975: 267). By assuming responsibility for the body and the time of the convicts, and by regulating their behaviour, this system of authority and knowledge sets out to reclaim them individually by the traces left in the form of habits (ibid.).

## **B. “The detestable solution, which one seems unable to do without”**

Prison is “the detestable solution, which one seems unable to do without” (Foucault 1975). So prison is necessary, “that darkest region in the apparatus of justice, is the place where the power to punish, which no longer dares to manifest itself openly, silently organises a field of objectivity in which punishment will be able to function openly as treatment and the sentence be inscribed among the discourses of knowledge” (Foucault 1975: 298). Although no longer the most common form of modern penalty, imprisonment remains the “penalty par excellence” (ibid.: 267), in other words the “reference sanction, in relation to which other forms of sanctions are assessed and organised” (Lascoumes 2006: 406). It is true to say that since the 19th century all societies have adopted this system.

It became such a natural system during the 20th century that it survived all crises, wars, decolonisation and different forms of democratic transition. ... From western democracies to colonial empires, from capitalist to socialist regimes, all political systems have adopted imprisonment as the core of their system of penalties. (ibid.: 406)

The success of the prison as an institution and its historical and geographical spread since the 18th century is probably due to the fact that imprisonment established itself as the “egalitarian punishment” in systems and cultures where liberty was equally dear to all (Foucault 1975: 269). Better than fines and less unbearable than corporal punishment, it was seen as a true victory over arbitrariness and over the violation of the physical integrity of convicted persons.

It appeared to be an adequate solution, one that allowed prisoners both to atone for their crimes and to mend their ways. A preventive, utilitarian and correctional system, based on the philanthropic ideals prevalent at the time, imprisonment managed to combine the main criteria and concerns of the reform movement and an emerging humanism. It was a system consisting of “a compromise between the optimistic idealism of the philanthropists and the realism of those members of parliament who were committed to defence of the new social order based on property” (Petit, Faugeron and Pierre 2002: 33). The same description still applies to European systems today:

They combine the traditional principle of individual discipline with new standards of “good prison governance” based on respect for basic human rights, rational prison management, and the goal of effective sentencing. At any given time, one of these principles will take precedence, without ever eliminating the other one, which can be updated once circumstances have changed. (Lascoumes 2006: 406)

After the Second World War, when prisons were in a state of chaos, particularly on account of the economic situation, management of long sentences once again became a matter of urgency. More emphasis was placed on the social rehabilitation of prisoners and the need to treat them more “humanely”. It was suggested that the system of detention should be better suited to individual prisoners’ attitudes and their capacity to mend their ways. In short, this saw the emergence of the concept of individualised sentencing and marked the start of a lasting belief in the need for more humane prisons. Efforts to achieve that goal still continue.

### **C. From the humanisation of sentences to the use of sport**

This notion of humanisation, although intellectually including the role of sport, is rather confusing in its definition. According to one of these nuances, “the use of humanism constitutes a provocation” (Foucault 1994/2001: 644), implicitly supporting a policy of control and supervision, in particular of the working classes. It could be used to justify this control, which Foucault saw as a cross between public intervention and the “charitable” (but no less alienating) bourgeois culture.

Used indiscriminately from a political point of view, and historically instrumentalised, humanisation was the cornerstone of prison policies, resulting in better detention conditions and greater respect for prisoners’ rights. Thus, “humanising consists in creating acceptable detention conditions and allowing more freedom in the daily routine. It precedes the introduction of rehabilitation programmes but is not the same” (Lemire 1990: 110). The second half of the 20th century therefore saw a wave of penal policy reforms in the different European penitentiary systems that reflected these “liberal” ideas, with priority given to reintegrating prisoners into society and efforts to prevent them from reoffending upon their release. Centred first and foremost on the introduction of and continued respect for rights in prison, the aim of these reforms was to combat continuing arbitrariness and inegalitarianism.

The spread of the requirement to introduce rights in prisons presupposes revealing the hidden reality of prison for what it is, an obsolescent, static, and arbitrary system, a uniquely shocking place incompatible with any concern for carceral equilibrium and social progress. (Salle and Chantraine 2009: 97)

On a European level, this was shown, for example, by the establishment of the European Court of Human Rights (the Court), followed by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT). To quote the Council of Europe leaflet “The CPT in brief”, the CPT’s title

highlights two important features: first, it is European, and second, it not only covers “torture”, but also a whole range of situations which could amount to “inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”.... The CPT was set up under the Council of Europe’s European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which came into force in 1989. It builds on Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights which provides that “No one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”. The CPT is not an investigative body, but provides a non-judicial preventive mechanism to protect persons deprived of their liberty against torture and other forms of ill-treatment. It thus complements the judicial work of the European Court of Human Rights.

As a result, “The application of a few European Prison Rules, the recommendations of human rights commissioners, the role of mediators, the appointment of a controller-general of prisons are all signs of this reminder that, by law, prisoners continue to be citizens who, apart from the freedom to come and go, still have all their rights, as pointed out in the Canivet report [in 2000]” (Rostaing 2009). To some extent “prison relations are ‘normalised’, meaning that conditions inside prison are brought closer to those on the outside or lose their exceptional characteristics, not that stricter discipline is imposed” (ibid.).

This paradigm also led to the gradual introduction of other cultural practices in prisons, including sporting activities, from the second half of the 20th century. This gradual introduction of sport in prisons was perfectly in keeping with the prevailing mood at the time, which favoured the humanisation of sentencing and its rationalisation in our societies (Foucault 1975; Faugeron, Chauvenet and Combessie 1996; Rostaing 1997; Petit, Faugeron and Pierre 2002). Little by little, authoritarianism gave way to an increasingly normalising regime. “The new norms ... are being adjusted by the various stakeholders, but the changes made are starting to have profound effects on prisoners’ relations with the prison and prison staff” (Rostaing 2009).

In other words, sentencing was gradually moving away from arbitrariness and physical suffering for two reasons, namely the shame of inflicting punishment, due to the growing desire for humanisation, and the need for a new rationale in relation to punishment, consisting in taking responsibility for the detained body in a different, more effective way. Although it did not stop completely, the “disciplining” of prisoners and their bodies turned into a political economy of a new power of punishment that was organised and internalised, and therefore less visible and more acceptable.

Although still defended in intellectual circles, in light of these different developments, Foucault’s theory, which is centred on the institutionalisation and internalisation of a new economy of punitive power and discipline, and Goffman’s concept of the total institution are currently controversial. Accordingly, some authors who have analysed how prison policies are changing describe the present approach to them in terms of abandonment and “de-totalisation”, although these prison policies are also complex, sensitive and in some respects still in their infancy. As Rostaing (2009) says, “these changes are not only due to legislative reforms, in response to certain European ‘injunctions’ (European Prison Rules, in particular the draft penitentiary law, the medium-term effects of which it is too early to measure), but also part of what public policy analysts call ‘incremental changes’, in other words ‘minor adjustments made from within by players *in situ*’ (Lascombes 2006: 413)”. However, the abandonment of coercion has been complicated by other factors.

The forms of de-totalisation of prisons, the recruitment of different categories of staff and outside stakeholders, the growing reliance on law, the creation of Family Units, the ways in which the relations between prisoners and prison staff are being “normalised”, all these aspects of the “decline” of the institutional programme confirm that prisons are opening up to society and reflect a trend common to other institutions. At the same time, however, increasing numbers of people are being imprisoned for increasingly long periods of time. Also, some changes are being cancelled out by overcrowding which prevents prisons from operating in decent conditions. Starved of additional human resources, security policies are reducing prisons to guarding over men kept

in humiliating conditions. What prisons had gained on the one hand as a result of the reforms, bringing the way they are run more into line with that of other institutions, they are losing on the other hand. (Rostaing 2009)

Although sentencing has distanced itself from physical suffering, because sentencing still involves imprisonment the human body remains a central issue. Far from waning, concerns about prisoners' bodies take on a new meaning and assume a different significance. At the very core of the introduction and use of sport in prisons, this focus on the body is henceforth seen in terms of a normalising education, consisting in particular of "learning by body" and responding simultaneously to the need to regulate detention facilities and to meet the needs of prisoners in terms of their well-being, fulfilment, health and upkeep.

Thus, there are two sides to the introduction of sport in prisons, one to do with discipline, through the drills and work performed on the body to combine the power to inflict punishment with the normalisation of behaviour, and the other humanist, a more acceptable way of rendering imprisonment bearable. Prisoners who engage in sport and/or who are institutionalised by it are controlled in a far subtler way by dint of their taking part in and adhering to this pleasing and fun occupation.

In this context, there were deeply legitimate reasons for establishing prison sports policies in Europe. From the 1960s onwards, some countries decided to try introducing physical and sports education in prisons, adding a genuinely educational dimension to so-called "sporting" practices.

From the beginning of the 20th century, it changed from being a kind of sanction inherent in the prison sentence to become more of a social activity which gradually modelled itself on the dominant social reference models found outside prison. The shift from one approach to the other was gradually confirmed in official texts through the terms chosen to define and organise these practices. (Sempé 2007: 197)

The speed at which the transformation of corporal practices took place varied from one country to the next. What used to be basic physical exercise, imposed often for disciplinary and hygiene reasons and organised in a rudimentary fashion in the prison quad, became genuine physical culture and/or, depending on the country, physical education that was more elaborate and sometimes daily, before being replaced by sports cultures that reflected the dominant models found in society, in other words, with reference to regulations, based on a "sport for all" approach that was open, voluntary and even sometimes performance-oriented. The change in terminology not only marked a gradual rise in the importance attached to sporting practices but also revealed a desire to legitimise these practices over time. From then on most countries adopted "sport" as a general term to describe and include all physical practices, both recreational and competitive. In spite of the scientific controversies surrounding it, the decision to use the term "sport" in this publication is therefore the result of this historic process and the widespread and significant use of the term, also in prison.

The changes on the ground were equally striking, since the organisation and widespread use of sporting practices in prisons gradually spread to all prisons and all member states of the Council of Europe. At different times and paces, in a different

order, and with means that varied tremendously, prison sports programmes combined several different dimensions: implementation in as many prisons as possible so as to reach more people; progressive rules and regulations within the different prison authorities; a broadening of the range of different practices and activities on offer; the emergence of a professional body of dedicated sports instructors within prisons, and sometimes even the institutionalisation of special training courses; the allocation of new resources; and, lastly and more recently, a gradual opening-up towards the world outside, in some cases to the point of making sport available outside the prison. All of these dimensions backed the hypothesis that more porous prison walls were a way of “de-totalising” the penitentiary system (Lemire 1990: 79, 144) so that it could fulfil its role of integrating prisoners back into society.

Accordingly, the “sportification” of prisons (Courtine 1980) took place throughout Europe, a process that started with the use of physical exercise as a strictly disciplinary tool and ended with the present-day situation of a genuine opening-up of prisons through the cultural or sports “offer” now available. This process and the fact that a pan-European study is being conducted on the subject are clear signs of the positive light in which sport is still regarded and the firm belief in its benefits and virtues.

Constructed, reproduced and then taken for granted as the history of sport has evolved, the connection between sport, ethics and virtues is well documented in scientific literature. Conveying throughout its history a set of values associated with a multitude of benefits, sport has been regarded as both supposedly immune to the dysfunctional aspects of our societies – although it may experience them, and in particular their violent side, at first hand – and a miracle solution capable of containing and even preventing such excesses. Faced with this finding, many scientific studies have stressed the importance of cultivating an evidence-based approach to sport capable of serving both purposes. Not in any way virtuous by nature, sports, in their broad sense as cultural practices, are a reflection of our societies. Therefore, sport is just as likely to include as to exclude, to prevent violence as to trigger it, to improve physical, mental or social well-being as to harm it, depending on how it is used (intensity, frequency, institutions and stakeholders that develop it, resources allocated to it, organisation, supervision and monitoring conditions, political and pedagogical aims, target groups, adaptation and assessment measures, etc.).

Although the introduction of sport in prison is analysed here in terms of the progress and benefits it represents, it must also be examined in the light of critical studies and discourses regarding prisons. Three reports are particularly good examples: in France, the report by the Senate in 2000; in Europe, the report by the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe in 2006; and internationally, the report by the Observatoire International des Prisons (OIP) in 2011. At different levels, one feature they have in common is that they still criticise the dysfunctional aspects, inequality and even failure of prison policies, which they regard as being hampered by scant resources, held in poor regard and in need therefore of more attention and greater reflexivity.

Thanks to, but also for the sake of, the development of more humane prison sentences, such criticisms have led to a greater collective awareness of the need to improve unsatisfactory conditions in prisons. They have also helped to put the media spotlight

on the prison situation, establishing it as a recurrent and sensitive topical issue. It is hardly surprising therefore that the interest shown in this question by the public authorities and, via the media, by public opinion, has accentuated a pendulum movement, such that the priorities of prison authorities risk swinging backwards and forwards between the need to detain and the need to reintegrate convicted persons, between a coercive approach and a normative approach (Lemire 1990), between a defensive philosophy and a correctional philosophy (Combesse 2003), and between a protective philosophy and a social work philosophy (Ohlin 1960). Experts agree that this pendulum movement is the main feature of prison policies, and it is what makes them so complex.

Despite the fact that in some countries there is this constant swinging back and forth between periods of tougher prison conditions, in response to the successive waves of overcrowding and reforms, the move towards more humane prisons is not under threat. Reintegration has now been enshrined in European legislation as a goal of prison policies – and one to which sport can contribute – alongside their historical function of detaining people sentenced by the courts.

## **II. Prison expansion: European prison populations**

We need to review the role of sport in the present context of massive prison overcrowding (Aebi and Delgrande 2014), given the current trend towards more widespread criminalisation and imprisonment, especially of very vulnerable people. Such overcrowding can be seen as evidence of a paradigm shift in prison policies, a sign that in most post-industrial countries the pendulum has now swung towards prison policies where the emphasis is on security concerns rather than the rehabilitation of offenders.

Many recent studies of prison conditions are critical of the use made of imprisonment as a political strategy for controlling advanced capitalist societies (Wacquant 1999; Nils 2003). They all refer to the steady erosion of the welfare state “under the influence of an intensification of the practices of surveillance and imprisonment” (Artières and Lascoumes 2004: 24). Faced with the decline of the mass workforce, many systems are responding by introducing measures that lead to a rise in precarious employment and by abandoning social protection. Faced with the erosion of state welfare assistance and state management of poverty, others are stepping up recourse to the courts and developing the industry of punishment. As the welfare state dwindles, still others are responding with force and the emergence of a “punitive state”. In this general political context of giving in to the temptation of a so-called zero-tolerance policy, on the pretext of “preventing” violence and crime, states must fight a tendency towards mass incarceration of the poor.

Since the mid-1990s, it is this zero-tolerance policy which has influenced most penological policy decisions. Now clearly evident in all sectors of detention and acutely felt in prisons, it is determining so-called rehabilitation activities, which often have to take second place behind security considerations. How can there be a focus on developing and investing in sport when prisons are so overcrowded that, for example, a third bed has to be put on the floor of a 9 square metre cell originally meant for

two? Conditions such as these are all the more problematic because they concern people who were already very vulnerable before being imprisoned. It is to be noted, however, that according to the survey conducted by the Council of Europe,

European prisons have made some progress in reducing overcrowding. Overcrowding has been slowly declining in European prisons since 2011, although it remains a problem in one out of four prison administrations, according to the 2014 Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics of the Council of Europe (SPACE).<sup>1</sup>

European prisons were close to their maximum capacity, holding 1 600 324 people. However, the number of prison administrations with overcrowding decreased from 21 in 2013 to just 13 in 2014. Aware of the adverse effects of mass incarceration, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe welcomes this reduction and is supporting the efforts made to resolve the problem and apply alternatives to prison sentences: “Overcrowding creates enormous obstacles to rehabilitating offenders and thus to better protecting society from crime. It can also breach human rights. I welcome the progress achieved in reducing prison overcrowding.”<sup>2</sup>

### III. The process of social disaffiliation

In the current context, no study of the prison environment is complete without considering the fragility of the prison population. Such vulnerability is typical of life in prisons where inmates are mainly poor (Wacquant 1999) and socially disaffiliated (Marchetti 1995, 1996). It applies to all post-industrial countries, where prisoners “come overwhelmingly from the unstable fractions of the urban proletariat” (Wacquant 2004: 302-3).

Most inmates of European prisons left school early, have no secure job and have had to cope with family break-ups. “For many, prison is merely the last link in a chain which, from school dropout to social precariousness, from exclusion to discrimination, can slowly lead to law-breaking and crime” (Conseil économique et social 2006: 15). Prisons bring together the most disadvantaged members of our societies, even though individually their inmates may have very different life histories.

Sociology gives an insight into these paths into poverty, pinpointing the mechanisms at play that ultimately produce these “marginal situations”. It becomes clear that individuals can fall prey to “a double dropout process” (Castel 1995: 15) with respect to work and relational integration. The overlapping of these two processes can lead to disaffiliation, even exclusion, since they are made worse by imprisonment.

According to this sociological definition, the process of social integration, dependent as it is on these two levers of work and relationships, is thus either an upwards or a downwards slope, with, according to Castel (1994, 1995), three zones: an integration

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1. Council of Europe, Press release DC038(2016), Strasbourg, 8 March 2016. The SPACE report is available at <https://wp.unil.ch/space/2016/03/space-i-and-ii-2014/>, accessed 5 August 2018. The countries with the most crowded penal institutions were Hungary, Belgium, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Greece, Albania, Italy, Spain (state administration), Slovenia, France, Portugal, Serbia, Romania and Austria.
  2. Thorbjørn Jagland, Statement by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Press release DC038(2016), Strasbourg, 8 March 2016.

zone characterised by stable work and a strong social network, which often go together; a vulnerability zone defined by job insecurity and relational fragility; and, lastly, a disaffiliation zone seen not so much as a rupture of the social bond, unlike exclusion, but as a path marked by lack of work and social isolation. Characteristic of life in prison, is it because of this double dropout, from work and social relations, that prisoners face ending up on the fringes of our society?

The European prison population cannot be analysed as one homogeneous group, because individual prisoners' positions on this slope of integration are not identical, owing to their different experiences and their distinctive employment and relationship histories. What prisoners do have in common, however, is the stigma of their low social status. In a utilitarian society obsessed with performance (Ehrenberg 1991), they are seen as being of no use to the world (Castel 1995). They are unable to convert their skills to suit present-day systems and are often seen as supernumerary or redundant (Castel 1995: 20). Lastly, without social and cultural provisions and the capacity to fight, or, in some contexts, lacking a welfare state that would help it to operate as a society, the prison population has at least two difficulties to contend with. Firstly, prisoners have to carry the weight of the constraints associated with their disaffiliated social path prior to imprisonment, and, secondly, their disaffiliation is then reinforced by their prison sentence which leaves them poorer and gives them an identity against which society discriminates. There is therefore an obvious risk that prison will make prisoners even more vulnerable by cutting them off from employment and their social connections, which, combined, are the main factors for promoting integration.

More specifically, it would appear that only the rare few who already possess some form of capital, be it economic and/or cultural, and who also have access to a protective social network, are spared (Faugeron, Chauvenet and Combessie 1996). Interpersonal relationships, particularly in the family and professional sphere, are bound to be affected by this phenomenon of disaffiliation, which greatly exacerbates the fragility of social ties and the relational vulnerability of individuals who find themselves more isolated than ever. Imprisonment therefore makes poverty and precariousness worse. Upon their release from prison "60% ... are jobless compared with 50% when they entered prison; 30% have nobody supporting them or waiting for them; over a quarter have no money (less than 15 euros) to cover the costs of their release; and one in eight has nowhere to live upon leaving the prison" (Wacquant 1999: 302-3). It is important to recall here that, although prisons are still necessary in Europe, European organisations are all well aware of the effects of imprisonment, which is why they are proposing that more attention be paid to prisons, and that recourse to them be reduced. Given that a prison sentence is unlikely to lift prisoners out of poverty if they were already poor prior to detention, that prisoners generally become poorer upon their release, and that prison exacerbates social inequalities, it is worth giving some thought to the impact of sport in prison.

#### **IV. Issues in the role of sport in prisons**

In view of these structural features associated with the prison context and the cultural features associated with prison populations, to what extent can sport influence the downward slope towards exclusion? A key question addressed in this publication is in

what way, and by what means, can participation in “sport”, as a key activity provided by prisons, have a positive impact for prisoners serving their sentence. What are the conditions that have to be met if sport is to serve the greater well-being of prisoners, enable them to maintain a link with society while they serve their sentence and help them to acquire social and vocational skills that can be used to their advantage during and after their release? In short, how can sport benefit them both during their prison sentence and afterwards, back in society?

This publication attempts to answer these questions in four parts. The first chapter paints the picture of sport in prison throughout Europe. It tries to shed light on the main features and issues associated with sporting practices in the member states of the Council of Europe, based on the results of the quantitative study devised and developed by EPAS and the VUB University in Brussels.

Following on from this quantitative section, the second chapter groups together in a qualitative approach the reflections and accounts of a number of member states of the Council of Europe based on various scientific studies on the subject. Chapter 2 also highlights the practical uses of sport in European prisons. In particular, it also attempts to respond to the desire of these countries for more information about how sport is organised in prisons, based on “good practice” identified by those actually involved in prison sport.

The third chapter aims to provide a reflexive and critical synthesis of current thinking about sport in prison. It adopts an impartial stance in relation to the main issues raised in the publication and objectively takes stock of the different practices and policies identified.

Lastly, the conclusion maps these different sporting practices in European prisons as it looks at the prospects for developing prison sports policies on a national and international level.



# Chapter 1

## Survey of sport in European prisons

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### I. About the study

This chapter is based on a survey and analysis of current knowledge and thinking about “sport and prison” in Europe, making use of the results of a quantitative study carried out in December 2013 by the Council of Europe and the VUB University in Brussels (Vrije Universiteit Brussel). More specifically, this study<sup>3</sup> is the result of a collaborative project carried out under the institutional initiative of EPAS and the scientific leadership of Professor Marc Theeboom. Its general context is that of a pan-European review of sport in prison launched by the Council of Europe in 2013.

The work began on 5 March 2013 in Strasbourg at a specialist seminar on sport in prisons organised by EPAS in co-operation with the Council for Penological Co-operation (PC-CP), under the auspices of the Andorran Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

The discussions that took place at this specialist seminar and during the PC-CP plenary meeting on 5 March 2013 led to the idea of a questionnaire that would identify and analyse examples of good practices relating to sports programmes in prisons.

The data collected during the December 2013 survey were then used as the basis for the debates and exchange of views held during the Pan-European Conference on Sport and Prison organised on 16 and 17 June in Paris by EPAS together with the French National Olympic and Sports Committee (CNOSF), and the French ministries of Justice, Families, Children and Women’s Rights, and Urban Affairs, Youth and Sports.

The questionnaire, which was sent out and completed online, consisted of forty questions about sport and prisons. It was sent to prison officials at different levels who represented their member state on questions relating to sport in prison. The replies came from people playing very different roles in the prison sector, ranging from prison officials to sports instructors, educators or co-ordinators, members of

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3. The author of this publication was not involved in the drafting or distribution of the questionnaire and did not take part in the data-collection phase. This chapter is the result of a request from the Council of Europe for a secondary, external analysis of a quantitative survey conducted upstream and independently of this publication. See [www.coe.int/en/web/sport/sport-and-prisons-in-europe](http://www.coe.int/en/web/sport/sport-and-prisons-in-europe).

senior prison management, lawyers, advisers, education experts (teachers or heads of education departments) and representatives of rehabilitation departments.

Replies were received from 32 member states from 5 geographical zones identified for the purpose of this study.<sup>4</sup> In some cases, there were several respondents for each country (20 for Romania, 16 for Belgium and Croatia, 15 for Italy, 8 for Ireland and Denmark, 7 for the Czech Republic and Lithuania, 5 for Switzerland, 4 for Portugal and Finland, 2 each for Luxembourg, Sweden, Germany and Spain); in other cases only one questionnaire was completed per country.

## II. Methodological considerations and the need for vigilance

The study presented in this chapter is part of a quantitative and comparative approach designed to take stock of the pan-European situation regarding sport in prisons.

The use of comparison, and in particular international comparisons, is “an explicit confrontation in the search for both similarities and differences” (Vigour 2005: 8). The choice of this method, widely used in social sciences, requires no particular technical procedure, leaving researchers with a certain degree of freedom to adapt the method to the particular focus of their study. Thus, according to Grawitz (1996: 380), the comparative method is “used at all stages of research” and is “relevant at all levels”, which explains why this study approach is not only a method but also a “strategy for investigation and research which permeates all stages of the researcher’s work, from the definition of the research topic to the choice of field, through data construction analysis and explanation” (Vigour 2005: 17) .

The aim of this study was to analyse the role of sport in prison, and to review this particular policy with a view ultimately to using this analytical filter to understand the penal system and how it is managed on an international scale.

However, the use of international comparison must be both reasonable and reasoned. It must take account of not only the benefits but also the possible scientific limitations of such an approach. Comparison entails some risks in terms of epistemological break and distance. Using this ambivalent tool exposes the researcher to the risk of ethnocentrism and cultural bias, which mean that extra vigilance is required (Vigour 2005: 17). Comparison

is a demanding methodology which has the great advantage of questioning everything and taking nothing for granted, starting with categories by which we think the obvious ... It requires that we show what is arbitrary about the administrative, educational, technical, cultural or political systems that govern sporting activities and which, as we all know, are unavoidable value systems and social conventions, both constraining for a given context and variable from one place to the next. (Faure and Suaud 2005: 385)

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4. Replies came from South-East Europe (31.62%: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Romania); Western Europe (22.06%: Andorra, Belgium, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Monaco, United Kingdom); Northern Europe (17.65%: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden); Southern Europe (16.18%: Italy, Portugal, San Marino, Spain); and Central Europe (12.50%: Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Slovakia, Switzerland).

As a means of challenging the obvious, comparison is an invitation to take an objective step back. By “introducing a temporal or spatial lag, [comparison] has the capacity to surprise, so that we pay attention to what seems natural, obvious” (Vigour 2005: 101).

Researchers who find that in a given prison they have access to a lot of data that are refused them in another prison can then decide to review how these prisons are managed, their policy on security and possibly their policy on data protection. Lastly, comparison “is a very successful approach, because it helps us to understand reality better” (Vigour 2005: 97). It is widely agreed in the literature that the aim of this comparative approach is not so much to compare as to understand, explain and analyse reality more easily. As well as depicting the main features of the particular subject of comparison, including the differences and similarities found in the various systems, comparison can provide helpful suggestions for building an explanatory model. Finally, although some researchers refute the idea that comparison can be reduced to a form of experimentation or evidence-gathering (Dogan and Pélassy 1980), most agree it remains one of the most objective tools in the social sciences field (Durkheim 1895/2004; Sartori 1994; Lijphart 1975).

### **The use of quantitative tools in prisons**

Nevertheless, it has to be said that access to the information and data collected varied from one prison and one country to the next. Sometimes they were not very forthcoming. For the researcher, however, variations in the way data are collected in each prison are useful for analysing and interpreting the results.

Concerning this questionnaire, the difference in response rates between countries probably reflects communication and/or centralisation issues, which are also very different from one country to the next. The different rates are also revealing of the relationship each individual country has with the subject of study, here sport. Some countries failed to respond at all, whereas others returned a large number of completed questionnaires. The variable response is bound to affect this pan-European overview and skews the definition of sport in this study. The over-representation of some geographical zones compared with others produces an uneven spread of results and complicates the task of comparing and interpreting the data.

This point raises questions about the way in which the questionnaire was disseminated and its relevance. It highlights the complexity of conducting a macroscopic quantitative study in prison.

As a result of the (physical and cultural) distance separating the questionnaire from the environment being studied – a prison environment requiring considerable methodological investment – using only a quantitative tool it is not possible to obtain a detailed picture of the wealth and complexity of the social realities, at least not without difficulty. The particularities and constraints inherent in such a secure and closed environment make the conditions in which information circulates in and between prisons, and hence access to data and their meaning, all the more difficult.

Another issue concerns the researcher’s reliance on prison staff, who are necessarily involved in the survey. In many prisons, it is prison wardens who have the task of distributing the questionnaires, encouraging the prisoners to fill them in, and then

collecting them up afterwards. It is therefore a time-consuming and selfless task, on top of their normal work. Ultimately, the quantitative tool is unsuitable given the distance separating it from the environment under study.

Those who completed the questionnaire were mainly stakeholders at all levels of prison administration: officers, wardens, national co-ordinators, or policy makers. In theory, with each stage of prison sports policy represented in the responses it should be easier to understand how the policy operates, from the policy paradigm on a macrosociological scale right through to implementation of the policy on a micro-sociological scale. On the other hand, it hinders interpretation of the results when this approach is not applied in the same way across all the countries. It becomes clear that there are imbalances in the levels of knowledge of the different systems represented, and among the respondents, depending on their position in the prison. Some countries replied on several levels whereas others presented a single point of view out of many possible views. One person (a member of the prison staff) will build up very practical knowledge of sport in prison, whereas someone else (a national co-ordinator) will develop a very policy-oriented vision of the same environment. The underlying impression is that the results proposed seem to be a reconstruction of different visions of sport in prison.

A further key discussion point regarding this questionnaire is the failure to consider the users, in other words the prisoners themselves. How can sport in prison be defined and understood without taking account of the views and practices of prisoners? It would mean painting an institutional picture from a purely administrative point of view, with all the “arbitrariness” and distance that entails, a description of corporal practices but without the bodies. Admittedly, the use of quantitative studies in prison poses a number of problems which make distribution among prisoners and use of any results particularly complex. Account must be taken of the difficulties that prisoners may have in answering a written survey, in particular because of the weak cultural capital and hence low level of education typical of the prison population (Marchetti 1995, 1996). Then there is the barrier of the language used, which – given the many different nationalities and ethnic origins represented in prisons – is not spoken equally well by all prisoners, irrespective of the country concerned by our investigations.

By avoiding the realities of the environment being studied and any attempt to understand the key players and their sporting practices, a questionnaire also avoids any reflexive effort. The quantitative approach, in this case a false belief in the virtue of statistics, is sometimes naively used as a way of providing evidence and objectivity, as if guaranteeing the scientific nature of a study.

It is particularly significant that statistics, the science of error and of approximated knowledge, which, in such standard procedures as calculating error or the limits of reliability, implements a philosophy of critical vigilance, is so frequently used as a scientific alibi for blind submission to technical instruments. (Bourdieu, Chamboredon and Passeron 1968/2005: 23)

With a scientific aim in mind, research can neither be reduced nor limited to a nomological purpose, defining some elementary principle, which might perhaps

prove useful but which would probably be misleading by failing to pursue one of the primary goals of social sciences, the reasoned and reflexive problematisation of real-world experience (Sempé 2007).

Accordingly, in keeping with many studies that look at the sociology of punishment, we maintain that “empirical research, for all of its difficulties and uncertainties, is the only way of deconstructing popular misconceptions” (Faugeron, Chauvenet and Combessie 1996: 41). In any case “the divide between ‘quantitative’ and ‘qualitative’ methods (heavily institutionalised in universities) is largely a false opposition” (Beaud 1996: 231). Whichever approach is preferred, one of the main epistemological challenges is the break with obviousness (cf. Bourdieu 1993: 904).

### **III. Main results of the questionnaire**

#### **A. Definition of sport in prison**

##### **A recent practice**

First of all, we learn from the study that sports programmes were introduced in prisons relatively recently. Only 21.53% of respondents stated that they had introduced sports programmes before 1980, and 29.23% stated they had introduced them between 1980 and 1999, whereas the remaining 49.24% had only introduced them after 2000.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to this chronological distribution, the results reveal geographical variations. A closer look at the significant periods for the introduction of sports programmes within each geographical zone identified in the questionnaire reveals that Southern and South-East European countries stand out from the other zones because they generally introduced sports programmes in their prisons from 2000 onwards (65% and 65.11%), in other words later, on average, than the other zones covered by the study. In particular, Central European countries are the most represented among the countries that introduced sports programmes before 1980 (56.25%) and the least represented among those to have introduced sports programmes after 2000 (12.5%).

These results raise questions on at least two levels. They show that, on the whole, sports programmes were introduced in the different prison systems of member states only recently, the inference being that sport as a practice is still not fully established in the prison sphere. This raises the question of how sport in prison is defined.

This definition is complicated, mainly because sport in prison has only recently been institutionalised. Given that the introduction of sports programmes has not been part of sentencing policy for very long, analysts trying to interpret the issues at stake on a European level have access to only a short data period. The definition of sport in prison is also complicated because, in the absence so far of any consortium and sufficient European or international impetus, it is being introduced in different ways, at different rates and for different reasons in the countries concerned.

Consequently, this part of the study aims to discuss what is meant by a “meaningful sports programme” as stated in the survey. How can a meaningful sports programme

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5. Question 5, “When did your institution start a meaningful sports programme?”, p. 6 of the questionnaire.

in prison be defined, circumscribed and identified? Insofar as the different interests and uses of sports policies and practices have been determined by historical and sociocultural features of the prison environment in each country, the notion of sports programmes ultimately covers a plural and contextualised reality. What constitutes a “meaningful sports programme” in and for one country is not necessarily perceived in the same way in the neighbouring country. Similarly, the context may differ from one prison to the next, even within the same country, depending on the staff available, the security profiles of the prisoners, the space and facilities available, the cultural policy of the individual prison, and so on. What are the criteria underlying this definition? What does “sport” in prison mean?

Because the results cover such a short time period, they draw attention to the lesser importance attached to sport in the long history of imprisonment and the handling of crime in Europe. Consequently, they lead us to question the legitimacy of such a recent practice in prisons, which have existed as institutions for centuries. Why was sport introduced only recently? How are we to understand this new need for sport in prison? What are the institutional expectations with respect to these new sports programmes?

Based on the questionnaire, it is possible to answer these questions, at least in part, by first explaining the role assigned to sport in prison.

## Rehabilitation/reintegration

Connected with the reintegration goals of the prison system,<sup>6</sup> sports programmes appear to have been designed in response to a desire, expressed by 76.34% of respondents, to use sport to help with prisoners’ rehabilitation.

To be more precise, in the context of this reintegration goal, sports programmes are seen as meeting three main objectives (pre-identified by the author of the questionnaire out of a total of four proposed closed answers): inmate health (88.15%); offering leisure time (82.22%), promoting social skills (71.85%).<sup>7</sup> Of the four proposed answers in the questionnaire, the prevention of drug/alcohol addiction (45.19%) is seen as a secondary objective. Lastly, in addition to the predefined answers proposed in the questionnaire, the main reply given to the open question “Other” (8.89%) was the pursuit of an objective about control, which consists of two dimensions that are separate but linked in prison: firstly self-control, particularly in relation to aggression control, and, secondly, control over social relations in the prison, in particular with respect to the relational atmosphere and discipline. Corroborating this policy of seeking control through sport, the study shows the high proportion of prisons and/or administrations (72.93%) that have special rules in place for sporting activities.<sup>8</sup> To meet these objectives, most member states who took part in the questionnaire have been developing the idea of sport for all.

## Sport for all

Of the respondents, 91.60% indicated that it was desirable and in theory possible for all prisoners to engage in sport in their prisons.<sup>9</sup> In keeping with this vision, the

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6. Question 11, “Is sport part of a rehabilitation plan in the prison system?”, p. 8.

7. Question 25, “What objectives do you pursue with the sports programme?”, p. 16.

8. Question 22, “Are there specific rules of conduct for the prisoners who participate in sports activities?”, p. 14.

9. Question 17, “Is the sports offer open to all prisoners?”, p. 12.

member states promote a sports policy based on voluntary participation and free access to sports programmes,<sup>10</sup> on the one hand, and the provision of facilities<sup>11</sup> on the other hand. Out of all the replies, 80.88% of respondents replied that it was possible for prisoners to access sports facilities on request. Only 8.89% stated that the use of sports facilities was compulsory. Although with the way the questionnaire was worded it is impossible to analyse these replies in more detail, we can nonetheless surmise that sport is currently compulsory only in a minority of member states, and that the preference is for a voluntary, non-disciplinary approach to sport.

Overall, the results give the impression that prisoners engage in sport on their own initiative. At first sight it seems that the approach to sport in European prisons is gradually moving away from the disciplinary model and away from the use of sport in prison for disciplinary purposes.

Nevertheless, at various stages of the questionnaire, reference is made to the existence in prison of constraints and barriers to prisoners' access to sport. These constraints are themselves a source of information about the strong structural requirements of prisons and the need to qualify the statement according to which there is a policy of access to sport for all prisoners. Constraints mentioned in answer to questions 9 and 18 include, for example, the prisoner's medical capacity or health, subscription and/or licence conditions, or selective access conditions for certain programmes and certain groups of people. Another condition for accessing sport, mentioned by 38.5% of respondents, is the good conduct of the prisoner who by dint of this requirement is ultimately subjected to a form of control by or for sport. To some extent, this reflects a more hidden but widespread form of what still amounts to a disciplinary use of sport, which is often used in detention for its pacifying effect. We develop this idea in more detail later on, by testing it against the prison practices studied.

On another level of this policy of sport for all, accessible in terms of space and available in time, 71.20% of the replies from member states estimated that on average prisoners spent more than 60 minutes per day on sport.<sup>12</sup> Seemingly offered to prisoners on a daily basis, sport sometimes totals more than 90 minutes per day in some member states (44.8% of replies), which is considerable compared with the average daily amount of time non-prisoners spend doing sport.

Moreover, the quantitative approach of the questionnaire does not fully capture the complexity and heterogeneous nature of a very patchy and uneven national and international context. The time spent doing sport in any given member state can vary considerably from one prison to the next and also from one detention system to the next. The reference in some of the comments written on the questionnaire to the use by some prisons of waiting lists, which are useful for controlling the flow of prisoners likely to access sport,<sup>13</sup> shows us how much care is needed when reading and interpreting statistics, the main flaws of which are that, as a result of an amplifying and homogenising effect, they ignore or conceal profound inequalities in terms of access within a given prison, between prisons and, it goes without saying, between different member states.

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10. Question 18, "Is the sports offer: freely accessible, compulsory, voluntary, other?" p. 12.

11. Question 9, "What are the conditions for the use of the facilities?" p. 7.

12. Question 10, "How long can the prisoners use the sports facilities per day?" p. 8.

13. Question 30, "If yes, which main results did these evaluations deliver?"; the negative replies include, for example, the waiting lists for accessing sport.

The questionnaire attempts to fine-tune this definition of the average daily time spent on sport by differentiating between prisoners along gender lines,<sup>14</sup> but with the data collected it is impossible to construct a reliable interpretation of this gender distribution. Admittedly, the results do seem to show that male prisoners tend to do more sport on a daily basis. Based on the replies to the questionnaire, the percentages for how much time male prisoners spend on sport are higher than those for female prisoners. Accordingly, 50% of the replies estimate that between 50% and 100% of male prisoners do sport daily (more than 30 minutes per day), and only 1.79% of respondents estimate that the percentage of male prisoners doing sport daily is 0%.

## Participation of women

Where women are concerned, the statistics show the symmetrical opposite of the results for men. Only 9.17% of the replies estimate that between 50% and 100% of women do sport daily (more than 30 minutes per day), whereas 61.47% of the replies estimate the percentage of women doing sport daily (more than 30 minutes) at 0%.

When explaining this result, it is essential to see it in relation to the under-representation of female prisoners, both nationally and internationally. The questionnaire itself draws attention to the over-representation of men in prisons.<sup>15</sup> Often confined to detention centres, units or sections within predominantly male prisons, women are treated differently with respect to sport. The implications of this are examined objectively in the following chapter.

Furthermore, given that women are so under-represented in prison, it is safe to assume that the officials who filled in the questionnaire most probably had little or no contact with this minority group, in which case they cannot claim to have an acute knowledge of female prisoners' practices. Without such knowledge, it must have been difficult for them to answer a question implying such a degree of detailed knowledge, unless they provided answers and hence data that were highly approximate. Ultimately, it is not possible with this study to identify any clear differences between male and female prisoners in terms of how much time they spend on sport. At best, it reveals that, on the face of it, the officials who took part in the survey had different impressions of men's and women's sporting practices, as seen through the prism of an institutional culture that is predominantly and historically male. The following comment left by a respondent representing one of the member states is a case in point. He explains the absence of women from sports grounds as follows: "Women are lazy".<sup>16</sup> This revealing comment shows that for prisoners and staff alike the prison environment is influenced and dominated by traditional, male-centred cultural and sporting models.

These estimates of how much time men and women spend doing sport on a daily basis reveal very different standpoints and views, depending on who the respondents

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14. Question 16, "What are the percentage rates for female/male prisoners doing sport on a regular basis (at least 30 minutes per day)?" p. 16.

15. Question 4, "What is the percentage of female prisoners of the total prison population?" p. 5.

16. This was an open comment made by one of the respondents as an addition to the proposed replies to Question 16. Such a comment calls for scientific investigation and needs to be analysed from a sociological point of view. This issue is addressed in chapters 2 and 3.

are (prison guards, wardens, national co-ordinators, etc.). Owing to their different positions, and therefore their different experience and knowledge of the prison population, each respondent has a different idea of how much time the different groups of prisoners spend on sport. The estimates also vary depending on whether the question is approached from a national or local perspective. The fact that the survey does not take the territorial level into account only adds to the imprecision and the complexity, if not impossibility, of interpreting this point of the survey.

## Different social reference practices

The survey attaches particular importance to the goal of prisoners' reintegration into society, with an underlying emphasis on how the sports model adopted in society influences how sport is structured in prison. The fact that the different approaches, rules and standards and, more generally, sports cultures found in open society are also found in prisons is a sign that sport is seen as having a role to play in rising to this challenge of preparing prisoners for release or, at least, in maintaining a link with the outside world. Thus, apart from a few features specifically due to the prison context and constraints associated with prison, sport in prison, like sport in the open community, can be organised in different ways.

According to the questionnaire, and based on the sports model found outside prison, there are three main types of sports practice in prison. Supervised sport is the most common approach (49.62%), but unsupervised or self-managed sport also accounts for a large share of the programmes available (32.33%), and, lastly, a smaller share of the programmes consists of competitive sport organised either inside or outside the prison environment (8.27%).<sup>17</sup>

In addition to these three general or "traditional" types of sports programme, 33.84% of respondents referred to special programmes targeting priority or vulnerable groups. For example, reference is made to young or female prisoners, those who are ill or otherwise physically vulnerable, dependent prisoners and older prisoners.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, in response to this goal of ensuring that all prisoners have access to and take part in sport, the study reveals a wide range of different sports available in prison,<sup>19</sup> as listed by the respondents: athletics, badminton, basketball, boxing, cycling, handball, judo, rugby, swimming, table tennis, table football, volleyball, wrestling, football, fitness training, bodybuilding, gymnastics, chess, weightlifting, hockey, foot-tennis, aerobics, billiards and yoga.

Although, because of the way the question is worded, the range of sports available is essentially given as a list, at least the replies show that such sports are possible, and that consequently the member states are keen to provide and promote as broad a variety of different sports as possible. However, it remains to be seen whether this desire on the part of member states stands up to the reality of prison conditions, which restrict and sometimes even prevent the development of a range of sports.

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17. Question 19, "How is the sports programme offered?"; p. 12.

18. Question 21, "Have you identified specific target groups for the sports programme(s) offered?"; p. 14.

19. Question 14, "Which sports disciplines are offered?"; p. 9.

As shown by the respondents through their proposed popularity rankings in respect of the sports available in their prison(s), prisoners' choice of sports can actually be narrowed down to only a few sports and is relatively homogeneous from one country to the next.

According to the popularity rankings,<sup>20</sup> two major sports are most popular with prisoners: football (mentioned by 51.11% of respondents) followed by so-called keep-fit or physical culture, including fitness training, bodybuilding and weightlifting (mentioned by 31.11% of respondents). In third place was table tennis (9.63% of respondents), followed by basketball and table football (5.93% of respondents each).

## **B. Resources for sport in prison**

To understand the institutional position and, to some extent, the legitimacy of sport in European prisons, we must also consider the financial models. For example, which budgets are used to fund sport in prison? What about the facilities used to deliver these sports programmes? Who are the staff who accompany prisoners when they do sport?

### **Funding of sport**

First of all, from an economic angle, due to its institutional infancy, in most member states sport is not well funded. According to 76.69% of respondents, there was no separate budget line for sports programmes.<sup>21</sup> In budgetary terms, such programmes therefore account for only a minority share, which is probably diluted among other sentencing schemes and domains. The main corollary from this is that sports programmes have to compete with other rehabilitation schemes. Funding granted specifically for sport is therefore rare and varies considerably from one region and one country to the next.

This finding raises questions about the forward planning of sports programmes, about their sustainability, and about their possible harmonisation on a national and then European level. If political impetus is to be given to developing sport in prison, questions must be asked about how it is funded, although it is also important to bear in mind that in some countries the authorities are finding it hard enough to feed prisoners properly or provide them with the medicines they need, let alone develop sport. So, priorities are not the same everywhere. For example, many countries started developing sport and other activities back in the 1960s and 1970s without a budget, and some of them are still having to make do with that solution even now.

For a while, in some countries like France, the development of private social and sports clubs and associations provided a way of compensating for the lack of any real interventionist public policy of support for sport in prison. Often set up with the support of the prison hierarchy by sports officers, the staff mainly involved in sport in prison, such associations have a legal framework that enables them to draw on public or private funds from outside the prison administration, and to bring the

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20. Question 15, "What are the most popular sports disciplines? Please rank (drag and drop)!", p. 10.

21. Question 6, "Do you have a special budget line for sport?", p. 6.

different stakeholders together around sports initiatives and projects that are then promoted as a result.

The problem of insufficient budgetary resources also raises the equally thorny question of sports facilities, without which it is impossible in practice either to set up or to develop high quality sports programmes in prison.

## **Sports infrastructure**

Moreover, sports facilities were one of the main factors in the success of sports programmes for 84.44% of the survey respondents,<sup>22</sup> along with accessibility (82.96%), qualified staff (77.77%) and programmes that are guided (74.07%) or targeted (69.63%).

As regards the quantity of available infrastructure, 52% of those who took part in the survey considered the sports infrastructure of their prison or prison estate to be positive, 19% expressed a neutral view and 29% gave a negative appreciation.

With respect to the quality of the infrastructure, 52% of respondents regarded the sports infrastructure of their prison or prison estate as positive, 16% expressed a neutral view and 31% gave a negative appreciation.

Other than these positive and negative views about the quality and quantity of the prison sports facilities, there are no quantifiable data in the study that could be used to assess these replies objectively, in other words to substantiate and acknowledge them.

It seems worth pointing out here that the views recorded in this pan-European comparative study are the institutional opinions of officials with a political “mandate” from their prison administration to answer the questionnaire, making them symbolic ambassadors of its culture and policy and, more generally, of their government. Large-scale international qualitative studies are also skewed in that they expose respondents to the fear of numerical comparisons and the risk of not faring well in any rankings or, more generally, in competition with others. We only have to think of the major surveys of education systems, and of the bias and opposition regularly associated with them (for example, school effectiveness research, PISA surveys). It is also worth adding that, while education systems may fear such studies, prison systems, which are seen as far less valuable and far less gratifying, probably fear them even more. So, while it is important not to minimise the truthfulness of the replies, they should be seen against that backdrop and interpreted accordingly.

To that end, it is important to come back to the strong constraints associated with the practicalities of organising sport, not only in prison but also in the open community. Sports facilities and sports infrastructure are a source of tension for many territorial and national public policy projects, constantly triggering and fuelling debate.

Compared with open society and owing to specific security-related constraints, which in the past have always taken precedence and have been institutionalised in prison architecture, prisons are complex in that they require special arrangements, and a closed, modest, confined and sometimes archaic spatial design. The result is

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22. Question 31, “In your view, what are the success factors for sports programmes in prison?”, p. 20.

often not very compatible, or indeed totally incompatible, with the societal norms currently associated with the construction and development of sports facilities, which are often open, costly, vast in size and constantly changing as technology evolves.

Faced with these practical constraints, two main policy approaches can be identified from the survey results, with many countries combining the two. One is driven by the principle of cobbling together a sports culture which has to be adjusted and reshaped to suit the prison environment, whereas the other seeks to balance the two cultures by embracing them both and respecting their respective constraints.

### **Cobbling together of sports facilities**

This improvised approach is how the majority of prisons operate, as shown in particular by the nature of the infrastructure reported by the member states who took part in the study.<sup>23</sup> First of all, it is to be noted that there is no mention in the study of whether prisons comply with the statutory national and international standards applicable in open society. However, the survey results reveal an over-representation of categories of sports facilities which by dint of their characteristics and use can be described as “multipurpose” or “multisports” facilities, usually with reference to team sports (for example, the football pitches mentioned by 70.59% of respondents, the sports halls mentioned by 64.71%, or the basketball courts mentioned by 57.78%). In addition, the facilities frequently reported by respondents included more confined areas, such as fitness rooms (mentioned by 57.78% of respondents), that can be adapted to the prison environment and also suit the bodybuilding activities taking place inside prison.

Although the questionnaire does not go into any explicit detail, a certain amount of cobbling together is sometimes needed in some prisons to provide even a minimum of cultural and sporting activities. Although this often means bending the rules and adjusting the practices that usually apply, it is the only way of trying to meet the recent and growing need in prison for areas where prisoners can do sport. Many prison chapels, exercise yards, dining halls, common rooms and other spaces have been converted from their original use so that they can be used for sport.

### **Matching sports areas to the prison environment**

The provision of purpose-built infrastructure that is then adapted to suit the prison context involves the construction, or compliance retrofitting, of infrastructure in prison that is imported from the social reference model. Whereas the aim might appear to be that of simply bringing prison sports facilities into general compliance with the standards that apply out in society, the actual aim is to allow the spread and use of such standards inside the prison walls in accordance with the roles assigned to sport. In other words, it is about tending towards the sports model that applies out in society as a means of facilitating prisoners’ medium- or longer-term rehabilitation through sport.

The construction or compliance retrofitting of sports facilities according to the model based on social reference norms is therefore an example of the policies and measures

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23. Question 8, “Does the prison offer sports facilities?”, p. 6.

carried out in several member states to meet requirements and to overcome the current difficulties of developing sports programmes. It boils down to either renovating existing facilities or building new ones. The former solution means adapting sporting standards to suit the architectural constraints of prisons, whereas the latter means designing new prison buildings that comply with the same reference norms and standards as those that apply to sports facilities outside the prison, in society.

### **Public spaces, multipurpose spaces**

As well as being used for sport, sports facilities are also spaces where prisoners can socialise. Their function, as well as ensuring compliance with the statutory reference standards that apply outside prison, is also to perform a potentially socialising role by providing common, shared social spaces for the prison population. As multipurpose common areas, they have the advantage of leaving the prison population a certain amount of freedom to use, appropriate or redefine the available space. Such freedom is relatively rare in the other parts of prisons. In that respect, prison sports facilities can be seen as an important “public” space.

In addition to the questions about cost that tend to dominate any discussions about the construction of sports facilities, these comments also raise questions about the benefits, or necessity, when prisons are being built or renovated, of consulting different sports experts working in prisons and also in the non-prison sphere, with a view to harmonising the two different approaches so as to move away from the purely prison-centred model that still prevails in many prisons. It is also worth pointing out in this context that there are currently many projects that include cells, work spaces, classrooms, infirmaries, sports spaces and leisure spaces, in which each space is dedicated to and used for the particular purpose for which it was intended.

Another question connected with facilities has to do with not just short-term funding capacities but the cost-effectiveness over time of investing in sports facilities.

Lastly, questions relating to the policies governing investment in facilities prompt more questions about how these facilities are used, and how such use is supervised. Which facilities are best suited for which predominant use, in response to which needs of the prison population, and in pursuit of which policy goal? It is worth considering the practical uses made possible or dictated by the different spaces, from multipurpose sports facilities to the fully equipped weights room. For example, are the different spaces self-managed or supervised, for collective or individual use, specialised or multipurpose, for experienced users or beginners?

### **Supervision of sport**

Although the extent of staff involvement varies considerably from one prison and/or one country to the next, all the respondents indicated that they had staff who were involved in managing sport in prison.<sup>24</sup> However, there is no mention in the survey of special skills or sports qualifications for organising and/or supervising sport.

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24. Question 34, “How many staff are involved in the provision of the sports offer in this prison?”, p. 22.

When asked whether the prison has a sports coach, there are sudden differences in the replies: 48.12% of respondents stated that they did not work with a coach, whereas the remaining 51.88% said they did.<sup>25</sup> There are several ways of interpreting these results.

Firstly, the question uses the term “coach”, which refers to traditional federative sport and is perhaps not suited to the main goals of sport in prison, and therefore not likely to apply to most respondents. If it is assumed that the use of coaches brings a rather technical, competitive vision to sport which, for prisoners, would mean a quest for performance, then the decision to employ coaches does indeed raise questions. Is it possible, easy and justified to organise coaching sessions in prison for a majority of inmates? Are the services of a coach or educator necessary for sport in prison? How do these aspects of sports policies match the objectives they set out to fulfil? How is this decision made in relation to prisoners’ socialisation prior to imprisonment and their sporting and cultural capital?

Following on from the questions linked to the recent introduction of sport in prison, the heterogeneous approach to the professionalisation of sports supervision is another telltale sign of past inconsistencies and fluctuating practices, particularly as regards training for prison sports supervisors, a growing sector. Often organised according to a “bottom-up” approach, it is common for sport to start on the pitch with no other equipment and as the result of an individual employee initiative, before gaining a structure and becoming a permanent fixture, in particular thanks to budgets as they became increasingly necessary.

This point leads back to the previous discussion about the poor financial support for sport. Given that the wage bill represents a large, if not overwhelming, share of the prison budget, cuts in wage costs are common in sectors considered to be secondary or peripheral, such as sociocultural activities. Such activities then have to take second place behind guarding and security functions, which in the last two decades have been reinforced on a political level, (re)gaining the upper hand in most post-industrial countries, including in Europe.

On top of that, the process of developing specific professional identities is a lengthy and complex one, all the more so because it generates conflict and resistance to change. Whereas in some countries this process led to the creation of a specialist body of staff dedicated to sport in prison, in other countries this sporting role has been outsourced or simply absorbed within the prison by being combined with other functions and entrusted to non-specialist staff.

For 50.36% of respondents, supervision of sports programmes is mainly entrusted to prison officials (whose sports function is not explained in the questionnaire). For 27.74% of respondents, it is entrusted to federal instructors or coaches from outside the prison. For 8.82% it is entrusted to the prisoners themselves and, lastly, in some cases there is no supervision.<sup>26</sup>

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25. Question 12, “Do you employ/work with (a) coach(es) who trains prisoners in sport?”, p. 8.

26. Question 20, “Who is guiding the sports programme?”, p. 13.

The questionnaire then includes a question about recourse to other structures, clubs and sports associations. Co-operation with sports clubs is mentioned by 47.76% of respondents. The remaining 52.24% replied that there was no such co-operation in their prison and/or country.<sup>27</sup>

When member states are asked what resources they use most to meet their objectives, human resources come first. More than other any resources, the use of qualified staff seems (for 67.41% of respondents) to contribute most to meeting sport-related objectives in prison.<sup>28</sup> Partnerships are also regarded as important for many administrations. These mainly take the form of co-operation with the sports sector, especially clubs and local associations (for 53.33% of respondents), and local authorities (for 42.96% of respondents). To a lesser extent, outside funding sources (for 30.37% of respondents) seem to enable some administrations to meet their objectives. The possibility for some administrations to extend and follow up their sports programmes in co-operation with the “outside world” also seems to be a way of meeting the objectives of sport in prison (for 30.37% of respondents).

More rarely, co-operation with other public authorities is a resource that helps meet the objectives of sport in prison. The questionnaire mentions the Ministry of Sport (24.44% of respondents) and Ministry of Health (15.56% of respondents). Lastly, some respondents (13.33%) mention sports club membership for prisoners as a way of achieving the objectives of prison sport. Supervision also reflects the whole approach to prison sports policy.

## **C. The policy of sport in prison**

### **Governance**

Affirming at the same time a certain view of the political governance of sport in prison, 57.25% of respondents stated that there was a person in their administration who was directly responsible for drawing up, managing and developing prison sports policy.<sup>29</sup> The scope of these responsibilities and powers varies considerably. Sometimes responsibility lies with the national justice department, sometimes it is entrusted to the prison directors and sometimes there are links with an interest grouping or organisation (in the education sphere). Once again, this raises questions about the wording of the questionnaire. What is meant by “responsible for”? And at what level: the level of the prison, region or national government? And what kind of powers are at stake here: educational, administrative, technical, or political? These questions are connected with the legal framework of prison sport in the member states.

### **Rules and regulations regarding sport**

The study reveals certain differences between the national legal contexts regulating how sport is organised in prison.<sup>30</sup> Firstly, of the different categories of replies that

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27. Question 13, “Does your prison co-operate with sports clubs?”, p. 8.

28. Question 26, “How are these objectives achieved? (open question)”, p. 17.

29. Question 33, “Is there a person, task force or organisation directly responsible for designing a policy regarding sport in prison?”, p. 21.

30. Question 2, “What laws or decrees regulate the functioning of prisons and sport? Are there any set norms? If yes, which ones? Please indicate everything you are aware of!”, p. 3-4.

mention statutory regulations governing sport in prison, 44.85% of respondents indicated that there is a national law in their country governing the functioning of sport in prison. On top of that percentage, a further 19.85% of replies mention both a domestic law and a decree or internal regulations of correctional institutions in connection with the organisation of sport in prison. From the details given, it is clear that in the vast majority of cases these national laws come under a general law governing the prison system and the competent ministry. Lastly, some respondents mention the existence only of European and/or international regulations governing the organisation of sport in prison (4.44%).

Moreover, of the countries that refer to a legal framework surrounding sport in prison, although most highlight the lack of specific norms governing sport, some report that the organisation of sport in prison is guided by certain general principles. Basically, underlying these principles that apply to the different administrations is a common obligation to facilitate prisoners' access to sport, as far as structural constraints allow, by making arrangements for a secure environment, timetables, space and/or supervision or coaching. As regards ensuring a secure environment, some countries also mention an obligation to ensure that sporting practices are safe; they refer, for example, to a restriction in the choice of sports considered to be violent, such as combat sports (Finland, Sweden). On the question of timetables, some member states explain that time in prisoners' schedules has to be reserved for sport (Denmark), and sometimes there is even a minimum daily or weekly amount of time for sport that has to be available to them (Belgium, Cyprus, Ireland, Iceland, Finland). As for space to be set aside for sport, the statutory regulations governing prison sport include a requirement to provide gymnasiums equipped for and used for sport (Ireland). Lastly, specialist staff must be on hand for sports supervision (Ireland).

Of the respondents who make no mention of legal regulations governing sport in prison, 7.41% stated there was no special law and/or decree governing the organisation of sport in prison, 11.11% failed to answer this question, and 11.11% found it confusing. Ultimately, nearly 30% of replies expressed an apparent or actual legal void or, at least, limited knowledge and awareness of the legal framework. Once again, these parts of the questionnaire suggest that there is room for improvement with respect to the support for sport in Europe, how it is regulated by law and hence its identity. In particular, sport in prison would benefit from more impetus on an institutional level, better structuring and better recognition.

## **Opening-up of sport**

There appears to be a need to ask more questions and to expand on issues relating to the opening-up of sport within and outside of prison. Openness to the outside world is mainly addressed in the questionnaire in terms of whether the sports movement is involved in coaching prisoners and, more generally, in the organisation of sport in prison.

In this respect, member states are mainly asked about any co-operation with the sports movement. According to the results of the questionnaire, the majority of

respondents do not co-operate with outside clubs and associations (52.24%).<sup>31</sup> The answers given here suggest that there are different visions and different models for how sport in prison is organised and managed. These models seem to range from responsibility for sport that is entrusted to the prison services inside the prison, to sport that is outsourced, where some of the responsibility for organising it is entrusted to open society, particularly the sports movement.

However, there are no questions about other forms of investment or support for sport in prison, nor about exchanges that may be possible between the prison environment and society (participation in championships, organisation of projects and events, granting of special sports leave, communication campaigns, partnership agreements).

## **D. Evaluation of sport in prison**

This question about evaluation is crucial, and therefore we felt it was very important to consider it not only from the point of view of identifying meaningful prison practices that have proved their relevance and their worth, but also with a view to possibly drawing up recommendations for the future and specifications that member states can refer to later when developing their policy on sport in prison.

So, with these two aims in mind, it makes sense to focus as much on the content of the evaluation of sport in prison in the different member states as on how their administrations related to the questionnaire, along with the underlying question of how the evaluation was used.

### **Uses of the evaluation**

Nearly 41.45% of respondents said they did not perform an evaluation. In respect of the prisons and member states that did perform an evaluation, there is no mention of the kind of evaluation, its frequency, the evaluating authority or the precise territorial level involved. However, the survey did ask respondents for their positive or negative impressions of the evaluation based on the results it produced.<sup>32</sup> Accordingly, 52% of those who had evaluated their sporting activities considered the results to be relatively positive, 19% considered them to be “neutral/average” and 29% considered them to be negative. Furthermore, among the respondents who indicated that an evaluation had been carried out in their prison, some degree of convergence can be noted in the content of the evaluations, particularly as regards the desire to improve the social atmosphere in prison and develop prisoners’ psychosocial skills.

### **Lessons learnt from the evaluation**

As regards these strategies for developing sport in prison and how successful they are, the questionnaire asked the member states to describe the success of their activities,<sup>33</sup> and 73.34% of respondents recognised that their work had been “successful” primarily in improving the prison atmosphere. On a more modest scale,

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31. Question 13, “Does your prison co-operate with sports clubs?”, p. 8.

32. Question 30, “If yes, which main results did these evaluations deliver?”, p. 19.

33. Question 27, “How successful have you been in achieving these objectives?”, p. 18.

57.77% of the respondents described the use of skilled staff for sport as having been a success (15.56% rated the effect of this as neutral and 14.81% as unsuccessful). Furthermore, 54.81% considered that efforts to meet health objectives in prison had been successful (30.37% considered these efforts neutral and 5.18% unsuccessful). Use of sport to pursue social skills objectives seems to have been a success for 51.85% of the respondents (neutral for 34.81%, unsuccessful for 3.70%). On the whole, the objectives that were less successful were co-operation with the sports movement (successful for 33.33%, neutral for 22.96%, unsuccessful for 11.86%) and efforts to secure sports funding (successful for 26.26%, neutral for 19.26%, unsuccessful for 15.56%).

## Impressions about sport

The questionnaire showed that, on the whole, prisons perceived sport in a positive light. With respect to prison staff, 79.20% of respondents expressed their positive appreciation,<sup>34</sup> and in the case of prisoners the percentage was even higher at 91.54%. These results prompt two remarks. The first concerns prisoners' highly positive appreciation of sport. It is an assessment which needs qualifying insofar as the question was answered by the prison administrations, not by the prisoners themselves who, it must be remembered, were not asked for their views. The second point to note is that, however positive the appreciation of sport, there is a falling-off effect, in other words a difference between the prisoners' perception and the more nuanced perception of staff. This raises a broader question about the relationship generally between prison guards and inmates. Given that this relationship is often based on discipline and hierarchy, there can be different perceptions, at least about the "positive" use and value of sport in prison.

## Repercussions of sport for prisoners

The study reveals a fairly positive perception of the repercussions of sport for prisoners. Only 12.12% of respondents observed negative effects of sport in prison.<sup>35</sup> Comments include references to violence, doping and addiction to sport. Phenomena such as violence, the development of a hierarchy and a culture of force, which particularly concern sports like bodybuilding or team sports, can be linked to what some authors call the prison "subculture" (Clemmer 1940; Sykes 1958; Vacheret and Lemire 2007) or what others refer to as social uses of the body thought to reflect a vision of the world, a vision which, here, is popular and divided (Bourdieu 1979; Boltanski 1971). Chapter 3 of this publication looks at how this subculture operates and the effects on sport in prison, according to the particular prison context.

As to how sport affects prisoners' behaviour, the study reveals a wide consensus on the influence of sport on health and social skills: 85.19% of respondents considered that sport had an important effect in terms of better health.<sup>36</sup> The social skills regarded as most important (by more than 70% of respondents) were then assessed

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34. Question 37, "Do you feel that the sports offer is valued by the staff in the prison system in general?", p. 23.

35. Question 24, "Have you observed any negative impact regarding sport and the inmates?", p. 15.

36. Question 23, "How has sport impacted the behaviour of prisoners?", p. 15.

in relation to two key dimensions: control of individual and group behaviour within the prison, and integration or “solidarity” links, in other words how individual prisoners relate to others.

The relationship with (self-)control seems to be characterised by the importance attached in a sporting context to acceptance of the rules (82.22%), discipline (80.74%) and self-control (76.30%). This dimension seems important from a statistical point of view, as it comes up frequently and regularly in the questionnaire in different forms and via different questions.

The relationship with others is characterised by the importance attached to a more tolerant atmosphere (85.93%), team spirit (76.30%), tolerance (77.78%) and fair play or loyalty (75.56%).

Lower down in terms of importance, there are the effects of sport on rehabilitation (65.93%), self-awareness (65.18%) and endurance (58.52%).

Lastly, the skills least influenced by sport would appear to be prisoners’ leadership skills. Only 37.78% of respondents considered the effect on these skills to be important. For 42.96% their importance was neutral, and 14.81% did not consider the impact on leadership skills important at all.

What can we learn from these self-assessments and, more generally, from the measures taken by the prison administrations in the member states in relation to sport?

## **IV. For an extended reflection in more depth**

### **A. Outlook for sport**

Based upon this assessment of the effects or benefits of sport for prisoners, the study ends with a description by the prison administrations of what the authors of the questionnaire have called “good practices”.<sup>37</sup> Although only a few examples of “good practices” were given in the replies, they can be grouped together under two main approaches common to the different administrations.

They refer, firstly, to sports competitions requiring training sessions and, secondly, to the opening-up of sport through co-operation with stakeholders outside the prison. These two approaches, often described as “good practices”, give an idea of strategies for developing future prison sports policies. They also confirm the prevalence of rehabilitation as a priority for prison sports policy.

In addressing the question about the future development<sup>38</sup> of sport in their prison, 77.78% of respondents considered increasing the sports offer to be a priority, and 77.78% of them also thought that improving the sports facilities should be a priority. With reference to the policy of sport “for all” in prison, the majority of those who took part in the questionnaire recognised that making access to sport easier was an important priority. Providing a range of different sports was identified as a priority

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37. Question 39, “If you know any good practices of sports offers within the penitentiary system, please shortly list and add why you consider this good practice!”, p. 24.

38. Question 28, “How do you intend to develop further the sports activities in your prison?”, p. 19.

in 69.63% of the replies. This section of the questionnaire picked up again on the imbalance and over-representation of certain sports in prison, suggesting it would be worth offering prisoners a broader range of activities, particularly in response to the challenge of rehabilitation. Consistent with the desire to increase the sports offer, 68.14% of respondents said that priority should also be given to increasing the number of hours of physical activity. In addition to the issue of access to sport, this question postulates that there is also a correlation between the number of hours and frequency of sport and the benefits to be gained for the prisoners concerned. We come back to this idea later.

Lastly, 56.30% of the respondents identified improving the quality of sports coaches as a priority. In additional observations, given as open replies, they mentioned the need to increase sports funding. These last two aspects probably reflect not only the need for more training and financial support for sport in prison but also the challenge of proving the legitimacy of sports practices with a view to securing proper institutional recognition.

## **B. Questions raised by the study**

From the proposals made by some of the respondents<sup>39</sup> at the end of the study, it is possible to identify some outline recommendations for sports policy in European prisons.

First, the respondents make a number of practical recommendations, suggesting the need for a more robust policy in terms of infrastructure, funding, supervision and sports equipment.

Second, there are educational recommendations to do with the content of sports programmes, in particular the need to offer a wider range of sports.

Third, there are recommendations concerning the image of sport in prison and how it is portrayed. They suggest the need for better recognition in prisons and public opinion of the role that sports programmes can play in preventing reoffending. They also suggest the need for better communication in this respect.

Based on these proposals and the different replies identified in the study, chapters 2 and 3 of this publication focus on a few key topics: the existence of different models for organising sport in Europe, and in particular the policy of openness and co-operation with the world of sport; the availability of resources for sport in prison; staff training and, with that, the need to hold sports supervision in higher regard; in relation to the voluntary status of sport, the difficult and unequal access to sport for some prisoners, particularly minority groups; the role and development of the evaluation of sporting practices; and, lastly, the question of territorial consistency, and the development of first a national and then an international policy of sport in prison.

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<sup>39</sup> Question 40, "Do you have any recommendations for policy makers (European, national and/or prison level) with regards to the sports offer in prisons?", p. 25.

## Chapter 2

# Capitalising on the social uses of sport in prison through “good practices”

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**T**his second chapter attempts to analyse the macrosociological issues raised previously in the light of sports initiatives implemented in prisons. It analyses how sport is put to practical use in various prison set-ups, beginning with a description of the measures taken and moving towards the perception, often at institutional level, of their impact. Based on that analysis, this chapter seeks to point the way to capitalising on the strategies deployed by different administrations and the mechanisms implemented to cater for the needs, often seen as important, of a vulnerable population.

Our focus on the specific ways in which sports amenities are organised, developed and sometimes innovated in the prison environment revolves chiefly around ideas and statements expressed in terms of “good practices” identified by and in the different member states.

This chapter is based on accounts and descriptions of what are identified by the different member states as “good practices”, as well as various studies, particularly by sociologists, mobilised to resolve the issues put forward in this work.

From the baseline of a description of various sports amenities, programmes or projects seen as “exemplary” in the different prison sports set-ups in member states, there are a number of questions forming a continuous thread for our analysis. What are the current projects? In each case, what is their scope, their aim, their state of progress? What are the expectations of the population, broken down by specific target audiences, men or women, as regards sport, detention regimes and long or short sentences? Is it possible to assess these amenities and, accordingly, gauge whether they meet the needs or expectations previously identified in prison establishments? What are the systems of regulation, co-ordination, training and collaboration that make it possible for sport in prison to attain its goals and develop? Within sport and sports facilities in prison, to what extent may there be permeability and exchange with the outside world, particularly the sports movement, and for which detainees, to what ends and in what conditions? In a nutshell, how and to whom does sport offer benefits in prisons?

### **I. “Good practices” for whom? And why?**

The expression “good practices”, voiced as a strong expectation on the part of different Council of Europe member states, whether in terms of political acceptance or of common application, raises questions in scientific terms. Being by nature a

yardstick derived from a specific culture and context, these good practices cover challenges and realities that are complex, variable and relative, depending on one's viewpoint. A practice viewed favourably from a given angle by a given stakeholder may be viewed very differently by another stakeholder and/or in another context. The subjective nature of such an assessment – “good” practice as opposed to “bad” practice – results in the very kind of value judgment that scientists seek to avoid, preferring to lean towards vigilance and/or what Weber saw as axiological neutrality (Weber 1919/1963).

Accordingly, this chapter does not aim so much at supplying an inventory of the models or patterns of sports practices deemed most relevant for organising sport in prison, and therefore capable of being robotically reproduced in identical form and the same state of development, but rather aims to elucidate the current trends driving sport in prison, through a few examples of measures that have actually appealed to member states from certain positive angles.

The diversity of prison contexts and differing attitudes to sport prompt the fundamental idea that there is a whole host of practices, beneficial to some and inadequate or non-existent to others. Beyond each of these dimensions, there is the further differentiating factor of sports activities that do not attract equal enthusiasm in every part of Europe or from every individual.

The challenges posed by the practice of sport, for the prison administration and the public authorities, do not necessarily coincide with the realities experienced by those actually practising sport, the detainees themselves. Consequently, status within the prison is a decisive factor in shaping the definition of a “good practice”, which is therefore relative. So there is a great diversity of opinions regarding sport in prison and differing views of what defines a “good practice”.

## **A. Differentiated uses and meanings of sports activities in prisons**

From one country to another, one region to another, one prison to another and ultimately one prisoner to another, concepts and uses of sports activities differ according to the prison population's socio-demographic characteristics (in particular, age and gender), their cultural and sports capital, sentence duration, status within the establishment, particularly in the eyes of its leadership, and/or the degree of stigmatisation. Note that the sports activities of prison staff and/or the administration in general, while they do exist, are not directly dealt with here.

Given the range and differing characteristics of practices regarding sport, for which access, meaning and appropriation are dictated by context, a comprehensive inventory of those practices and an objective assessment of their quality or effectiveness are simply impossible.

Accordingly, these “good practices” are qualitatively analysed in the light of the complex social realities *in situ*. All the programmes mentioned in this publication that have been singled out for praise by the institution and/or prisoners, appear at first sight to be chiefly geared to the mission of reintegration that is assigned to sport by the different administrations. These sports activities are first characterised in terms of what purpose is pursued and what benefits are at stake for prisoners, and they

are then illustrated by descriptions of a few examples of amenities, before finally leading to a summary of the dynamics and mechanisms at work in these programmes.

They vary enormously in form, pattern and content, mobilising resources and protagonists that differ greatly from one context to another, thus making any effort to construct a typology of these practices a simplifying blanket exercise. Notwithstanding their diversity, the different prison sports programmes in Council of Europe member states do appear to be structured around two common approaches, enabling us to understand and situate each of them as we collate them in this work.

## **B. Common approaches**

The first approach considers how open or closed sports activities are. They vary greatly, depending on prison configurations, from inward-facing, with the organisation of sport oriented inside the prison, to outward-facing, with organisation oriented towards the world outside prison, even stretching as far as permission to go outside the establishment. Depending on this orientation, sport takes on a variety of forms and responds to a wide range of challenges, which it is our task to grasp and situate.

Inward-facing sports activities, the most common kind, often cater for the inmates' immediate need to endure the prison context and adapt to it through sport. From simple routine exercise to participation in prison events of a more occasional nature, sports activities enable detainees to combat the harmful effects of day-to-day seclusion and a sedentary existence, in the interests of both physical and mental well-being, among other things.

Outward-facing activities, often developed in collaboration with the outside world and sometimes organised outside the prison, meet a less immediate need to prepare the detainee for a return to society. Chiefly intended to pave the way for a detainee's reintegration, these sports programmes may lay greater emphasis on socialisation at both relational and professional levels. "Training activities are becoming more widespread in order to promote the exchange of sports experiences, information and documentation on physical education and sport. Among the actions that are carried out we can highlight sports training courses, referee courses, sports schools, conferences, screenings and exhibitions" (statement by Spain, Pan-European Conference on Sport and Prison, 2014).

The second approach shaping the organisation of sports activities in prison is the degree of institutionalisation. This approach also caters for the reintegration function by showing the prisoner the many different ways in which sport can be practised, with considerable contextual variations in frequency (occasional or regular), level of intensity and style (leisure pursuit or competition), supervision (self-managed or trained) and structure or form (more or less formal and organised).

Ranging from occasional, recreational, informal sports activity, seen by some prisoners as merely a way to pass the time, to intense, regular, trained and competitive activity, which has become a real driving force of performance for others, we can identify different models, each capable of taking on the contours of good practice, appropriated and represented in different ways depending on the needs of the prison population.

Like that of other countries, the Spanish experience shows how sports programmes can take a dual approach:

Recreational sports and physical activity seek to promote attitudes, skills and behaviours that help to prevent social high-risk behaviour and favour insertion, trying to meet the existing demand, achieving physical, mental and social well-being through the development of basic physical qualities;

With competition sports we are promoting self-improvement through competition, taking peers as a reference, encouraging at the same time relations with non-criminal groups. We try to promote official competition in those sports that are more interesting for inmates and that are usually performed in the social environment where each prison is located. For this purpose, the necessary contacts with the territorial federations are established. In addition, championships between inmates of the same centre and inter-centre competitions are encouraged. (Statement by Spain, *ibid.*)

These programmes more generally pursue the aim, for the system or society, of steering the detainee towards social integration, termed by Castel (1994) as “making society”. Nevertheless, these practices are shaded with nuances and full of latent challenges, which are considered in Chapter 3, devoted to critical analysis.

When identifying these good practices, there is a major issue to be borne in mind in connection with the nature of social skills or targeted measures hinging on sports activities. Based on the thesis expressed at the beginning of this publication that sport forms part of an integration drive that may make it easier for the detainee to “(re) make” society, three main angles of study are emphasised that identify that process: benefits in terms of health, relational capital and professional socialisation. Sports programmes ultimately target the acquisition of certain social skills or attitudes which could conceivably be converted, transposed or transferred at the end of detention.

Sections II, III and IV (below) relate to the good practices identified by the stakeholders themselves. Although the practices are described one after another, there is a dialogue and interdependence between them, because individual fulfilment or well-being can take on multiple dimensions which cross over, reinforce one another or accumulate, just as much to support the prisoner on the road to integration as, in some cases, to make it more likely that they turn off it. The well-being characterising an individual’s state of health is as much the fruit of a balance between physical or biological conditions of existence as of their lifestyle, and therefore of their social conditions of existence, viewed here in the two dimensions defined by Castel: relational and professional.

## **II. Sports activities and health in prison**

### **A. Health in prison: a major concern**

The relation to health seems to be a relevant category for analysis of sport in prison in several respects. Firstly, sport increases an individual’s propensity to integrate. It influences and shapes their relational stability and professional integration.

Furthermore, health is a major concern for the different institutions and players involved in handling detention in Europe, as evidenced by the setting up of programmes, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) Health in Prisons Programme,<sup>40</sup> and by institutional publications focusing on this aspect of detention (Lehtmetts and Pont 2014; WHO 2013). There is very real consideration of health issues in the prison environment today.

The member states and their prison authorities are now mindful and reminded of this issue, through the alerts and various criticism they receive on two levels at least. At the first level, this criticism deplores belated, weak and unequal commitment in respect of the overall population of the different institutions regarding this issue. And, while most organisations have integrated this health promotion dimension into the heart of their programmes and missions, much remains to be done on the ground, as indicated by WHO recommendations on this subject (WHO 2013).

Second-level criticism focuses on the poor overall state of health of prison populations, citing both the characteristics of prison populations, particularly vulnerable upon arrival in prison, in physical, psychological and social terms, and the incarcerated way of life that is likely to exacerbate that fragility while serving the sentence. "Observations regarding the prevalence of numerous disorders and pathologies in prison point to a situation that is generalised for all prison establishments in western Europe" (Verdot 2008), with prisoners being on average twice as ill as the general population (OIP 2011; Verdot 2008; Obrecht 2000; Lhuillier and Veil 2000). "Illness, all pathologies combined, is linked to poverty and financial and cultural destitution. We know that 60% of prisoners live below the poverty threshold, and it is not surprising, therefore, that the prison population presents serious pathologies linked to exclusion, marginalisation and addictions: drug addition, alcoholism, smoking. Overall, the prison population is twice as ill as the general population of comparable age" (Lecorps 2004: 81).

According to WHO,

Prisons are extremely high-risk environments for transmission of infectious diseases because of overcrowding, poor nutrition, limited access to health care, continued illicit drug use and unsafe injecting practices, unprotected sex and tattooing. If prisons are not to become a breeding ground for infectious diseases, prevention and treatment must be an integral part of the penal system. Three major issues challenging prison health are HIV, drug use and tuberculosis (TB). Hepatitis C and sexually transmitted diseases are also major threats to the health of prisoners. (WHO 2009: 1)

As well as endangering prisoners' "general well-being", this fragility is reflected in an over-representation and expansion in prison of various illnesses such as HIV (human immunodeficiency virus), hepatitis C, tuberculosis, drug addictions, depression, stress and anxiety, sleep and eating disorders or increased risks of melancholic depression apparent in a high suicide rate (Gonin 1991; OIP 2000; OIP 2011; Freudenberg 2001; Viggiani 2007).

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40. See [www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-determinants/prisons-and-health/who-health-in-prisons-programme-hipp](http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-determinants/prisons-and-health/who-health-in-prisons-programme-hipp).

With prisoners presenting “medical conditions that are very serious, to say the least” (Verdot 2008), the inclusion of sports activities in measures for their management and well-being in prison appears to be a legitimate approach that reaches beyond the mere physical aspect. “The improvement of physical health and fitness – in the face of the inherent risk of physical decline due to the restriction of movement – may foster a constructive attitude towards communication, ties with the family, in particular children, and a co-operative attitude with others and may support a positive development of leadership skills in a context where the risk of a negative leadership is round the corner” (Mauro Palma, Chair of the PC-CP, Council of Europe, Pan-European Conference on Sport and Prison, 16 June 2014, Paris).

## **B. Sport and health: an age-old tandem**

This vision of sport as being physically, mentally and socially beneficial harks back to a historical idea that is today widespread, if not universal, and broadly taken on board in all walks of life. While that vision is tempered by scientific literature, keen to curb excessive faith that might prompt conclusions that sport is a good thing in all circumstances, it is worth pointing out not only to what extent those beneficial effects are not “naturally occurring” and not systematically induced by definition or by “essence” in sports activities, but also that they are the result of the conditions in which physical exercise is organised and regulated from a pedagogical, political, health and economic viewpoint.

Scientific literature, the world of education, those involved in sport, political protagonists and the major intergovernmental organisations recognise in turn the importance of sport as a factor in well-being and health promotion. In the eyes of many, sport remains firmly associated with health and seems necessary for the favourable development and fulfilment of our citizens and their societies. As pointed out in Chapter 1, within the different authorities surveyed, in most Council of Europe member states the development of sport in prison should provide a response to the challenge of health promotion, education and development in prison.

The damaging influence and risks, particularly of a physical nature, presented by sports activities are undisputed in certain contexts, where they can be an arena for expressing and escalating violence and discrimination of all kinds, where one can learn how to withstand pain or suffering, for example, or the art of doping, where injuries and pathologies linked to overtraining or undertraining are well above average.

And yet, when we consider other cultural dimensions – we are thinking here of diet, healthy living, lifestyles and biorhythms, various cultural practices and the like – sport can contribute, at its level, to improving health, in certain conditions and in a relative proportion. No – sport, depending on the context and the definition we give it, does not boost individual fulfilment in all cases and, when it does, it cannot do so alone.

While research and scientific literature have really not got over this desire to define sport, which is in fact dynamic and multifaceted, both in its forms and the issues it encompasses in our societies, they do identify the prevalence of values and benefits which have underpinned its historical construction and/or have been associated

with it. It was very much in this spirit that the European Sports Charter defined a vision of sport as

all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competitions at all levels. (Council of Europe 1992/2001)

Recognised as being of a certain public utility in promoting health and health education, sport occupies a significant place at the heart of our educative systems, ideas and practices. And, although sport is not universally recognised as a human right, it plays a role in promoting those rights and helps to foster the fundamental right of access to education and the full development of the individual in our societies.

The various testimony and practical experience recorded in this publication suggest that sport in prison provides inmates with access to a form of physical education through a sports culture and more generally a physical culture, which are themselves a means of enabling detainees to become inculcated with habits, abilities, knowledge and, more broadly, social values and attitudes beneficial to this quest for health, generating combined psychological and social effects whose impact should be looked at more closely.

The European Prison Rules (EPR) – adopted by the Council of Europe’s Committee of Ministers on 11 January 2006 as Recommendation Rec(2006)2, replacing Recommendation No. R (87) 3 – promotes the role of sport in health, stating that:

[p]roperly organised activities to promote physical fitness and provide for adequate exercise and recreational opportunities shall form an integral part of prison regimes. (Council of Europe 2006: Article 27.3)

### **C. Health: seeking to enhance well-being in prison**

Without going back over the debates and beliefs that have been associated with the construction of the notion of “health”, we thought it important to look at the meaning conveyed by this notion in order to pinpoint the challenges involved in sports activities for prisoners.

“Health is not defined once and for all. It is not something that fits into the absolute or a given period. Its definition bears the traces of time. In a word, it is a story” (Rauch 1999: 13). From that story, the notion of health has retained primarily the relationship with physical well-being seen through the overriding prism of illness. This concept of health has evolved considerably and, after some refinement over the 20th century, it has gradually asserted itself as having an emphasis on well-being and the fulfilment of the individual, not only in biological terms, as was previously very much the case, but as a whole, incorporating the social and psychological aspects too. From the beginning and still today, it has been understood by the World Health Organization as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”.<sup>41</sup>

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41. Preamble of the Constitution of the World Health Organization, as adopted by the International Health Conference, New York, 19-22 June 1946; signed on 22 July 1946 by the representatives of the states (World Health Organization official records, No. 2, p. 100) and entered into force on 7 April 1948.

Although somewhat general in nature, this definition is widely accepted and forms the basis for health-related thinking. As the worldwide benchmark definition, it raises questions in the context of prisons.

On the basis of this definition, taken literally, the drive for health cannot be an end in itself in prison but rather an unattainable goal if we admit that it is historically incompatible with incarceration. Beyond the issue of physical well-being of an individual, nowadays less affected by detention, which no longer targets the body as something to suffer from expiatory punishment, there is the trickier issue of their social and psychological well-being, which suffers collateral damage from confinement and other forms of deprivation of liberty.

The definition of health is currently a broad one, covering an individual seen in their entirety. In doing away with the archaic vision of an individual separable in terms of body and soul, this definition leads us to question whether social well-being and mental equilibrium – which among prisoners are not only precarious but also rendered more fragile – are at all possible in a situation of incarceration.

Health is gradually coming to be understood from the viewpoint of the individual's general fulfilment which, historically, has not been a prime goal of imprisonment. Time served in prison stems more from an antagonistic logic enforcing a court sentence which, through a custodial measure, imposes criminal punishment and is therefore of a negative tenor. Before any kind of opportunity for reinsertion into society is perceived in such a measure, the penalty is organised by and in society on the pattern of a judgment and a banishment of the individual pronounced guilty of reprehensible acts, with restrictions on their existence, aimed at rendering that existence more painful.

It is true that society's way of dealing with crime, through the penalty of imprisonment, is designed to preserve the cohesion and social and moral order of our societies (Durkheim 1895), an aspect that cannot be ignored and that results in the construction and expression of a need in terms of public safety and security. Today, that need comes across as a more pressing one, particularly in the face of crimes of a sexual nature or terrorism. But from the viewpoint of the individual being punished, the prime historical function of imprisonment is not fundamentally geared to well-being. Before we can even begin to think about rehabilitation, imprisonment reflects logics of expiation, deterrence and neutralisation that have been ingrained in our societies for centuries (Combessie 2001). Through the eyes of a sociologist, "it is clear that prison is designed to destroy a person" (Chantraine 2004a: 111). This admittedly critical view draws a perfect question mark over the evident need for and even function of prisons in our systems, but more fundamentally it prompts us to further explore the alternatives and how to prevent delinquency, and therefore how prison could be avoided altogether, as well as possible shifts in crime policy and penal institutions.

For the sociologist, it is the neglect of this multidimensional welfare of the individual, and more generally of the dual influence of integration and social regulation (Durkheim 1895/2004), that helps us understand how delinquency emerges and is generated in our societies, and more or less indirectly the increase in prison populations. While crime can be understood as a "normal fact" (Durkheim 1895), it remains a

dynamic social construct. In our societies it is defined in relation to social norms and rules, labelled and established not in terms of an action but on the basis of a societal judgment. In fairness, it is through the prism of well-being that societies should feel able to question and adjust the ways of dealing with criminal acts.

That is why many prison systems have attached increasing importance to improving detention conditions. And this is where sports activities come into the debate on prisons. At the same time, a drive to improve health, as a premise for committing to sports activities, seems complex and excessive, if not unattainable, in such a context. The term “well-being” used in the definition of health above, ultimately appears ill-matched to the prison context. What this study suggests is not to use the term “well-being” as meaning good health but to recognise a drive for improved well-being, as a plank of prisoners’ commitment to sport, which would be a more sensible approach, more in keeping with the prison context.

## **D. Physical fitness**

The emphasis placed on promoting health through sport in prison can be perceived in different ways. Through a whole host of programmes, physical activities are used as a tool for addressing, fostering and inducing improved well-being for prisoners during their detention, in the same way as they could be used in the outside world. As several studies confirm, these programmes are seen as having beneficial effects on prisoners’ physical fitness at a number of levels and in different countries (for example, Battaglia et al. 2013; Pérez-Moreno et al. 2007: 1-7).

In view of the generally fragile state of health of prisoners and their low level of sports performance on arrival in prison, with some going from doing no sport to engaging in sports activities on a daily basis once in detention, we have to consider how these activities influence their improved physical, mental and social well-being. Supervised sports activities are seen as firstly influencing prisoners’ physical fitness according to their different physical abilities, with maintained or improved performance among those regularly practising structured physical activity being frequently observed. The different protocol set up in an Italian study was shown to “produce substantial gains in functional capacity (cardio-respiratory capacity and reduced risk of cardiovascular illness) in male detainees. Those substantial gains in functional capacity illustrate the great potential of supervised exercise sessions for improving prisoners’ state of health” and “[c]urrent results show that supervised physical activity improves prisoners’ physical condition and state of health” (Battaglia et al. 2013). In particular, introducing structured aerobic exercise programmes is said to help maintain the fitness of detainees by compensating for the detrimental effects of the sedentary lifestyle in prison, by working on their respiratory and cardiovascular capacities. See, *inter alia*, the study on walking by Fischer et al. 2012.

So there are several studies confirming the dominant views of those involved in sport demonstrating that, in certain circumstances, the practice of sport changes a person’s physiognomy, and this can help to regulate prisoners’ muscle tone and mass as well as their weight. “These benefits include ... weight loss, and increased muscle tone” (Buckaloo, Krug and Nelson 2009: 329).

Beyond the period in which the sports programme is run, the physical benefits may be long-lasting and even continue after the prisoner's release (Spalding et al. 2004; Strawbridge et al. 2002; Gool et al. 2006). "On condition that the individuals follow a regular exercise regime, the results are visible in the long term and possibly throughout their entire life" (Buckaloo, Krug and Nelson 2009).

While there are a handful of studies highlighting the role of sport in curbing the development of certain illnesses that are widespread in prison (for example, Awofeso 2010: 25-33), it is also true that sports programmes are also rarely developed with this in mind. Most prisoners and administrations point firstly to the playful aspect of sport.

The Walking Towards Health programme (En marche vers la santé) on offer in France to a number of identified and medically supervised prisoners is an exception here and illustrates how sport can be used to promote prisoner health and what resources are needed for it.

The idea of the scheme is to get people used to sedentary existence back into physical activity. To empower these people in their sports activities, it is indispensable to include an enjoyment factor that will be their driving force. Hiking combines physical exercise with discovering the heritage of the Val d'Oise area, not forgetting the important aspect of socialisation, as well as three days where they find out what it is like to be disabled and live like a blind person. Health walks are offered to people referred by the outpatient consultation and care unit; these are people suffering from chronic illnesses (diabetes, cardiac or respiratory problems) or on suicide watch. The outings are supervised by prison staff as well as a nurse from the outpatient consultation and care unit. (Statement by France, Pan-European Conference on Sport and Prison, 2014)

Dependent on heavy involvement of the medical sphere, not only during the programme but all around it, bound by the rigorous supervision protocols operating in this context, presenting risks and incurring costs that not every administration could bear, this programme remains a rarity within the overall offer of sports activities. Evaluation studies backing up the use of sport in prison as a curative means in connection with certain illnesses, particularly chronic ones, are just as rare. At best, this type of programme supports prisoners in improving their physical conditions of existence and indirectly in rationalising their living conditions in relation to and in accordance with their illness.

A more frequent phenomenon is the introduction of sports activities with a view to addressing addictive tendencies, drug consumption and dependency in prison (tobacco, alcohol and psychotropic drugs). Regular and structured sports activities in these programmes are geared to influencing prisoner behaviour by reducing addictive consumption patterns and the need for substitution treatment.

The example reported by the Spanish prison authorities of the Metagym programme developed in their country illustrates the "good practices" identified. This sports programme is aimed at a group of 25 prisoners monitored under an anti-addiction scheme known as the Methadone Support Programme. It was devised in Madrid V prison in the belief that, for the prisoners participating in this programme, physical activity can be a substitute for methadone. Around 50% of the prison population is more or less dependent on psychotropic substances. The methadone maintenance programme, run in line with WHO recommendations, provides medical stabilisation,

improved compliance with pharmacological requirements and a reduction in conflicts. However, since methadone causes a high rate of relapse among prisoners taking substitution medication, the objective is to gradually replace this treatment by sport. Metagym has proved that physical activity, in certain conditions, trains the body to produce endogenous opiates, such as dopamine and endorphins, resulting in a feeling of pleasure and well-being, lessened dependence on methadone and, more importantly, a substantial reduction in the recurrence of addiction.

A further benefit of sport is considered to be its potential to help prisoners forget their punishment and escape the reality of life in prison, not only by merely physically occupying their attention but more fundamentally by taking their mind off their (onerous) incarceration and its detrimental effects on their health, including mental health.

In other words, sport is seen as helping to dissipate and, for some, numb the problems of a life seen as asocial. As a symbolic or physical palliative, sports activities are frequently considered in terms of their tranquillising effect. This idea of numbing or tranquillising negative feelings is also present in the outside world but the impact is far greater in a prison environment, one of whose covert roles is indeed to neutralise an individual within society.

Soothing, pacifying and tranquillising an individual's troubles constitute a possible benefit of sports activities and their quasi-sedative effect. Indeed, most prisoners acknowledge how sport promotes sleep, and therefore its ability to kill time. Studies focusing on the relationship between insomnia and sport, for example, definitely show the influence of sport on sleep disorders. They also note that, among detainees not suffering from sleep disorders, there is a greater incidence of sports practitioners (Elger 2009).

Covering up the reality of prison life is said to provide something of a means for prisoners to soften the sentence and its consequences (Goffman 1961/1968: 123). The same phenomenon is observed among certain individuals living with Aids and engaging in sport to give their lives a semblance of normality (Ferez and Thomas 2012).

Thanks to its occupational dimension and highly diverting or even hypnotic function, sport in both the outside world and in prison combines pleasure and fatigue, its numbing ability covering a dual dimension: physical and symbolic. By seeking to use their body in this way, many prisoners also fulfil a need to make good the social harm caused by imprisonment, disqualification and disaffiliation.

## **E. Psychosocial effects of sport in detention**

The sports programmes highlighted in scientific literature and case studies of good practices are regarded as having a clear impact on the mental health and improving the mental well-being of the prisoners taking part.

Most of the authors having studied this impact conclude, among other things, that, for prisoners with minor levels of depression, stress and anxiety in prison, exercise is an effective adaptation strategy for coping with imprisonment (Buckaloo, Krug and Nelson 2009; Martos-García, Devis-Devis and Sparkes 2009; Nelson et al. 2006). Accordingly, the setting up of specific programmes appears to be a factor in preservation of mental health or the containment of psychological problems, potentially

reducing the syndrome of depression (Buckaloo, Krug and Nelson 2009; Cashin, Potter and Butler 2008; Libbus, Genovese and Poole 1994).

In addition to the influence of regular sports activities on mental health problems, sport is also considered to boost the self-esteem of the participating prisoners (Amtmann, Evans and Powers 2001; Leberman 2007; Ozano 2008; Pedlar, Yuen and Fortune 2008; Sabo 2001). Several states, including France and Spain, mention efforts made in this connection via the introduction of specific programmes aimed at prisoners presenting mental health issues.

In Spain, for example, the main aim of a programme run in Madrid III prison is to improve the quality of prisoners' lives through physical exercise, by working on their self-management and behavioural stability, as far as their problems allow it, and a positive change has been observed in the participating prisoners. Their situation has improved in that they have picked up good health and hygiene habits. Furthermore, thanks to this programme, medication has been reduced, and the prisoners have become very keen to exercise and improve their general physical condition.

In addition, there are a number of studies showing the positive impact of sports activities on levels of anger and aggression (Wagner, McBride and Crouse 1999). This leads us to consider their benefits for regulating the interplay of prisoners' emotions.

## **Regulating the interplay of prisoners' emotions**

Sport is regarded in all the countries surveyed and by all the stakeholders in prisons, from prisoners to administrations, as an activity with proven benefits and virtues. Everyone recognises its importance in the serving of their sentence and within the establishment. Important it certainly is, but to what extent and at what level? When it comes to explaining why, words are in short supply but one thing is clear: sport does you good!

(Researcher:) And can you imagine prison without sport?

(Prisoner:) No way. Because it fills in time to begin with, it's in your mind between sessions, even before you get ready and start thinking about it, and then afterwards when you come back and you're still thinking about it, you take your shower, you feel good. All that time, it takes up a good three or four hours a day, and that's a whole lot of time. You get through the night easier too because you sleep better.

(Researcher:) So is that the main benefit of sport here for you?

(Prisoner:) Well, I'd say it is to begin with, it takes up the time, yeah, but then after that it's the sport itself. You enjoy it and you get better at it.

Prisoners are already happy simply to have access to these activities which they find pleasant and vital, as a means of recreation and occupation at the same time. So the desire for enjoyment is sufficient justification for using and developing sport. A feeling of exaltation and the seeking of pleasure, in the sports activity itself and in progress and improved performance levels, explain at least part of prisoners' passion for sport. That pleasure can be seen as having several meanings.

These activities' ability to break up the routine echoes the studies produced by Elias (Elias and Dunning 1986/1994) in his analysis of leisure pursuits and his understanding of the civilizing process for our societies. In the prison context, they largely

owe their success to the potential for prisoners to give themselves an area for free expression, counterbalancing the weight of social control and ambient regulation. Often effective in the daily programmes provided for inmates, the idea of enjoyment characterises many sports programmes.

All the member states mention this organisation of sports activities which, while apparently routine and commonplace, give a great many inmates the pretence (Goffman 1961/1968) of a normal life and the attendant psychosocial benefits. More often than not, these programmes take the form of freely organised and accessible daily activities revolving around several dominant disciplines, with their management sometimes entrusted to prisoners and sometimes orchestrated by an official who is able to co-ordinate initiatives or their implementation. These sports activity programmes, which could be defined as free, allow prisoners to choose both the discipline and the form of commitment, their partners and the level of investment in time and effort.

While it is viewed overall as a remedy to cure all the ills of incarceration, sport is described at the same time as simply a means of letting off steam, revealing a degree of ambivalence that does little to appreciate what issues are really involved in sport in prison. It can provide a means of combating most of the perverse effects of imprisonment: isolation, solitude, promiscuity, dehumanisation, sleep disorders, boredom, routine, surveillance, omnipresent discipline, stress and depression. In short, it breaks the monotonous and often sedentary pattern of cell life.

In some detention regimes, where inmates may be kept in their cell day and night, particularly in preventive detention where detainees are awaiting judgment or in establishments for prisoners serving short sentences, sport provides a rare opportunity to leave the cell and interact with other prison inmates, in which case it may become synonymous with an easing of strict conditions and an enjoyment contributing to the constant drive for improved well-being of a population struggling with its existence. It is in its dual cathartic and mimetic dimension that sport, an area where the “unleashing of emotions” is tolerated (Elias and Dunning 1986/1994), can really improve the well-being of the prison population.

In prison, probably more so than in the outside world, the cathartic power of sport seems compounded, in line with the heavy ambient structural constraints. Sport in prison comes across as a need which many prisoners did not cultivate prior to their incarceration. The pleasure stimulated by physical exercise also comes from the fact that prison sport, functioning as a social area, generates and diversifies interaction in the prison environment, helping to heighten both excitement and keenness to participate.

The mimetic nature of sport also stems from the symbolic escapism it offers. Practising a sport provides an opportunity to get one’s body moving in a context that breaks with the time and space of detention. Organised in facilities that are sometimes similar to those outside and enjoying a fairly positive image associated with fun and entertainment, the sphere of sport stands apart from negative images of prison.

(Prisoner:) It’s good for relieving stress, it’s good for your esteem and for working out your frustrations. People on the outside go to work and have other means of using up their energy, whereas we’re locked up here and we need it as a safety valve, so things don’t explode.

In a fun and friendly atmosphere, generating social relations through mimetic activities that are fairly close to what exists in the outside world, prison sports broaden an otherwise restricted horizon, thanks to their strong symbolic dimension and the associated imaginary world. These are precious and much sought-after moments as they trigger feelings and/or illusions of reliving sports situations resembling “real life” in the outside world in a mimetic approximation.

Within the workings of this dual cathartic and mimetic logic we can ultimately see a real interplay of prisoners’ emotions (re)forming. While sport channels their stress and anxieties, it generates and liberates emotions and tensions at the same time. While the liberation of these feelings is mostly seen as a pleasant sensation, they take on far more importance as they are normally controlled and repressed in prison. As an arena for expression, resistance and release of emotions, sport is seen as one of the most “open” areas in prison. But what characterises the subtlety of this sociological interpretation is the idea that this release of emotions and tensions fits at the same time into the well-regulated, defined and authorised framework of contemporary sport and is expressed in line with the values it conveys. This “civilizing process” of learning the controlled decontrol of emotions through sport (Elias and Dunning 1986/1994) leads the prisoner to master and balance their behaviour as they oscillate between regulation and emotional release.

In another way, Gallant’s studies (Gallant, Sherry and Nicholson 2014) reiterate these emotional benefits of sports programmes for the participating prisoners and the added value for prison management. By demonstrating what are considered to be the surprising effects (ibid.) of these programmes on emotional and mental health, the author emphasises once again their positive impact on prisoners and more generally on the prison community. Observing that the detainee and detention are placated by sport, he explains how it has spread to all prisons. This advocacy of the pacifying virtues of sport in prison is relayed by administrations keen to spark the interest of their prison population – in particular to counteract structural difficulties such as overcrowding – in opting for more peaceful cohabitation, rendering imprisonment less painful for everyone. Consequently they support the provision of sports activities for the prison population.

## **Building a somatic culture in prison**

Sociology postulates a very strong affinity between the social conditions of a person’s origin and then of their existence and the relationship with the body as a real vision of an interiorised, incorporated world. Accordingly, the corporal conduct of individuals from the same category or the same social group may be understood as the product of a “social habitus” interiorised, learnt and translated by the body (Bourdieu 1979). This social habitus has been described as:

[a] system of deeply interiorised rules which ... organises the relationship of individuals from the same group with their body and whose application to a great many different situations generates different patterns of physical conduct adapted in different ways to those situations but with a deep-lying unity stemming from the fact that they always match the somatic culture of those implementing it. (Boltanski 1971: 225)

Endowed with a corporal culture stemming from their socialisation prior to imprisonment, prisoners import into prison a certain relationship with the body and therefore with sport. It is true that individual life paths and stories, social relationships in terms of gender, age and ethnicity, and histories of crime previously experienced and then interiorised, mark the individual with a corporal imprint that is their own, the fruit of their accumulated social experiences.

Nevertheless, as we pointed out by way of an introduction, the prison population in different countries and different prisons tends to be sourced from more or less the same kind of social background and specifically from the most underprivileged sectors of our societies. This sourcing from “poverty” gives us an idea, from this theoretical viewpoint, of the nature of the corporal model cultivated and held in esteem by the individual, in this case from an underprivileged background, and the social purposes of the prisoner’s body. Notwithstanding a degree of diversity, most prisoners say that they were not as keenly interested in sport before arriving in prison. Few of them had engaged in sport as regularly and intensively as they did once they were imprisoned, in which case we might wonder about the scale, volume and nature of the sports capital (Bourdieu 1992) that characterises this population on arrival and then how this pans out in prison. Two hypotheses might be put forward for the effects of sports programmes during imprisonment: the reinforcement of a pre-prison corporal habitus or a transformation of that habitus; or else corporal hexis (ibid.).

The prisoners talk about a certain change in their behaviour brought about by the regular and sometimes intensive practice of sport. Closely watching their weight, detailed monitoring of their muscle mass, watching what they eat, exchanging tips, paying attention to physical symptoms, better understanding of the body’s functioning and anatomy, perception of the effects of practice and anticipation of any issues, regulation of biorhythms and the daily discipline of training all underpin a real cult(ure) of the body.

Reaching well beyond the sphere of sport, it is an entire relationship with the body and more fundamentally the world that is voiced in this behaviour. Beyond “physical fitness”, we can postulate that, for some prisoners, there is a new somatic culture being “manufactured” through the practice of sport in prison. In certain prisoners, it is visible in the closer attention they pay to their body, bodily hygiene, diet and overall upkeep, all apparent signs of health education. Taking the form of new bodily habits, knowledge and a system of values, this education would even be a pathway to promoting and preserving health inside and then outside, on a more or less long-term basis. Furthermore, this process may engender the development of a real cult of the body.

The influence of the media (specialised press and television), during but also prior to detention, plays a decisive role here in the socialisation of the prisoner and the construction of this cult of the body. That influence is all the more marked in prison, where every single item of outside culture brought within the walls caters for a need for outside contact and fills another gap in the accumulated lack of exchange with the outside world.

However, our research has also revealed both the excesses and abuses that such an attachment to the body may engender in prison. For example, it can trigger an

addictive relationship with sport which, if excessive and unsupervised, can result in injuries, doping and/or a wearing down of the body. It can also alter social relations in prison, placing the body at the centre of relationships of paroxysmal force in a reclusive, restrictive universe, characterised by a feeling of criminal community and “homosociability”, particularly in men’s prisons.

(Long-sentence prisoner:) But here (I just do) bodybuilding. ... [He shows me a photo of himself when he was musclebound]

(Researcher:) Where does this desire to bulk up come from?

(Long-sentence prisoner:) I’ve had a thing about it since I was little. I can’t explain it. I’d always admired this sport since I was a young boy, muscles, stuff like that, being brawny! But not for doing competitions, I didn’t fancy the competitions at all. I never did any competitions, I just did it for me ... But in the end you live for your body. In everything, starting with food. But some blokes tan themselves, shave their body and all that. In the central block it’s worse than here. You see everyone lying on towels on the grass with oil on them, and they’re really tanning themselves.

Yet, often developed on the basis of prisoners’ aspirations and the bodily ideals they have interiorised and imported from their environments of origin, does the culture of sport in prison fundamentally change prisoners’ relationship with their body and, if so, how and to what extent?

(Researcher:) So if there wasn’t any sport, prison life would be very different for you?

(Long-sentence prisoner:) ... But I don’t know, yes it would change things. Prison without pumping iron would be strange! It’s the image you have of prison. That’s the way it is, there’s always guys bodybuilding in prison!

The way in which prisoners spontaneously say “bodybuilding” when they mean “sport” highlights how this form of sports activity has become a dominant, assimilated feature and it reveals the corporal model idealised in prison. This model has as its central focus the glorification of force, resistance, virility or courage. Seen in this way, bodybuilding not only wins the approval of the prison population, but more fundamentally becomes associated with a prison sentence. For many prisoners, there is no prison without bodybuilding, and going to prison means *de facto* that they will engage in this discipline. The administration explains that this “self-evident” fact is also down to reasons of practical organisation, as it is an activity that is easier to set up inside the establishment than many other sports, especially in prisons with little in the way of facilities or whose architecture is full of constraints and dated. But this theory does not go the whole way to explaining why bodybuilding is so popular. Even in recently built prisons, equipped with outdoor and indoor sports facilities other than weight-training rooms, this activity is still very much all the rage.

This “naturalisation” of bodybuilding and the issues surrounding bodybuilding programmes need to be looked at. Firstly, we can see the expression of a secondary adaptation to the institution, a prime means of resisting prison and what is in it, as many prisoners confirm. More fundamentally, this relationship with the body is surely the fruit of a “structural homology” for prisoners having socially internalised, in keeping with their outside and inside lifestyle, the equation of an idealised standard sport that exudes popularity, masculinity, power, energy and virility. So this practice

is very clearly a form of reinforcement and ultimately incorporation, firstly of social relations, juxtaposing a “bourgeois/outside/dominant” practice with a “popular/inside/dominated” one, and then, through those relations, the reinforcement of the stigma and disqualification of incarceration. It is a form of alchemy that brings sport, prison and the sentence forth as a physical form. The prisoner feels that he is protecting himself against a condition to which, through this physical relationship, he would otherwise be only more and more attached and socialised (on this point, see Sempé 2015.) Before reaching any conscious plane, prison could be said to be learnt via the body, internalised, embodied and lastingly memorised.

## **F. The conditions for beneficial sports activities**

In a nutshell, “through certain benefits that we have been able to measure as regards stress, depressive symptomatology, self-esteem, physical satisfaction, the quality of life associated with health, physical condition and subjective health, we believe that physical and sports activities can provide real educative, therapeutic and health-enhancing support, at low cost, for people in prison, as well as prison institutions” (Verdot 2008: 305). In the light of all these analytical elements, while maintaining the body and engaging in regular sports activities are indeed an effective means, as prisoners see it, of combating the harmful and sometimes lasting effects of imprisonment, in the long term they can also constitute a marker of that experience of imprisonment and a means of adaptation to the lifestyle in prison.

However, studies and measurements evaluating sports programmes in the different prisons of Europe in terms of the impact on prisoners’ physical health are sadly few and far between where open-regime prisons are concerned, and very much limited to a specific context or facility. Consequently, they do not currently provide an overview of the situation in Europe, and their findings cannot be generalised to all programmes.

What is clear from some of them is that the obstacles encountered during programmes include the high rate of prisoners who drop out of the programme. This point refers back to the early influence of motivation processes and the sociocultural factors of self-elimination that prevail for everyone in practice and in the deriving of any health benefits.

When the link between sport in prison and health is cited by the different member states and those involved in sport in prison, it tends to be vague and usually conveys naturalised and generalised beliefs in the benefits of sport throughout society, from the open environment to the closed prison context. “By promoting sport we encourage the inmates to promote a healthy way of life” (statement by Moldova, Pan-European Conference on Sport and Prison, 2014). By winning collective approval, this depiction swiftly leads to the conclusion that merely setting up sports activities in prison would bring about an improvement in prisoners’ health. As Moldovan prisons are among the poorest in Europe, one might wonder if there is something of a gap between the official statements regarding sport and the sometimes precarious real situations of prisons, which are still hard pushed to meet even the primary needs of the prison population.

Are then, the physical and psychosocial benefits perceived in certain prisoners and in certain prison contexts within the reach of all prisoners and all prison establishments? Ideally, sports activities can help to improve health, or at least prevent it deteriorating, for prisoners whose development and well-being are particularly at risk. But what are the conditions attached to the claimed benefits for the greatest number of prisoners? Do sports activities not carry incidental dangers for prisoners?

What the few studies and/or evaluations of specific sports facilities do agree on is the existence and necessity – if the intention is to influence the health of prison inmates – of stringent requirements for organising these programmes at several levels. These requirements and the likelihood of them being implemented in most prisons suggest a number of precautions. But no official guidance or specifically devised handbook geared to physical benefits in prison exists to answer these questions and support their development, at international level or indeed at national level in some states.

Improving prisoners' physical conditions of existence through sport nevertheless remains subject to a few indispensable prerequisites if there are to be proven fitness benefits for prisoners. The literature and reports on what is being done in different member states mention the influence of programme intensity and activity frequency. We have indeed observed that a prisoner's progress in improving some of their physical conditions of existence (cutting down on smoking, sleep disorders, apparent signs of aggression) depended on a minimum level of physical activity. While that level varies according to the studies, in relation to the demographic make-up of those studied (age and gender in particular) and their physical capital (particularly their previous practice of sport), it also hinges on the prison context, which is more or less closed, more or less stringent, more or less assiduous in organising sports activities. So taking account, *inter alia*, the prisoner's state of health and physiological and psychosocial characteristics is necessary from the outset of running sports activities but also in the follow-up to that programme. The fact that that state of health is set in a specific context should be considered at the same time.

Analysis of prisoners' state of health in the light of sports activities must also take account of age-related characteristics. Some studies have shown that those engaging in sport have a lower average age than the overall prison population. It is mostly young prisoners who are involved in sports activities and the majority of programmes are therefore geared to them. Some states, such as Georgia, stress the importance above all of tailoring their programmes to these age characteristics and then focusing strongly on the juvenile population in the organisation of sports activities. Reiterating the powerful educative potential of sports for young people, the Georgian Resocialisation Programme for Juvenile Prisoners appears to illustrate these "good practices" geared to and specifically structured for the age of prisoners and their specific needs. Obviously, in the context of an ageing prison population in some states, focusing on young people, who are often a priority in public sports policies, must not rule out consideration of and initiatives for other categories, of adult and more senior age. That said, many countries do not currently have the resources to develop several programmes in parallel and/or cater for the diverse needs of the different categories concerned.

Some states point to specific problems in terms of health and in difficulties in accessing traditional sports programmes (often competitive sports) experienced by specific groups of prisoners, particularly the more elderly. As lengthier prison sentences are applied, particularly for sex offenders, prison administrations are observing an ageing of their population and have become aware of the specific physical problems stemming from age and incarceration. Bearing this in mind, some have geared their programmes to sports activities for more elderly prisoners. These programmes mostly require qualified supervisors and include “soft” and accessible disciplines, either with an individual bias based on relaxation and fitness activities, such as gymnastics, yoga or walking, or with a more collective bias based on activities such as pétanque, badminton or table tennis.

One example is the Seniors Sport and Health programme developed in France under a partnership between the French prison authorities and the Léo Lagrange National Sports Union (UNSL). This multisport programme, on offer to male and female prisoners aged over 50, is intended to mitigate the loss of unaided mobility due to ageing in a closed and confined space. It also seeks to reduce cardiovascular risk resulting from a sedentary existence. Finally, it pursues the objective of breaking the social isolation induced by incarceration. Supervision is effected simultaneously by sports educators from the UNSL, prison staff and the staff of consultation and outpatient units. The programme combines a personalised and collective approach to sports activities in three phases: a phase in which the prisoner’s profile and state of health is assessed, a phase involving work in specific workshops and a phase in which progress is evaluated. The 15 sessions are structured in three parts: synchronised work focusing on balance and the prevention of falls; then a workshop on the cardiovascular, muscular and articulatory systems; this is followed by more enjoyable, collective activity revolving around games in order to work more on the aspects relating to prisoners’ identity and sociability. The programme is assessed on an ongoing basis through the keeping of an individual sports record containing information on the prisoner’s health, their progress and tailored, personalised advice on nutrition, sport and health in general.

Along the lines of this programme, the various stakeholders involved in sport linked to health in prison stress the fundamental need for specialised and competent supervision to ensure that the relevant and safety-oriented conditions stemming from “good practices” are applied, as to the pace, control, nature and repetition of the activity. Finally, they emphasise that thought must be given to the content of activities and the monitoring of the prisoner as a safety condition pertaining to good practice.

But can these components be applied to all contexts and all populations? This is an issue that prompts the different stakeholders in sport in prison and various academics to consider the competence and forms of this professional supervision of sports activities. The risks and/or the possible endangerment of a vulnerable population lacking crucially important notions should be highlighted to avoid situations where activities are excessive, uncontrolled and, in short, dangerous: this is particularly the case with bodybuilding.

Informing the prison community in the broad sense of the term about the potential adverse effects of sport could avoid the framing of naive or dangerous policy (Meek 2014: 150). For Meek and Lewis (2012), sport and leisure activities can actually be harmful to prisoners' health (there is a greater risk of injury, for example) in the absence of supervision or depending on the nature of supervision. In addition to injuries, we should also bear in mind the risks linked to doping or the development of a sports addiction, which, instead of safeguarding health, could adversely affect it. Finally, there are also the issues of antisocial behaviour and phenomena of violence, to which we will return in Chapter 3 of this work.

Beyond mere information, the most important aspect is to train this prison community, and more generally any operative in contact with it, about the issues cutting across sport and the prison universe. As Gallant, Sherry and Nicholson put it (2014), the provision of sport and leisure programmes with the express purpose of improving the health, particularly mental and social, of prisoners requires the support of experts in prisoner management, psychology and social work. These programmes call for professionals with unique skills and expertise to ensure optimum distribution. The effective recruitment of sports trainers is a particular challenge in the setting up of these programmes.

The example of a programme resulting in a French Boxing Federation qualification illustrates a "good practice" in this respect. Its aim is to train qualified sports supervisors running a boxing-related sports project in a prison establishment. This training is part of an agreement formalising collaboration between the French Boxing Federation and the French prison authorities. It is run for two days every year at Poissy central prison for a group of 14 trainees. More specifically, it is aimed at sports educators with a boxing diploma wishing to gain a qualification enabling them to teach boxing in prisons. "This training leads to a diploma as a boxing trainer in the prison environment awarded by the committee for employment, training and development of the French Boxing Federation. It is valid until 2017, and retraining will be provided for all trained educators" (statement by France, Pan-European Conference on Sport and Prison, 2014).

This is taking place in a broader context of organising a number of common sports projects in prisons. One of the most important of these, the programme entitled *Another Round for a New Departure*, is offered in thirty or so establishments, the central project being to promote the educative scope of boxing. Aware of the developmental context of these numerous boxing sports projects in prison, the prison authorities and the federative sports movement have jointly expressed the wish, for this type of training, to support their development by catering for the "specific features of the prison environment (security, functioning, prisoner management, etc.) and also for the educational demands set by the project in its own right" (statement by France, *ibid.*). This training is put forward firstly as a tool to aid the management of existing projects and help "train and support boxing educators to guarantee a high quality of service to prisoner groups" and "run the sports project in optimum conditions". This entails understanding a number of parameters prior to the teaching effort which, once taken into account, will greatly optimise dealings with those being taught as well as the overall running of the project (statement by France, *ibid.*). This training then serves as a driving force, carrying and facilitating

the development of new initiatives. "Moreover, the recruitment of sports educators, to meet this new demand for services in 'specific' environments is constantly on the increase. Through their ability to meet this new demand, sports educators will help make their professional activity a permanent fixture" (statement by France, *ibid.*). A framework convention to guarantee the institutionalisation and lasting presence of a programme, a mix of stakeholders providing a balance of experience and views with regards to sports practice and prisons (men/women; prison authorities/boxing federation), official recognition of the qualification awarded, an annual evaluation of the programme, retraining over a number of years and finally visibility thanks to the support of a charity (the M6 foundation) are all precautions and commitments pursued by this programme with a view to better supervision of educative boxing activities in prison.

Finally, generalising and supporting the development of scientific work on a larger scale focusing on different prison sports programmes, disciplines, contexts and geographical areas could help both to more accurately identify the determining factors in beneficial sports activities and to shift practices towards a more targeted and relevant organisation of sports initiatives in prison.

Besides working to promote health in the prison environment, it would be interesting to study what prison sports activities contribute in more "general" terms: 1) among a large number of prisoners in order to "confidently" report on this contribution; 2) among diverse prison populations, in order to better gauge the role and impact of detention conditions (establishment, isolation, "segregation") on the quality of prisoners' lives, as well as the influence of physical activities in the light of these different situations; 3) by more specifically studying the diversity of sports activities in prison and their specific contribution in detention conditions; 4) by diversifying the issues studied and considered, with a view to highlighting any diversity in what physical exercise contributes, ... and also by diversifying the data collection methods used; ... 5) by monitoring populations in the longer term, post-programme, to be able to confirm the lasting nature of benefits and prisoners' real commitment to a healthy lifestyle. (Verdot 2008: 305-6)

### **III. Social links, identity issues and relational aspects**

While prison is a place where numerous deprivations and, consequently, suffering are imposed, it is also a living environment where sentenced persons cope with the constraints of an incarcerated existence. But detention can have long-term effects on prisoners, who are both forced to adapt to imprisonment – becoming a little less used to and prepared for "normal" outside life with every year that passes – and keen to prepare for their return to the outside world. The socialisation process in prison, torn between these two logics, is complex and continues to be a subject of discussion. On the basis of the classic typologies of prison, from Clemmer's *prisonniérisation* model (1940) to the development of cultural relativism today, one after another, experts on prisons have concluded that the type of institution (Gendreau, Goggin and Law 1997; Wright 1991; Wright 1993; Zamble and Porporino 1988), the type of offence (Gendreau, Goggin and Law 1997; Schwaebe 2005), the age of the prisoner (Gallagher 2001; Garofalo and

Clark 1985; Gendreau, Goggin and Law 1997; Hanson et al. 1983) or the prisoner's knowledge of the prison (Goodstein, MacKenzie and Shotland 1984; MacKenzie and Goodstein 1985; Zamble 1992; Zamble and Porporino 1988) "had a strong effect on the nature of the carceral adjustment" (Cabelguen 2006). We can further add the influence and articulation of the social relations of sexes, classes, ethnic groups, which are social in more general terms, if we are to fully grasp the complexity of prison socialisation dynamics.

What role can sport play in these socialisation mechanisms and adjustments in prison? One thing is clear to begin with: sport is an excellent support for socialisation in a context where there is a lack of opportunity for interaction and where areas for forging links and opening up are rare and restricted. Sports activities provide one such opportunity to both forge and regulate social relations in prison.

Underlying this view of sport, we can also glimpse a way of influencing lifestyle, and therefore of educating the prisoner first in prison, and then with a view to release. This socialisation through sport can pave the way for the activation, reinforcement or even construction of certain social inclinations (Bourdieu 1979), potentially useful in identity-building for vulnerable prisoners, who are belittled by others and often (self-)depreciated in prison. The idea is very much, via sport and sometimes even the use of the sports facility, "to mobilise the subject's capability to escape his situation of exclusion" (Castel 1994: 23).

Depending on the role assigned to them, the meaning bestowed on them and the resources allocated to them, sports activities in prison could provide an interesting vehicle for the development of identity, or even self-fulfilment, which might also pass on values and influence the often tough conditions of imprisonment.

Sport is neither virtuous nor educative in its own right, any more than it fosters by definition an individual's integration (Gasparini 2005), but practising sport is an obvious opportunity to forge a link, a link that needs to be considered and whose content needs to be adapted if these objectives are to be attained.

Many of the member states express an interest in sport and a belief in its ability to create the social link between individuals serving prison sentences. The ultimate aim is an educative aspect and therefore the possibility via that education, in particular through laying down norms and constraints (Durkheim 1934), of integrating the individual into society.

The obvious difficulty arising with sport in prison is to tailor it to a dual perspective whereby the prisoner is to be prepared for outside life on the basis of the norms and constraints of the way of life in prison. While this logic may seem ambivalent and even contradictory, it can be seen as a kind of distancing that is thought useful by those who currently frame penal policy, useful in order to gain a better view of the "centre" – that is, open, integrated society – by experiencing life on its "fringes", which ultimately are not outside it but define it and demarcate it. Among prisoners' difficulties in readjusting when they are released, one of the most insidious is probably the stigma of having spent time in prison, as it emerges in their self-representations and their relationships with others.

## **A. Combating the stigma of prison**

### **Leading a “normal” life**

Seeking to maintain or regain “normality”, in terms of the open environment, is the cornerstone of regular physical exercise for many prisoners and sometimes even the whole purpose of committing to a veritable sports career in prison. Convinced of the great advantage to be gained in being normal (Goffman 1963/1975: 93), it appears that prisoners do not sit out this social game either. Adapting to life in prison, in other words making the prison lifestyle as tolerable as possible, means, for most prisoners, seizing the slender opportunities to take their mind off their sentence by looking to the open environment. Many prisoners attempt, with the limited room for manoeuvre that they have, to reproduce their outside, pre-prison lifestyle. Accordingly, one of the opportunities provided by sport is to introduce greater freedom of space and time in an area and timescale that is otherwise particularly restricted.

Sport, seen by our societies as the symbol par excellence of leisure and free time (Dumazedier 1962), seems to provide a suitable tool for attaining that objective. Organising a balance of daily tasks that allow a mix of constrained activities and leisure pursuits seems to us to be the right way to go about the undertaking of a return to a life regarded as “normal”, in other words one that is constructed, generalised and then naturalised in the open environment in the collective conscientiousness. Sports activities would then provide a means of redefining, on the basis of a dominant societal model, a reality of prison life seen as a little less abnormal and/or less marginal. This is what many experts in the field of prisons call normalisation, that is, the introduction into prison, as the European Prison Rules put it, of the positive aspects of life in the community.

Equally providing opportunities to control the organisation of time spent in prison and to compensate for the weight of social constraint and regulation imposed by imprisonment, it appears that sport pursued as a leisure activity makes it possible to restore a life balance that many prisoners recognise the virtues and importance of in prison.

This is reiterated by certain states, such as Georgia, where the issue of age is concerned. Learning a life balance through sport is the central focus of a programme of resocialisation for young prisoners. This programme is geared to the aims of rehabilitation as well as prevention of crime and recidivism by young prisoners, by tackling the issues of how they occupy their time, development of intellectual and educative mindsets and aptitudes for creativity, of turning young people away from criminal activities and of developing their sense of responsibility. On the basis of co-operation between different institutional players (Georgian Council for Inter-Agency Co-ordination, Ministry of Correctional Services and Legal Assistance, Ministry of Justice), this programme lays on several activities, including sport, mainly involving football and rugby. Following teaching modules focusing on “values for young people” and civic education, via debates and team-led work, this programme blends different activities using a more informal approach. For the authorities, it results in better organisation of time for young prisoners and the development of their professional, physical and socio-psychological aptitudes.

## **A search for identity: remaining a “man” or “woman” in prison**

Being deprived of their freedom, including sexual freedom, prisoners are obliged to live in a context of homosociability. The prison lifestyle, characterised by the lack of sexual and gender diversity can make the construction of identity in prison – especially a “normal” gender identity (Chabaud-Rychter et al. 2010) – a more complex and problematic matter.

### **Sport, prison and masculinity: a “normal” gender identity**

Sociological studies enable us today to establish a close link between the culture of individuals, here of popular and disaffiliated origin, and the uses of the body whose socialisation process induces structure (Mauss 1934; Boltanski 1971; Bourdieu 1979; Pociello et al. 1981; Pociello 1995). Since sport has first and foremost a bodily dimension, it also has a gender dimension that is very present in prison. With a perpetual blurring of the biological order and the social order in the history of social relations, the pursuit of a masculine ideal within the scope of sport in prison is a major driving force in prisoners’ physical commitment.

Echoing this binary (di)vision of a sexually differentiated and differentiating outside world and guided by the structural articulation of prison–popularity–sport–masculinity–virility (Sempé 2007; Sempé, Bodin and Robène 2008; Sempé 2014), many prisoners seek to use sports activities to reconstruct and reproduce this gender order, and therefore to remain “real men” in prison. Reiterated in popular contexts, the exaltation of strength and virility is universally attractive.

Accordingly, most of these prisoners hark back to the traditional pattern of sport instilled as competitive, virile and “physical”. This pattern holds up the figure of a “real man” lying at the core of the patriarchal order and living up to the requirement of being strong, tough, independent, cruel, polygamous, misogynous and depraved (Stoller 1973).

Consequently, sports activities, with their potential for meeting this identity need, are organised around an androcentric vision and culture of the body and of sport, with prisoners keener on disciplines that are in keeping with corporal norms and traditional and popular values that define the contours of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1987).

It is a form of expressing identity with several characteristics that chime with the context of sport in prison: the use and control of power and physical force; the desire to open up in efforts to surpass oneself, for example; the esteem of heterosexuality, and through it a form of virility. The other two criteria of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1987), professional success and family hierarchy, are more difficult to apply in this context. Some authors, particularly those specialising in the study of gender in sport, tack on to these criteria the exercise of male domination over women (Terret 2004: 214-5).

This culturally idealised form of the male character with its emphasis on the links between masculinity and toughness, the spirit of competition, the subordination of women and the marginalisation of gays (McKay and Laberge 2006: 4), which prison puts to the test and probably revives the need for, appears to be transferable to the

uses of sport. In this respect, the sphere of sport can become an antechamber for a prison whose architecture has the characteristics of a real “men’s house” (Godelier 1982; Welzer-Lang, Dutey and Dorais 1994; Mennesson 2005).

Numerous anthropological studies identify a “men’s house”, often taking a specific form, forbidden to women and constituting the fulcrum of life and initiation into manhood for young men. The best-known example is the Baruya society in Papua New Guinea, studied by Maurice Godelier. In the “men’s house”, young men learn the basics of dominating women. ... Daniel Welzer-Lang extends this notion to western societies, with “men’s houses” designating anywhere where boys and men gather and are educated as such. (Mennesson 2005: 18)

Having incorporated the common equation of sport constructed around effort, virility and heterosexuality (Messner 1992; Wacquant 1995; Sabo 2001), many prisoners see in this exercise arena an opportunity to (re)construct the masculine identities that are certainly tested by detention. Accordingly, bodybuilding and football, sports historically internalised as bastions of masculinity/-ism (Daviess and Louveau 1998), are favourites among the different male prisoner populations. These sports appear to be (falsely) self-evidential choices in prison.

Many administrations and prisoners acknowledge that, today, these two disciplines are not only generalised to all establishments, and more generally to all states, but also more heavily associated with the prison lifestyle. Reactivating attitudes that were socially internalised prior to imprisonment, including the legitimacy of strength and virility, both bodybuilding and football take on a coherent role in a prison sentence in which the need is keenly felt to (once again) become a man. Through their culture and the relationship with the body that they induce, these disciplines provide objective but also symbolic opportunities to access a masculine identity represented as valued and giving value, especially in popular contexts.

Through playing football, prisoners who are receptive to the cult of achievement in which they were socialised (Erhenberg 1991), a cult which is even more heavily driven home in a context of hegemonic masculinity, have a chance to claw their way back from their social relegation through sporting conquest and achievement. In the logical continuation of this traditional vision of sport, many states mention the importance attached by the prison population to competition and/or achievement in sport in prison. So a number of programmes put emphasis on organising intra-prison championships whose competitive scope backs up this thesis. Asserting oneself through achievement under the critical gaze of spectators within the prison, partners, another prisoner team, a visiting team from outside or possibly a team of wardens may be a major challenge for many prisoners who are lovers of an idealised and gratifying footballing culture. One step beyond stands the chance of possibly (re)constructing their identity through sport in prison.

Playing in the prison football team is therefore a means of gaining major recognition, with all the many selection trials and negotiations, more often of an informal than an institutional nature, that this entails, providing the prisoners with a further opportunity to boost their “warrior capital” (Sauvadet 2006), which bestows on them a certain intramural power, and therefore balance. In a way, football is an extension

of an expression of identity already present for this population, which the literature recognises as having a certain closeness to communities from “poorer districts”.

In bodybuilding, focused on a relationship with a body that is ideally powerful, big, tough, musclebound and generally virile, prisoners’ corporal expectations chiefly express a need to please, forming part of a quest for masculinity (Sempé, Bodin and Robène 2008; Sempé 2014). From gestures to language, the repeated efforts of self-valorisation to be recognised as a “real man” constitute a real virility contest. The interest value and impact of this demonstration of virility becomes all the greater when it can be seen by the other gender, for example during a visit or an outing, when in contact with a woman from outside the prison or a female member of staff, and eventually upon release.

On top of physical achievement, highlighted in particular by visible musculature, there is the added bonus of social achievement within the prison. While the prisoner certainly becomes more visible, he also more symbolically accedes to power, which is a determining factor in a prison marked by aggravated power relations. The risk of these relations developing and with them power struggles around or stemming from bodybuilding is well identified, both by the scientific literature and by the prison authorities themselves. Indeed, some authorities have regulated the practice in order to lessen its perverse effects, one example being France’s restriction of free weight machines.

## **Sport, prison and femininity?**

The possibility of fulfilling gender identity through sport in prison, in the context of women’s prisons, raises a potential issue. Prison and sport are two social areas seen as having been historically occupied and constructed for and by men. As areas where a masculinity considered as hegemonic is expressed, the question arises as to whether the expression of a “feminine” identity is possible.

### **► The invisible incarceration of women**

As a result of a differentiated socialisation that is internalised and reproduced in the unequal social relations of gender, the position of women in our societies makes it unlikely that they will be offenders and also influences how their fate is decided, notably by the judiciary. Socially preprogrammed to avoid and/or be preserved from the violence and delinquency traditionally associated with men, women are indeed under-represented in the prison system and very much a minority in the prison population of Europe. Europe’s prisons hold around 100 000 women; the European median is 4.4%. Spain has the highest percentage of women prisoners, around 8%, and Azerbaijan has the lowest, at under 1.5% (Walmsley 2006; WHO 2009). On the other hand, the facts that their number is currently growing faster than that of men (WHO 2009) and that they are highly vulnerable have certainly not gone unnoticed by the experts.

The health and social situation of female prisoners is far more precarious on the whole than that of the general population. On top of health problems, which are considered as worrying in female prisoners, there are social issues whose characteristics appear to be shared across all European countries.

A large proportion of women in prison have experienced a lifetime of victimisation, including child abuse, neglect and domestic violence. There is a close link to the woman's criminogenic pathway and her mental and physical illness. (WHO 2009: 2)

Moreover, their specific needs, particularly in terms of appropriate health and social support, "can be seriously neglected in a male-dominated prison system. ... Women's rights while in prison are the same as men's rights, but women seldom have equal access to these rights" (ibid.: 8).

In correlation with the low rate of imprisonment of women in all the member states, there are few prisons specifically for women. As "prison sentences have been designed for men and by men, women are always an exception. It creates problems to find a special solution to meet the needs of women" (Kurten-Vartio 2007).

This situation affects their sentence on a number of levels. Firstly, women tend to be "imprisoned far away from their homes and families, causing serious problems in ... family ties" (WHO 2009: 15). Then, they are imprisoned together despite sometimes having committed very different offences and crimes, whereas men's prisons can arrange for a degree of segregation of prisoners: between prisoners awaiting judgment and sentenced prisoners, or between first offenders and repeat offenders, as well as by type of crime or offence, separating sex offenders, for example, high-profile offenders, terrorists or others.

If there are no specific establishments for women, still a rarity in a number of states, they may be held in women's blocks within men's prisons, where they are subject to a regime devised overall for male prisoners. This affects their living conditions and the management of their sentence in respect, *inter alia*, of security levels (women are mostly imprisoned for non-violent offences) and access to the different correctional reintegration programmes, including sport, which are designed on the whole for men (Penal Reform International 2008: 2). As far as arrangements are concerned, "prison policies and programmes are seldom specifically tailored to the needs of women, especially in the vital area of pre-release programmes and resettlement" (WHO 2009: 4).

The different international organisations and institutions, including the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the International Centre for Prison Studies and Amnesty International, have therefore focused on the question of more attentive and closely regulated management of women in prison, particularly as regards health and respect for their rights (Walmsley 2006; Bastick and Townhead 2008; Lane 2007; Taylor 2004; Amnesty International 1999). The challenge is twofold and entails curbing unequal treatment which women suffer in relation to men and more finely tuned provision for their specific needs in detention.

### ► A man's sport

In the sports world, also historically formed without the involvement of women, there are many studies showing up enduring inequalities, including access, differentiated and differentiating, to the activities themselves, their supervision, their promotion in the media and their governance.

Despite all this, the latest studies point to the efforts and joint effects of a gradual "feminisation" of sport and a "sportivation" of the women in our societies, as

demonstrated by the commitment of most national and international sports institutions to discussion and initiatives promoting this trend.

This increased involvement is borne out by numerous pieces of research into women and sport. With a view to promoting greater equality between men and women, these studies have, among other things, spelt out the mechanisms at work in the construction of male dominance and control of sport, and held up examples of struggles and major advances that today allow us to see a place for women in this sphere.

Despite previously being kept at arm's length from the traditional sports model, women are present in the sports arena today and are redefining its challenges, meaning and contours. It is perhaps worth pointing out that they are increasingly present and involved in all dimensions and at all stages of sporting life, as politicians and players in sports governance, as sports journalists, high-level athletes, academics and researchers, technical personnel, trainers and coaches, physical education teachers or just sports enthusiasts. While some male bastions resist their emancipation, the days when women were invisible seem long gone.

In a context where institutions are more proactively focusing on women prisoners while there is a parallel ongoing quest for the emancipation of women by and in sport in our societies, the question of their sports socialisation in prison arises. Considering the interventionism of educative and sports policies focusing on developing sport for women at both national level, in the different member states, and international level, and within both non-governmental and intergovernmental organisations, this priority treatment could be expected to extend to places of imprisonment, where probably some of the neediest citizens reside.

Among the women less likely to have access to sport, those from poorer origins and the poorly qualified are penalised. Furthermore, many of the female prisoners spoken to during our different studies displayed, in various ways, poor sports capital as most of them had never or very rarely practised any sport prior to imprisonment.

Do most of them enjoy access to sports activities in prison and, if so, in what conditions? How are these activities organised: disciplines, forms, supervision? What are their uses? What do they mean for women prisoners during their time in prison?

### ► The prospect of women's corporal/cultural emancipation in prison

In the first major quantitative European study on sport in prison or in the various reports gathered from Council of Europe member states, very little information has emerged during these two years of pan-European analysis and studies concerning the practice by women of sport in prison.

Most of the stakeholders in the prison sphere tend to spontaneously propose and link two general observations: women's lesser representation within the prison population and their lower level of participation in sports programmes. The involvement of women in sport in prison is therefore rarely mentioned in the different descriptions of good practices, where it is always men who are at the forefront, with no visible distinction between activities.

This point stealthily underlines one of the first inequalities of treatment with regard to women in sport: their differentiated access to it. As we can see from the history of women breaking into the sports sphere in our societies (Théberge 1995), many women exclude themselves *de facto* from sport, and that exclusion indirectly legitimises the fact that they are invisible in this area.

(Woman prisoner:) Sport in my block is not designed for women.

But the hasty conclusion that their limited experience of, commitment to and interest in sport supposedly points to a lack of need and would justify a degree of institutional indifference where this target audience is concerned, amounts to nothing short of discriminating against them even more and propagating their submission to this scheme of things. More than that, it is tantamount to pushing them away even further from the benefits of sport that could enhance their welfare, both in and after prison, which ultimately undermines their chances of reintegration.

And yet the needs of prisoners in terms of social ties, self-esteem, health, pastimes and entertainment, important for the overall prison population, would appear to be more acute among women, whose disaffiliation and precarious state, in the broad sense, are acknowledged as being more severe.

Indeed, those needs are expressed very differently in female and male prisoners, which means that we must not ignore or minimise their existence and at the same time consider their specific nature.

### ► Remaining or becoming “a woman” again: overcoming gender-related discredit

In many areas and at different stages our societies continue to be a theatre where scenes of women's (self-)exclusion are played out. At their high point, women run into a glass ceiling in their bid for power, and on the fringes the most underprivileged among them suffer a real impediment in accessing the necessary education and support. Women prisoners, substantially under-represented in the prison population, live in the shade of a society that bears a particularly strong grudge and discriminates against those who have not managed to live up to the social roles assigned to them by their gender.

The ambivalent representations of the murderous wife, the child-killer mother and violent women (Rostaing 1997; Cardi 2009) fall within the unthinkable in common wisdom, shaking a collective (un)consciousness locked into a traditionally gender-driven and insidiously highly normative moralism.

For men it is violence and excesses of all kinds, for women it is about sweetness and the role of the victim ... The image of the murderous woman, the woman criminal, the witch, in short the female monster, derives from this use of myth to divert popular opinion from all these realities that trouble the balance and stability of societies, for men who have forged the image of a stock femininity, and also for women themselves who do not recognise themselves in these criminals, monstrous figures who no longer embody all the virtues and values ascribed to their gender. (Régina 2011)

Seen as the lowest of the low, these women are also locked away with male prisoners with whom they share a status of being “unnecessary to society”, and they suffer an additional gender-related discredit which has them marked down as monsters. In a way, the concept of “gender trouble” (Butler 1990/2005) and the analysis of the monstrous produced by Butler, as illustrated by her study of the character of Antigone, may shed light on the mechanism of exclusion of certain prisoners portrayed as criminals before being seen as women.

How does a woman remain a woman or become a woman again in prison? This question takes on meaning in this context of “double punishment” of women prisoners. Using sports activities and the learning of a new relationship with the body as a means to and sometimes the end of a process of constructing a gender identity is one possible way of answering this question.

### ► An activity between peers

While the context of homosociability imposed by imprisonment redefines the nature of social gender relations both inside and outside the prison, at the risk of depriving these women of the socialising effects of mixed interaction, it may turn out to be a positive thing in the prison context.

The idea of all being women prisoners together does seem to be able to partly free many female prisoners of their corporal inhibitions and their cultural calling to remain sport-free, among other things. The challenge here is to counteract withdrawal, prudishness or uneasiness on the part of women whose life stories have forged a fragile relationship with the body, kept away from sport and deprived of its benefits.

Sports activities shared by women, under the comprehensive gaze of peers sharing the twists and turns of an unfavourable history and position, may relieve their fears over engaging in sport, releasing them from the burden of other people’s, and particularly men’s, perceptions and judgments. The lack of mixing – and therefore the lack of a male ascendant capable of reshackling them with a low level of involvement in sport, shame in doing sport and in showing their body, and a reluctance to emancipate themselves through the body and through movement – can facilitate access and initiation into sports culture.

This context of a shared activity between women, in this case poorly initiated into and little appreciative of sports culture, can further pave the way for organising activities and supervision that are better suited and more closely geared to their specific needs and (low) level of experience.

### ► Sports officer, supervisor, coach, a “special” man

In the light of these factors, for women prisoners, the role of supervisor is of paramount importance. As an icon of sporting prowess and a source of motivation, he is also very much a man and often embodies an “accessible” ideal. Keen on having him in attendance, female prisoners see in the supervisor the possibility of rebuilding mixed gender social relations. The gender dimension of their exchanges is therefore very present. This often gives rise to a relationship of

seduction which reiterates the male/female binary order and restores its balance, or more accurately imbalance, along the lines of the open context.

The body of all the internalised history of these women constitutes a useful analytical laboratory of gender social relations in prison. Clothing, physical contact and the semantics of seduction show the importance these prisoners attach to the position of the supervisor and the way in which they recreate binary and asymmetrical social relations in their interaction.

While this reveals an identity-linked malaise in an area constrained by homosociability, it also expresses a need to experience mixed interaction in detention and underscores the interest of sports programmes in this quest for mixing.

In such a context, for these women, who are less aware of and therefore less responsive to the traditional performance-oriented sports model, another form of sports activity may be envisaged and organised. As they look to the pleasure of recreating ties, a form of cohesion, in short, a social life within the prison walls, these women highlight another way of identifying with sport. Accordingly, many “soft” and easily accessible keep-fit and training activities are on offer to female prisoners to reconcile them with sport.

Among other things, these choices are driven by the initial observation that sports activities are often merely a pretext for seeking other objectives in the sports hall: getting out of the cell obviously, but more fundamentally seeking the exchange that constitutes life in society. During the sports session many women prisoners spend as much if not more time on the sociability aspects than on actual sports activity. So if the idea of forging links is a strong motivation for many women to access sports facilities, sport would appear to be an interesting tool for supporting them through their sentence. Before launching any programme that would necessarily be competitive and geared to achievement, simply enabling women to first glimpse “men’s” sports activities and facilities, and then to access and benefit from what they have to offer, particularly in terms of socialisation, is in itself a decisive step. It is also and perhaps above all the whole point of sport, ahead of the drive for physical prowess or technical performance, to enable individuals, in this case imprisoned, to fulfil themselves through the prism of differentiated expectations.

### ► Towards the development of sports skills

When the first, most insidious and most discriminating obstacle of self-elimination of women from sport is overcome, there are a few states willing to further develop sports programmes so that these women can go on acquiring a sports culture.

The example of Spain seems to typify this kind of interventionism. The Basketball Without Limits programme, for women in prisons, has been nurtured by collaboration between the General Secretariat of Prison Establishments and the Spanish Basketball Federation (Federación Española de Baloncesto) since 2008. Currently run in seven Spanish prisons, it has brought benefits for 1 080 prisoners since being launched. The idea is to use the practice of basketball to enhance employability through training and the adoption of healthy habits among these women prisoners. A number of initiatives have been implemented to that end: the setting up of basketball schools with the emphasis on introducing prisoners to basketball and honing their skills;

refereeing lessons, with the discovery of the regulatory aspects of the discipline that this entails; and also catering and nutrition classes for prisoners having served a fair amount of their sentence, which means prisoners in the third grade of treatment or a semi-open regime (presentation by Spain, Pan-European Conference on Sport and Prison, 2014).

## **B. Forging links, combating isolation**

The first task in combating isolation is to forge links between prisoners and more generally around them. Sport forms both a sphere and a development tool for social interaction that can nurture this link and pass on values, norms and more broadly the cultural models that will ultimately be of use in the prisoner's adaptation within society. Cutting down the distance between the prisoner and society is one of the key tasks currently assigned to sport in prison.

### **A protective relational capital through sport**

Sports programmes can make prisoners less isolated by enabling them to forge links with other prisoners, staff, individuals and groups of individuals or more generally cultures outside prison. By cultivating the more or less distant project of prison release, these exchanges are beneficial and necessary for the welfare and social balance of an individual whose vocation in our societies is not to live cut off from everyone else. Imprisonment is a sanction which impacts on a person's social life and renders them fragile by weakening their links with society. There is a marked rupture both in private life, as they are cut off from their family, and in the public sphere, as they no longer have access to others and the open environment of society or a means of free contact with them. Sport can cut down that distance by providing opportunities to maintain relational links in these two dimensions.

### **Facilitating the maintaining of family ties**

Being cut off from one's family is often experienced as the most painful of relational separations for prisoners. While the safeguarding of prisoners' rights today nevertheless enables them to maintain these ties through visits in booths, phone calls and letter writing, and even (though often few and far between) experimental initiatives setting up "family life units" or family leave measures, the fact remains that the maintenance and depth of these ties are still strained by a situation of physical isolation of prisoners who are also divorced from the day-to-day lives of their children, spouses or close relatives and friends.

Depending on geographical location, with prisoners sometimes kept hundreds of kilometres from their family, on the nature of the crime committed and on permissions and the determination of the family itself, sports activities can be of help in maintaining family ties.

Let us consider the French example of collaboration developed between the prison authorities, the Olympic committees of the *départements* and the sports movement to enhance family ties through sport. This type of programme hinges on a number of initiatives, one of which, aimed at fathers receiving father-and-child booth visits,

is managed by the association Agir pour la Réinsertion Sociale. Its aim is to “work with prisoners on their role as father in a place and conditions other than the visiting booth. Female sports educators specialising in karate and baby gym have run group sessions for two half-days a month” (statement by France, Pan-European Conference on Sport and Prison, 2014).

(Prisoner:) My relationship with my daughter would go downhill without these karate classes ... We can get this feeling of togetherness because we can laugh, touch each other, chat and carry on looking to the future together ... it's a real breath of fresh air. And the karate can release the anger that my daughter might feel deep-down. It's a good therapy and it is very well run by D.

(Prisoner:) Then there were the baby-gym sessions, in a much bigger room where I've discovered another side to my daughter. I watch her getting over obstacles, I can run around with her and, above all, there are new feelings that come to the surface between us: when she runs into difficulties she looks over to me, she has trust in me. (Statement by France, *ibid.*)

The organising of a father's day event around fun sports activities for volunteering fathers is another illustration of these sports initiatives helping to sustain the parental links between prisoners and their children. Father-and-child swimming pool outings also help imprisoned parents to get together with their children at a swimming pool which the municipality in question agrees to make available during a free time slot, with supervision by a lifeguard and a facilitator as well as a sports supervisor from the prison authorities. Seen as having “promising results that have already made a broadly positive contribution to the rebuilding of family ties” (statement by France, *ibid.*), these initiatives are the fruit of multiple collaboration exercises between local and regional authorities, operatives in the sports movement, prison authority staff and volunteers from associations.

Beyond these sports projects organised in conjunction with the family, sport can also facilitate family ties at another level. Some administrations use sport as a gauge for measuring a prisoner's “good conduct” and it can therefore help pave the way to release. While there is no legal provision making it a core instrument for reducing the length of the sentence, it is still a major factor in assessing a prisoner's conduct and may therefore indirectly come into play in decisions on sentence adjustment. These adjustments include family outing permissions much sought after by inmates and very often dependent on an assessment of the prisoner from different viewpoints. An assessment board examines the prisoner's progress and prison record, their conduct in detention and the efforts invested in employment, learning, training and, where applicable, sport. So, some sports programmes are used as a real test and a stepping stone to other permissions, including for family contact, much coveted by prisoners.

The opportunities provided by these activities to develop ties in prison are not solely geared to a reintegration project and sometimes fulfil another logic, namely the more immediate imperative of adapting to imprisonment to make the prison context more bearable. Making the prison a liveable place is a self-evident project and often comes ahead of the more distant objective of reintegration.

## Intramural cohesion

For four decades there has been sharp and recurrent criticism of the violent and criminogenic nature of the detention environment, pointed to as a school for wrongdoing (Foucault 1975). Despite greater vigilance and streamlining of the different prison systems, drawing on the experience of open prisons, for example, or family life units that are recognised as being less likely to breed criminal behaviour, in view of the persistent problems of reoffending and the massification of criminalisation, the criticism is still there and tarnishes the reality of life in prison.

Faced with the imperative need to organise their life in such a context, prisoners express a need to “protect themselves” in prison. Being able to form a protective “network” and “capital” of relations is motivating for some. These mechanisms are visible and operative in the sports sphere among others and constitute one of the reasons why prisoners become involved in sport. As a response to this pattern of thinking, some sports programmes focus on better social well-being for prisoners who feel insecure in prison.

This quest for a “protective capital of relations” is catered for by the opportunity afforded by sports activities, by sports achievement or even just by support to forge cohesion between prisoners. Team sports play a very particular role at this level, which partly explains their success in prison. There are numerous programmes to illustrate this point, in a number of countries, encouraging the organisation of sports championships, meetings and events within establishments, between blocks or between establishments: matches, theme days, sports demonstrations, tournaments, sports challenges or the screening of major sports events.

Beyond team sports, the setting up of sports programmes self-managed by prisoners is intended to develop exchanges and a form of cohesion leading in turn to the forming of groups of prisoners. Notwithstanding the undeniable risk of a possible reorganisation of groups on a communitarian and/or criminal basis, sport may give rise to other forms of togetherness based on affinities or pure enjoyment of sport, ranging from performance to mere relaxation and shared pleasures. With their capacity for forging links between peers, self-managed and/or unsupervised activities are sometimes mentioned by the different member states as opportunities for the cohesion sought after by inmates. Whenever they organise themselves into teams, improvise as partners and coaches in their own training sessions, referee their own matches, lend and manage equipment, provide one another with support and talk about the day's sports encounters when back in their cells, prisoners build links that can recreate a more bearable social context and, within it, forms of mutual understanding inducing and/or generating a sentiment of cohesion and sometimes “protection”, which sport will have greatly helped to reinforce. However, owing to the issues of competition and rivalry, whether sport-related or not, as well as logics of identification with and affiliation to a community (ethnic, religious, criminal, gender), it is true that relationships marked by domination and violence may emerge in and around sports activities, particularly if self-managed. So devising sports activities taking a participatory and relatively autonomous form does not exclude some vigilance – supervision, guidance and accompaniment on the path towards autonomy – that can prevent this violence.

Finally, in addition to those actually involved in sports activities, sport's unifying capability enables it to create another kind of link for the entire prison population by providing a sporting spectacle in prison, which becomes the driving force behind a buzz of social activity and a source of daily news in the establishment, heightening the pleasure of taking part. At the same time, it can generate tension, against a backdrop of betting, for example, that risks leading to racketeering and ultimately interprisoner violence. The presence and organisation of surveillance of these self-managed activities and sports events is therefore necessary in many prisons. These activities demand special vigilance on the part of the administration as, in a context of constraint, they significantly heighten the risks of violence and excesses, which are always difficult to control in prison.

## **The challenges of mixing: bridging the cultural gap**

Besides their sentence, what weighs heavily on prisoners is exclusion. Inspiring fear or contempt in the collective (un)consciousness, they are constantly brought back down to their convict status, treated as inferiors and as irresponsible children.

Sport is one of the areas where certain cultural gaps – themselves sources of conflict and inequality, often binary and dichotomous between guard and guarded, free and deprived of freedom, innocent and convicted, haves and have-nots, and so on – can be bridged. The statements of different prisoners and/or wardens, or indeed visitors, show how sport can make these status issues vanish for the duration of an exchange, an encounter, a match. The experiences of matches between wardens and prisoners, or between free sportsmen or sportswomen and prisoners, between prisoners from different prison blocks and between different age groups, are a factor in these challenges of addressing otherness and shaking off preconceived ideas.

Many initiatives seek to promote mixing by bringing together hermetic or distant cultural spheres and enabling groups that know little of one another to draw closer. The sharing and discovery of differentiated cultures through sport is a means of exploding misconceptions, which lie at the foundation of social intolerance.

Sports activities and programmes can be geared to deconstructing prejudices and defusing the discrimination and violence that follow from them. Sport, in a context of exchange, provides a means of shaking up often stereotypical representations on both sides by getting people to physically interact and come into close contact. Sport can broaden prisoners' social outlook, making them more tolerant and open-minded.

## **A feeling of solidarity**

The focus of some administrations' programmes may be to develop a feeling of solidarity among prisoners. Sports programmes with an emphasis on solidarity-based and/or humanitarian initiatives get prisoners involved in championing various causes: helping sick children or adults (the French telethon raising funds for research to prevent cystic fibrosis, for example, or Sidaction for research to prevent HIV), underprivileged communities (Action against Hunger), disabled people (disabled and adaptive sport in different prisons). All these schemes and many others show how social links develop around a solidarity-based initiative in prison. In a more sociological dimension, the experience of practising sport creates links and can build

or reinforce forms of solidarity between prisoners that promote social cohesion. While they are useful because of the links they forge, these initiatives also provide a means of unravelling the mutual prejudice between different groups suffering from social stigma and/or discrimination, and of countering negative portrayals by others and by the members of these groups themselves.

## Discovering sports cultures

The discovery of a sports culture, whether of a high-level nature or more of a leisure and amateur pursuit, is a major challenge in the eyes of many states wishing to help prisoners restore social links and bridge the cultural gap with the outside world.

While the findings of the previous section point to the over-representation of popular sports disciplines, such as football and bodybuilding and/or fitness activities, notably involving weight training, there are also many countries which have tried to bring in changes. By laying on multisports sessions, even on an occasional basis, the authorities are seeking to diversify sports disciplines and thereby change prisoners' relationship with sport and more generally with the body. It is then with the involvement of the sports movement, Olympic committees, leagues, federations, clubs and associations that a policy aimed at shifting prison sports culture towards societal sports cultures can be developed. This involvement of the sports world in prison sports programmes is most commonly placed on a formal footing in partnership agreements ensuring sustainability and mutual commitment on the part of the stakeholders in these programmes. This new policy of "sportivation", of liberalising and opening up sport in prison towards society and vice versa, is to be found in Italy, France and Spain, among others.

The Spanish programmes developed in collaboration with Spain's Royal Football Federation (Real Federación Española de Fútbol) and the Real Madrid Foundation are good illustrations of this. The programmes Co-Operation and Self Management through Football and For a Real Education in Values and Sport are run in 22 Spanish prisons. Through these programmes, the participating prisoners are not only able to familiarise themselves with sports (football and basketball, among others) but also to be involved in and given responsibility for the smooth running of activities, including through the planning of competitions, any mediation required in conflicts that might crop up and the refereeing of matches. The programme includes the setting up of football schools, an interprison championship, training sessions and refereeing classes, prison visits by Spanish national team players and prisoner participation in major sports events and matches, including national team games.

France is seeking to open up the playing field in a similar manner, using 13 main partnerships with sports federations and numerous agreements, notably involving Olympic committees (national, regional and *département* committees) in sports activities. Italy is also developing an important link with the Italian national Olympic committee and securing support from national federations, particularly in the areas of table tennis, dance sport, volleyball, gymnastics, athletics and football.

With input from the sports movement, these programmes convey and import a sports culture in the broad sense of the term into prisons, including values, norms, practices and representations revolving around sport. They also enable prisoners

to meet with and sometimes draw closer to a more or less local network of players in the sport and education spheres. As long as they are organised, these relations may then provide resources which prisoners can directly tap into upon release. The question obviously arises here in connection with where inmates are imprisoned, as some are held in prisons far from home and will not be able to make use of these resources when they are released. Also to be underlined is the differing degrees of prisoners' willingness to build on these experiences as shaped by initial resources and cultural background.

### **The “social mobility through sport” model and the parable of sporting heroes**

Behind these programmes and policies, we can catch sight of beliefs in the social mobility model embodied by sport and successful sportsmen and women: sports professionals and/or high-level athletes.

The Italian experience of the involvement of high-level sport in the organisation of prison sports programmes is informative in this respect. The penitentiary police are formed around a corps of staff who represent their institution in the sports sphere: the Fiamme Azzurre. They are high-level sportsmen (at national, European, world and Olympic levels) who win titles on a regular basis. Alongside these sports activities, Fiamme Azzurre also develops social activities in the youth sector and in the area of sports promotion. It also works in prisons, with occasional seminars and meetings organised between prisoners and Fiamme Azzurre champions. The aim is to pass on their experience of personal fulfilment through high-level sport to the prisoners. Where the constraints and commitments of their national teams allow them to do so, these athletes lay on practical demonstrations during the periods devoted to sports activities in prison.

This information confirms the utility of setting up close partnerships, particularly with the world of football in most member states. The involvement and/or contribution of top first-division clubs in a number of collaborative projects and/or events in prison is a good illustration.

The dual challenge here is to encourage prisoners to take part in programmes through idealised sporting heroes and to counteract disaffiliation.

The hero figure acts as a prop for collective identification ... it can help to defuse tension linked to social inequality ... The representation of figures of expertise within groups that are dominated in various respects plays a role in the symbolic struggles to break down the negative stereotypes attached to those groups. (Defrance 1995/2000: 77)

By engaging in sports activities, prisoners “could become associated with values of effectiveness, technical skill, speed, intelligent play, a thinking approach etc., boosting the resources of those seeking to break free of the stereotype” (ibid.: 77) of individuals accumulating the social stigma of fear and loathing.

Some studies focusing more specifically on the closed prison environment (Nichols and Taylor 1996; Purdy and Richard 1983) show that there is a link between these models for collective identification and their influence in curbing criminal behaviour,

as well as the positive impact of certain leaders in the sports sphere on the conduct of participating inmates. This process is not so different from the open environment, with many researchers emphasising the influence of high-level individuals in collective representations and the identification, particularly of young people, with the sports heroes who dominate in the headlines. Having been eroded by a few scandals and “counter-models” – especially present on the football scene, which is one of the most popular in every sense of the term and therefore one that is most ingrained in the collective psyche, particularly of prisoners – this relationship with high-level sport has now been transformed. The hypothesis may be put forward of a certain cultural proximity in the prison context between prisoners and these popular sportsmen, including (and perhaps even more so) when they acquire a “bad-boy” label. Fuelling the belief in a relative proximity, the lapses of these sportsmen enable prisoners to identify even more strongly with them. Not only are they redefining the image and contours of sport, but they are also, perhaps unwittingly, passing on other values than those generally seen as positive which are historically attached to it.

#### **IV. Sport as a tool for professional socialisation**

More than mere leisure, sport is today an economic factor reflected in a rich and diversified job market. A large number of works mention the changes in the sports employment sector that took place in and around the 1980s (Augustin 2003; Bernardeau-Moreau and Collinet 2009; Chantelat 2001; Falcoz and Walter 2009; Loirand 2004) and went hand in hand with the development of the spectacularisation and professionalisation of sport. The emergence of and huge increase in demand in the field of sport are reported to have resulted in the creation of a reservoir of sports-based jobs.

This rapid rise in available manpower is not only affecting certain disciplines that are being given media exposure but also a heterogeneous range of sports practices and recreational or leisure activities. Any reference to working in the sports sector therefore needs to be in the plural: athletes, trainers, educators, programme leaders, managers, salespersons, etc. Sport as an employment sector in its own right has become a reality. (Falcoz 2013)

In view of these characteristics and given the collective enthusiasm of young people and those not so young for a particularly popular field of activity, as well as the difficulties in vocational reintegration encountered by the prison population, some administrations have begun to emphasise the usefulness of sports programmes in providing support for inmates and preparing them for gaining or returning to employment.

Although sports are included in the range of activities available in prison, the use of sport as a means of pre-employment preparation is not very widespread and is still only to be found in a minority of prisons when compared with the range of sporting opportunities as a whole, the main purposes of which are recreational and occupational at the European level. Moreover, in parallel with the difficulties associated with employment in the general population in some member states, problems are inevitably and increasingly arising in dealing with the employment of prison inmates.

Several initiatives to provide employment through sport have nonetheless been identified in those member states that are receptive to and convinced of the virtues of this approach. The experience gained with regard to the redirection, training and assessment of inmates and enabling them to obtain sports-related qualifications or diplomas is the subject of specific programmes in some countries that wish to enable prisoners to obtain employment through and/or in sport. Although these approaches are rarely chosen and are often designed for a minority of prisoners, they nevertheless make it possible to foster the desire to undertake through this activity the necessary task of addressing the question of employment before an inmate's release.

It is possible to discern in several ways the contribution of sport to preparing a prisoner for the world of work. In our opinion, there are three, apparently ambivalent dimensions that both need to be mentioned and are ultimately complementary when it comes to describing the evidence of practices in the various member states.

The first dimension to be mentioned is the use of sport through identity issues, consisting not only in raising a prisoner's standing but also in enabling them to develop various physical and social means of helping them to return to work. As an individual represented as an athlete, the prisoner develops, for example, a certain dynamism and an ability to take the initiative that are considered compatible with employability requirements (Yondre et al. 2010). Apart from the work itself, the aim here is to strengthen the prisoner's relationship to work and to their efforts made in this connection. "Although work-based integration is a key prerequisite for general integration, it is not the only factor to be taken into consideration, even though it (still today) determines all forms of integration" (Sayad and Laacher 1998).

The second dimension links sport to preparation for employment, which means empowering the prisoner. This development of empowerment by and in sport, through the development of the individual's capacity and the rational use of their time, physical abilities and involvement in sport, can enable the prisoner to reactivate, maintain or build vocational aptitudes.

Finally, there is the possibility offered by sport for the prisoner to internalise a certain amount of (self-)discipline, including the ability to exercise self-control and the normalisation of behaviour considered more appropriate to the demands of working life.

### **A. Being active: adopting a resilient attitude to a prison sentence and combating a feeling of uselessness to the world**

Forced as individuals who feel "useless to the world" (Castel 1994: 11-27; Castel 1995) to forgo engaging in social life because of their inability to cultivate social and vocational interaction and relationships in prison, inmates in most systems today do not manage to meet the demands and requirements of what is first and foremost a utilitarian society. They suffer from being ignored, with the result that their position in this society threatens to change from a certain vulnerability to full-blown social disaffiliation, even exclusion in some cases. Although some prisoners become reintegrated, and although measures to combat reoffending are being taken in some

states, and some prisons and prison administrations stand out with open prison schemes and innovative programmes to assist inmates during their sentence and until their release, these cases are still the exception.

Sport, as a societal phenomenon that has taken on a key role, especially in the media, which a large majority of prisoners access via television, cultivates the schema of social, educational and integrational virtues through its history, popularity and collective idealisation. In prison, as elsewhere, sport attracts

uncritical adherents in a fairly vague manner (from the pacification of the suburbs to sociability and self-realisation) ... Accordingly, there is a broadly shared conviction that only engaging in sports can, outside stadiums, bring about proper civic and ethical behaviour. (Gasparini 2008: 1)

As it also takes the form of a genuine popular belief among the prison population, sport does not seem to have to convince either inmates or prison administrations of its benefits. It is organised as a self-evident form of preventive and curative assistance during a prison sentence the effects of which, especially when they last for some time, are generally condemned as harmful, particularly in employability terms.

Portrayed as being occupationally idle in a world in which a person's vocational identity takes precedence over other forms of self-expression, prison inmates give the impression through their isolation, especially in occupational terms, of being underachievers or social failures. The experience of engaging in sport in prison seems to be able to contribute to minimising the burden. Being willing or seemingly willing to rejoin society through sport would boil down to adopting a resilient attitude to the sentence by conveying, both inside and outside the prison, the image of an individual and a body that are apparently active, and therefore potentially employable.

## **An active attitude**

As the big losers as far as social competition is concerned, and leaving aside such matters as performance, excelling oneself or acquiring a sense of self-worth, prison inmates can develop certain aptitudes or social skills through sport, including dynamism or the ability to take the initiative. Learning values likely to be associated with or conveyed by sport, along with the development or reawakening of certain physical and social abilities, seems to convince prison inmates that they are combating and probably changing the preconceived judgments about them that they are idle, discredited and comparatively useless individuals.

“Sport teaches an active attitude in life ... The sense of victory over oneself contributes to self-esteem, satisfaction and the development of the personality” (presentation by Bulgaria, Pan-European Sport and Prison Conference, 2014). Regularly reflected in prisoner discourse by the idea of engaging in sport in order to feel that they exist and are alive, and to prevent their incarceration from getting the better of them, a keen interest in sport seems to fill this new existential void felt by prison inmates who try to feel less superfluous through sport and who tacitly provide input into “(re)making society”.

(Researcher:) [Is the purpose of this physical work] to make you look good when you're outside?

(Long-term inmate:) No, there are lifers here and they're not thinking about getting out. Twenty or thirty years, and they've got no visiting room. No, that's not the reason. It's to tell themselves they're still alive. In the long-stay prisons they buy everything in the canteen, even coconut oil and all that. But these guys do what they do outside to carry on living. They're looking for a balance. When it's winter, it's winter, and when it's spring, it's spring, and in summer they sunbathe like you do on the beach.

(Researcher:) I assume it's similar for sport, their relationship with their body.

(Long-term inmate:) There's a lot of time in here, so guys get involved. It's this place or never. I say sport in prison has its benefits.

Well-toned or sturdy, muscular or tanned as a result of the work carried out on themselves and their bodies and because they have put in a measured and/or visible performance, inmates cultivate the image of athletic individuals who are, moreover, perceived to be in good health. As in the open environment that they cling on to, they use their bodies to challenge their portrayal as socially discredited and physically weakened beings. "The body therefore acts as pointers for judgments of situations and work activities, as well as assessments of vocational skills" (Pierre and Koebel 2011: 259).

## **Being or seeming to be a sports person in prison**

Through sport, prison inmates show that they can train, put in effort and demonstrate self-sacrifice as competitors. Their ability to display rigour, discipline and self-denial through physical exercise implicitly enables the researcher to perceive in this physical commitment a means for the inmate – constantly underestimated, spied on and under control – to achieve legitimation.

The rationalisation of a regular practice employed in connection with a balanced diet and a healthy body and lifestyle, the care and maintenance of the body, the demonstration of the efforts made with regard to that practice and the performance put in, all reveal a certain desire to occupy or take over a highly valued position in a prison held in social contempt. By looking after their bodies and engaging in a new lifestyle devoted to competition training and to making progress, inmates show that they lead more balanced and healthier lives and respond better to informal and tacitly understood expectations with regard to rehabilitation through hard work.

Apart from mere physical abilities, one element implicit in the learning process and the demonstration of the effort made is the symbolic construction of the identity, indeed the superimposition of that identity, of an individual who, by providing a positive "sporting" image, attempts to tone down the clearly negative image of the prison inmate. The presence and expertise of trainers are extremely important factors in enabling inmates to take this interest in sport. Trainers can help to prevent inmates from giving up out of discouragement or a lack of interest in the activity, help to ensure the smooth, not too long drawn-out and gradual introduction to a sport, help to avoid injuries that, apart from physical damage, could deter inmates from continuing to be involved in a sport, and help them to understand the effects of that involvement and to get to know their body better in order to make progress.

All member states emphasise this importance of involving experts in their sports programmes and some are consequently developing for their staff specific programmes centred on these considerations.

Accordingly, prison inmates, who are portrayed (or portray themselves) as somewhat less inactive, demonstrate their efforts to adapt to their incarceration, over which they have little control. Is it not also possible to see in this use of sport more a demonstration of a struggle and the need of inmates – who quite simply are fighting hard to “bear the unbearable” (Courtine 1980) prison conditions – to resist their situation?

Many prison administrations recognise the existence of this process by using sport as a demonstration of (re)taking control, an apparent sign of progress and an improvement in the inmate’s overall behaviour. A number of sports programmes are included among the tools for assessing the behaviour of inmates whose anticipated progress in the course of serving their sentence has been observed.

Finally, it is less being a sportsman or -woman that is a primary consideration (and brings its rewards) but, rather, ‘appearing to be a sportsman or -woman’ that seems to come into play as symbolic capital. And the idea that this symbolic capital does not receive the same additional input according to the social spaces available (sports distribution versus non-sports distribution) holds out the promise of excellent research prospects. “In words” and “in deeds”, the approaches adopted by recruiters are based on the philosophical view of the virtues of sport and their transferability to the business world as well as “on the bodies” themselves. (Pierre and Koebel 2011: 257)

However, one question remains unanswered: does engaging in sport fundamentally change the behaviour of inmates as far as their reintegration is concerned? Is a change in their behaviour in this connection not simply the result of institutional and, more generally, internalised social expectations? These questions therefore raise the issue (perhaps of a subsidiary nature in the short term but crucial in the long term) of the intrinsic or extrinsic motivations for engaging in prison activities and the mechanisms likely to lead inmates not only to engage in sport more regularly but also, and above all, to derive benefits from it in connection with their planned reintegration.

## **Combating the uncertainty of time**

Seeking to lead an active life, or more precisely an active life in prison, by engaging in sports inmates once again symbolically become managers of their own time. Sport in prison is an activity organised around the principle of voluntary participation, which most European prison administrations have endorsed. As we stressed in Chapter 1, inmates in the various European countries participate on their own initiative, at least in theory. We will see the limits to achieving this ideal in Chapter 3, which describes particular obstacles to access that may be encountered by inmates: medical, disciplinary, material or structural (such as waiting lists) or relational by stigmatisation, (self-)exclusion or violence. Being able to choose whether or not to become involved, to decide on which days to do so, to choose between specific activities or disciplines and the extent of their participation or to choose whether they are looking to achieve performance targets, inmates apparently have more freedom than outside prison to retake possession of and control the use of their body, the space and their time when serving their sentence.

What mainly happens when people are imprisoned is that they face uncertainty and are deprived of the ability to manage their time:

[t]he uncertainty of the actual period of imprisonment, which is subject to the vagaries of the police, judicial or prison authorities, and more generally the expectation of being released and the daily expectations of life in prison make institutionalised uncertainty a basic characteristic of long-term prisons. ... The term [institutional uncertainty] was coined by Peters (1977), who sought to characterise the discriminatory allocation of conditional release measures during the execution of long sentences, which plunge those who could benefit into absolute uncertainty." (Chantraine 2003: 373)

In this connection, imprisonment has something to do with absolute power: "[a]bsolute power is the power to make oneself unpredictable and prevent others from having any reasonable expectation, to place them in a position of absolute uncertainty by allowing them no control over their ability to foresee" (Bourdieu 1997: 270; cf. Marchetti 2001: 367-81; also Combessie 2001: 45).

Sport arouses the interest of many prison inmates from the moment they arrive since it provides opportunities to break with the prison routine, to resist inertia and the sedentary nature of imprisonment and to choose how to use their time, and therefore provide better justification for that use.

(Long-term inmate:) In a way, I've grown since I was in prison. It's true! Why do I say that? Well, because I had no body hair when I came in but I did when I came out! It's a sign, you see. The guys outside don't understand that. Neither do I in a way. Even though I was in prison, I managed to develop (through and in sport).

## **The marathon: activating and controlling the body, time and one's existence**

Many prisons in various states are introducing sports programmes based on running. These programmes are sometimes organised around a final plan to hold a marathon. In this connection, inmates can access the appropriate structured physical preparation in the course of a sports season by the sports instructor and/or a coach.

A French experiment developed at a men's prison for those serving long-term sentences illustrates the dynamics at work in these programmes and their impact on inmates' behaviour. The training is planned around a team of inmates supervised by the sports instructor. The programme eligibility criteria are physical abilities, regular sports attendance, perseverance and the confidence inspired by the inmate, to all of which qualities may be added good health and a penal situation that permits day release. The aim is to combine the regulatory penal conditions required for granting a day-release permit for sports purposes. These conditions depend, *inter alia*, on other criteria associated with the criminal record as well as the initial conviction and the length of the inmate's sentence. This set of criteria, according to staff, leaves very few potential marathon runners per year in the facility.

The team prepares itself according to a common nine-month timetable. A series of day releases are scheduled, in the course of which inmates participate in races on local roads in surrounding communities. The team's ultimate objective is for everyone

to participate in an end-of-season marathon, and if possible to run it in less than four hours. Each month, an official race is scheduled outside the prison, enabling the inmates to be issued with a day-release permit for sports purposes.

(Sports instructor, long-term sentences:) The aim of this activity is to prepare the marathon with a few guys. The team consists of around six to eight inmates, rarely more, who begin work in March and commit to the entire season, that is to say up to November or thereabouts. This is more or less the precondition. What I mean is I'm trying to work with guys who'll last the distance. The aim is fixed, which is to run a marathon in under four hours. This is not a foregone conclusion and not everyone can manage it, so this particular activity isn't open to a large number of inmates.

The aim of the project goes beyond the physical. Apart from physical performance, the programme also demands mental and social effort, which will have enabled inmates to structure their lives in prison around a difficult and gratifying project by disciplining themselves and rigorously fighting against suffering and against themselves.

The way in which runners approach the race, their expectations reflected in hours of preparation and the many exercises employed to train mean the idea of a peaceful and relaxed activity must be discarded. The picture that comes to mind is of an ascetic practice in every sense of the term as used by Max Weber to characterise a historical type, with regard to both economic and religious conduct. Training is a freely accepted discipline, a strict choice that excludes ease of execution and concessions. The rules that individuals adopt for themselves commit and bind them. They express a demand and a struggle with oneself. (Faure 1987: 39)

This activity therefore appears surprising in the prison context, in which constraints and deprivation of liberty already impose a rigid routine. The relationship to physical discipline, the rigours of training and self-denial in a life reorganised around running races reflect a struggle through effort, which it may be assumed can be transferred to other dimensions of the individual's life.

Turned to account in the professional sphere, aptitudes and skills developed in sport must be understood much more broadly than through technical and physical dimensions alone. "It is necessary to avoid only considering the activities of professional sportsmen and women from the physical and technical point of view. By focusing only on the technical dimension of sporting skills of these individuals, it is forgotten that the professional situations in which the latter take part also bring into play the 'convictions, obligations, shared perceptions and rules' (Reynaud 1987) that underlie working relationships" (Pierre and Koebel 2011: 256). The main thing is to take a deeper look at social skills where, "in addition to joining a collaborative group, the runner must internalise a real 'esprit de corps' that organises the forms of sociability on which the division of labour is based" (ibid.: 257).

(Long-term inmate:) That saved me in here and it'll help me outside because there'll definitely be a few tough moments. But I think I'll carry on with what I've been given here.

(Researcher:) Is that in some way due to the sports instructor?

(Long-term inmate:) Yes, to some extent, because he motivates you and helps you complete a great project, which I'd never have got into on my own, especially as I've

not felt at ease in this environment. What I mean is I don't know too many people. I suffered from depression and didn't go out for years and he won me round, by which I mean he reassured me. Once I'd taken the plunge, I became a balanced person, because we all need plans to move forward, even in prison. The marathon was my project, and it helps time to pass, I can tell you.

How can a person be a marathon runner in prison? To put it another way, why devote one's energies to such a demanding endeavour in an already restricted space? Is it not possible to regard the effort, suffering and discipline required by the exercise as the sign of a penitent?

Indeed, this hard work, these resolutions and struggles involve a structure, support and a rigorous training regime assisted by a team of runners, which is itself overseen by the sports instructor. They all know which way to go, from the simple jogging stage to the crowning of the marathon winner, a success that rewards both the inmate and the sports instructor.

(Sports instructor, long-term sentences:) Yes, I've never had a failure in twelve years. Everyone registered has done it and completed it. That's a success. However, it's true there aren't many to start out with. The key is that I put in a lot of work. I accompany them on every race; I run with them and I do the marathon with them.

These programmes also provide rare opportunities for social contacts between inmates and staff. The experience of this marathon programme in prison seems to have made it possible to break down the normal barrier between warders and inmates for as much as a full season, the time scheduled for the programme. By establishing a relationship of mutual trust and recognition, this friendship in the field of sport seems promising with regard to building enhanced identities for inmates who have come out of this project as winners and with increased stature.

(Researcher:) How did you manage that?

(Long-term inmate:) Well, I owe it to the sports instructor, and I'd like to thank him because he did a lot of work with me, both with regard to motivation and passing on what he knows. I didn't know anything about running races before coming here. Then there's everything to do with training and effort management, as well as diet, keeping myself well hydrated and all that. Finally, I discovered more things than I can remember when I was out running.

From being a simple break from serving a sentence, running has for most of these marathon runners ultimately become a real way of life. Thus incorporated into the regime, this programme promises to leave its mark in both the short and long term on the life of an inmate who has become "a runner".

## **B. Empowerment through and in sport**

The European Prison Rules support the case for the possible empowerment of inmates through sport by expressing the desire for these activities to be organised by the inmates themselves. As emphasised in Rule 27.6, "Recreational opportunities,

which include sport, games, cultural activities, hobbies and other leisure pursuits, shall be provided and, as far as possible, prisoners shall be allowed to organise them”.

However, the results of the questionnaire presented in Chapter 1 and the presentations by member states at the 2014 Pan-European Sport and Prison Conference highlight the fact that sport is rarely included in this search for autonomy by empowering the inmate. Providing moderate training for leadership, these practices are generally organised in Europe in such a way that inmates play a passive role. In other words, inmates are considered mere participants rather than actual organisers of their sport. The number of programmes developed in which inmates are put in charge of the activity is still few.

However, in prison,

those involved are, more than ever, required to assume responsibility while simultaneously being deprived of all autonomy and independence at a time when various mortification techniques and the installation of intimate surveillance are testing their self-control and threatening their ability to express themselves. The institution thus strikes at the core of their individuality, and this violation further increases their inability to take charge of their lives. (Chantraine 2003: 374)

Chantraine believes that prisoners are subject to a form of social domination: in a society where individual responsibility is seen primarily as responsibility for managing one's own path in life, the individuals with the least ability to take control of their lives are also those most often told to “develop a sense of responsibility” (Martuccelli 2001: 229-74). Inmates must confront this paradox, manage with the few resources available to them on their arrival in prison and guard against the risk of their resources dwindling as their sentence progresses.

These analyses correspond to the situation in many European prisons, but they must be nuanced according to the prison context and the effects of the specific regime. Organisational sociology, for example, has been able to set out these nuances (Lemire 1990) by describing the influence of prison regimes on the degree of autonomy enjoyed by inmates. Some prisons that operate the prescriptive regime described above have split the prison space into small living units capable of enabling inmates both to lead more individualised lives and have more autonomy. This is also the case in prisons with more open regimes. However, the large prisons and those with increased security are still lagging behind as far as this approach is concerned, both because of feasibility issues and their penal policy. In any event, the inmate's autonomy and empowerment are never really complete as, according to the administration, they lead to abuses and perversions considered hard to deal with.

Can the organisation of and/or participation in sports programmes enable individuals to (re)take control of certain aspects of their lives in this context? Some states are responding positively to this question and postulate through their programmes that “(t)hrough sport inmates learn leadership, teamwork, responsibility towards the group and compliance with the rules” (presentation by Bulgaria, Pan-European Sport and Prison Conference, 2014). These states accordingly make the principle of inmates’ “voluntary and active participation” in programmes (presentation by Spain, *ibid.*) a feature of the organisation of their sports activities.

Some states mention their referee training courses as having the potential to foster skills, especially with regard to social mediation, conflict management, learning certain types of leadership or the exercise of a form of authority, all of which can be redeployed on the inmate's release. Probably more sensitive and complex in prison than outside and a source of conflict and tension in a violent environment, the role of a referee in prison requires both technical and social skills, which Spain, Italy and France have decided to teach a number of inmates through specific programmes.

In relation to training and sports motivation activities, they have acquired a special relevance, as follows: sports schools: spaces dedicated to training, where inmates acquire technical, tactical and strategic principles that allow them to improve their sports practice; training courses: promoting vocational training of inmates, facilitating the employment process upon release. The most relevant actions include coaching courses, lifeguard courses and referee courses. (presentation by Spain, *ibid.*)

Apart from providing referee training, several countries have actually begun to train inmates to supervise sports with a view to their future vocational integration. Well managed, the ultimate aim of these programmes is to develop autonomy skills among inmates, either by assuming responsibility for a programme or a group of individuals or quite simply through their involvement in a training process. Italy, for example, has embraced these programmes through its co-operation with the Italian Football Federation. "As far as the Italian Football Federation is concerned, it will activate courses for the qualification of football instructors, inside prisons, and agreed with the penitentiary administration" (presentation by Italy, *ibid.*).

As a result of the assumption by inmates of responsibility for the activity itself, it is possible to see in the activity another form of the expression of self-assertion. Through their technical supervision, some inmates develop specific aptitudes, especially educational skills. This practice, often expressed informally through potential leaders who have established themselves as such on the ground, takes on much more institutionalised and formal forms when it comes to setting up training schemes for the position of trainer and/or coach in some states and/or prisons. Italy, Spain and France seek the expertise of the national sports federations, the Olympic movement and, sometimes, their top clubs to deliver content for these schemes and issue the relevant certifications.

In addition to the educational and technical dimension of the programme content, there is symbolic added value connected with the image of a club, a team, top-level sport and, perhaps one's popular heroes. A sports coaching certificate issued by a federation can enable an inmate to find a position later in the field of sport as a sports organiser or instructor or, failing that, to be deployed in the course of the process of their reintegration on the strength of the skills acquired in this programme. Issuing these certifications naturally depends on the nature of the criminal record and the conditions of release. In practice, few prison inmates obtain these sports certifications or qualifications, which are, incidentally, costly and can only be accessed by a minority of prisoners with the necessary physical attributes and subject to the appropriate penal constraints.

Other countries are introducing programmes for training prison inmates assigned to sport, along the lines of the Canadian model in particular (see Sempé 2007). These programmes are designed for those who have developed professional skills in the management of an activity found in open prisons. Some inmates are responsible for the maintenance and logistical management of sports facilities and equipment, while others are provided with equipment, are responsible for the upkeep of sports surfaces or act as intermediaries between the prison population and the staff assigned to sport. The inmates who carry out these activities are sometimes paid or receive a bonus, the main beneficiaries of these payments being sports auxiliaries.

In some European prisons, inmates can set up their own associations to promote and organise their sociocultural activities themselves. Most of the time, this arrangement is organised under the supervision of the administration but involves the employment of a unifying objective approach and gives relative autonomy. Some administrations manage the educational and logistical aspects of sports programmes. Armenia provides an example of this, mentioning the benefits that these associations of inmates enjoy by entering into contact with other organisations and associations. Apart from the managerial and organisational skills necessary for running an association, these association-based approaches enhance the relational dimension of sports activities, which are also organised on the basis of the constitution of networks, which can themselves contribute to the reintegration of inmates.

Inmates may create their own associations which function under the supervision of the institution's administration. These associations may interact with relevant associations and organisations. (Presentation by Armenia, Pan-European Sport and Prison Conference, 2014)

Sports programmes also offer inmates opportunities to build ties with the area of professional sport through meetings in prison with individuals from this sector, as well as the chance to discover new perspectives in the training or employment field, in respect of which many had imposed cultural self-censorship or to which they had had no access.

Sport can therefore offer inmates practical ways of discovering new occupational sectors or training fields through these programmes. We believe this is demonstrated by the French experience of programmes developed in co-operation with universities. These programmes are developed under partnership agreements between a university and, in particular, the Training and Research Units for the Science and Techniques of Physical and Sporting Activities (UFR STAPS) and the French prison administration. Such programmes are, for example, being developed at Rennes 2 University's Training and Research Unit. On the one hand, they enable inmates to access sports programmes aimed at their reintegration by learning about the university culture and its sports training courses; on the other hand, they provide students with an opportunity to further their training, knowledge and empirical skills in their field while at the same time gaining a greater awareness of the specific issues of social integration and imprisonment in their society. These programmes take the form of students' participation in training placements that enable them to become involved in planning the range of sports activities available in prisons through the development of release schemes for sports purposes, the organisation

of sports events in the prison and, finally, the experience of regular sports meetings between students and inmates. On the basis of the issues surrounding this mixing of cultures, real prospects for removing the barriers between the two worlds come into play for students and inmates as a result of their learning about their respective resources and needs, thus benefiting both groups.

Finally, it is interesting to note programmes that, apart from certification or the issue of a diploma, simply develop the learning of personal or social skills that could be unleashed or acquired when engaging in sport. Whether more or less specifically geared towards employment, these programmes are developed in prison around key aptitudes that are identified in the professional field in an open environment and could presumably be deployed by the inmate in this professional context upon release. Accordingly, any programme of socialisation through sport can aspire to achieve this objective as long as it is planned to develop these skills that the inmate is considered to be lacking. It is, however, once again necessary to emphasise the importance of establishing a large number of close partnerships that enable sport in prison to be made an outward-looking activity that could be beneficial for the inmate's reintegration. Working in prison on enabling inmates to access employment in anticipation of their release makes it necessary to open up, at all levels, programmes offered in the course of an individual's sentence, including when they are offered inside the prison.

Several questions of interpretation remain nonetheless on the subject of the inmate's engagement in sport in prison. Can it be perceived as a means of empowerment and resistance to the infantilisation at the heart of the prison situation? Can it not also be understood as a product of the institutionalisation of an inmate who has gradually been (self-)disciplined in prison by physical work?

### **C. The relationship with sport as an instrument of institutionalisation: the internalisation of (self-)discipline**

From the work by Foucault (1975) and its contribution to the study of the history of prisons and its archaeology of power and knowledge, we need to single out in particular the author's detailed analysis of two levels of the exercise of discipline in our societies. The first level develops and receives input in an institutionalised, that is, collective, situation. In a prison, for example, it is reflected in the institutional use of sport as a way of controlling the prison space and the individuals held within it. In this space, the "modern watchtower" (Courtine 1980) becomes a monitoring post where surveillance and the threat of punishment make for docile and compliant behaviour.

The second level is internalised in the individual situation, that is to say within individuals themselves, in the form of "biopower". By training the body, evidence of which can be seen in the form of habits acquired (Foucault 1975: 155), sport corroborates and teaches the societal mechanics of discipline and power and their political anatomy. Both in prison and in an open environment, the human body enters into a machinery of power "that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it" (ibid.: 162) to make the individual a social being who is all the more useful as their forces are placed at the service of the collective output.

At all levels of society, discipline is structured, can be learnt and is reconstituted. Instruments for the implementation of an informal and invisible instruction to participate in this power structure, physical work and exercise would thus be a response to the rationale of a physically trained docility forming part of the process of continuous progress that drives our systems.

The heuristic scope of these analyses is all the more precise and reaffirmed as they throw light in our context on the security-driven and coercive prison environment, one of the main institutional tasks of which explicitly consists in responding to the requirement to look after the inmates and detention areas and keep them safe. However, "the success of disciplinary power derives no doubt from the use of simple instruments: hierarchical observation, normalising judgment, and their combination in a procedure that is specific to it, the examination" (Foucault 1975: 201). This view of sport as a factor of social control in prison is recognised by many people involved in prison sport as an effective prison management instrument with low material and symbolic costs since no one really puts up any resistance to its development.

Prison sports programmes are a good response to this interaction between surveillance, normalisation and punishment, and they contribute for some inmates to the granting of rewards, especially through sporting progress and performance. This balance is well summarised by the phrase employed in Denmark: "The art of balancing a strict with a soft approach" (presentation by Denmark, Pan-European Sport and Prison Conference, 2014).

At the intersection of this balance, sport can promote the inmate's "good" behaviour while serving their sentence, when, it should be reiterated, details of their significant behaviour, from the most intimate acts to acts in the public sphere, are observed, analysed and put on file. Through the acquisition of small daily privileges (such as day-release permits for sports purposes, association periods, easier access to prison areas and practice times, support provided to the inmate in various forms by supervisors), as well as through appraisals of the inmate's day-to-day behaviour (resistance to frustration, camaraderie, respect for others, compliance with the rules, efforts made) with the aim of making an overall assessment of their case or time in prison on the basis of the progress that has been observed in their behaviour and the "rewards", especially those of a symbolic nature, that it provides, sport can constitute for the prison administration an important means of training and normalising this social individual.

Disciplinary mechanics also operate at the individual level. Sport is an instrument for normalising and regulating the inmate's behaviour, especially from the social point of view. "Sport develops an attitude towards order and lawfulness in society. It teaches discipline; it builds endurance of body and spirit. It limits the subcultural activity of inmates" (presentation by Bulgaria, *ibid.*). Sports activities supposedly teach (self-)discipline all the more easily as they attract the support of a very large number of people. Overwhelmingly approved by inmates, especially the young men who make up the majority of the prison population, and supported by the administration, these activities are used as an instrument for self-regulation and for regulating the prison space, time and order. Described as means of pacifying,

diverting or occupying inmates, sports activities actually make it easier for both the inmate and the administration to regulate the life and operation of the prison.

“By practising sports detainees have less time for criminal activities” (presentation by Moldova, *ibid.*). In the context of Moldovan prisons, which are both poor and reputedly difficult, this analysis is evidence of the “derivative” character often sought primarily in sports activities, especially in coercive situations. Nonetheless, it loses some of its explanatory potential in open prisons or facilities where living conditions enable inmates to extricate themselves from their confinement and where they are better able to balance their lives between work, studies and other cultural activities. To summarise, this idea applies less to prisons that are probably better off and can potentially develop a regime closer to the lifestyle outside.



## Chapter 3

# Overview and critical perspective

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**T**his chapter brings together all the views set out previously to work out a critical sociological perspective. This is necessary in order both to step back from the issue, allowing an objective representation of current policies on sport in prison in Council of Europe member states, and to map out the prospects for developing a pan-European policy for sport in prison.

The concern here will be not so much a critical approach, challenging the role and importance of sport during a period of custody, as an exploration of the obstacles likely to restrict access to its positive effects and potential benefits by the great majority of prisoners. Serving as a focus for the various contributions that have provided food for thought on this subject since the conference in Paris in 2014, this publication aims to promote a number of suggestions for improvement to coincide with the introduction across Europe of a real policy for sport in prison.

This overview of the present pan-European landscape may help to clarify the issues relating to sport in prison, as well as its nature and variety, and can bring to light common patterns of organisation in Council of Europe member states.

The study has revealed diverse cultures and uses of sport in prison in different states and different prisons, indicating considerable variety in sports programmes. This diversity of views on sport in prison reflects not so much an atomisation as a genuine opportunity for improvement and innovation, which is available to the various authorities through situation analysis and exchange of practice, and this diversity can be used to develop their prison sports programmes and policies.

The fact that, thanks to the Council of Europe, there is a growing desire to join forces and reflect in common on this issue shows the increasing importance attached to sport in the design of prison conditions and in providing support for prisoners during their sentences. This recent attention to sport in prison has in turn led to a number of useful ideas.

The fact that 32 states took part in this pan-European debate in various forms, thus demonstrates their shared interest in the sports programmes that they all seem to use, in different ways and to various extents, in their prison policies.

This debate on sport in prison, following on from the recent history of sentencing and how it should be treated, shows a continued pursuit of greater rationalisation of sentences to make them more humane, greater consideration of prisoners' well-being and basic respect for prisoners' rights.

This European debate has also renewed belief in the potential of sport and reaffirmed the high expectations of the role that it can play in rehabilitation, which in most member states covers both social and vocational aspects.

## I. Sport: an underrated practice

Although sport has now been popularised and is universally available, being present in all social strata in its extraordinary variety, which genuinely reflects the nature of our societies, sociology reminds us that sport is undervalued in collective representations.

As far as cultural practices and the symbolic hierarchies at work in the social and political order/space are concerned, sport is still sometimes “an underestimated cultural object, particularly where legitimate culture exerts an influence ... since it seems to be the most obvious expression of popular culture and mundane enjoyments” (Pociello 1995: 38).

Little used in job-seeking support, relatively low-profile and undervalued in the field of science, and often an underrated minority subject in education and educational institutions, sport is constantly looking for legitimacy and social justification.

Interpreted as the achievement of the unnecessary, a “free” and gratuitous act, sport and by extension physical education have constantly sought utilitarian justification. There are few subjects for which so many reasons have been found, as if each functional justification were too weak on its own and needed others to back up it up. (Defrance 1995/2000: 68)

The fact remains that the current universal enthusiasm for sport, its availability across different sectors of society and its widespread teaching in schools, although still uneven, bears witness to a relative popularisation and democratisation of the discipline.

How sport is seen in prison stems from these internalised perceptions of sport in society. This is not so much a policy debate as a matter for each prison and the people associated with it. Although countries’ legal provisions relating to sport in prison recognise its considerable social and educational potential, in practice and in accounts of this practice, sport is mainly occupational and recreational. While it is undoubtedly useful and valued by the authorities and by the prisoners themselves – as we have shown in this publication – the entertaining and “diverting” aspect of sport may in some countries and for some categories of official significantly increase the stigma attached to such programmes and/or insidiously minimise their educational value. In countries – particularly wealthy ones – that have long since introduced sport in prison and developed widespread and/or innovative formal sports programmes, reducing sport to just its soothing qualities means ignoring its part in rehabilitating prisoners, which is probably less apparent and well established than in other programmes (educational, language, vocational, etc.). Whether sport is regarded as quintessentially downmarket (Erhenberg 1991) and underrated, or legitimate and to be supported by the prison establishment, is still an open question in some contexts and countries. This publication is a contribution to the discussion, based on the actual situation, and makes both cases.

Driven by officials involved in sport and supported by their institutions, sports programmes are expanding and are overflowing with ideas and innovation to mark their place in the correctional system.

However, far from being a panacea (Meek 2014), sport in prison has led to rather mixed results. Since it is unable by itself to counteract the evils of imprisonment and the mechanisms of reoffending, it must be combined with other activities in prison. Not being enough to prevent prison-related disorders, it cannot, for example, compensate for damage caused by shortages and overcrowding, which are both likely to make prison conditions harder. If under-resourced, sport cannot always do what is expected of it. Restricted by a public understanding of prison that is often conservative, the development of sport is sometimes reduced to its purely recreational aspect. As a result, the educational potential of programmes that are struggling to expand is exploited only partially and sometimes rather perfunctorily.

Often reduced to an improvised knock-about (Travert 1997) in the exercise yard or to the conventional ritual of weightlifting, sport in prison, just like sport outside in some milieus, still bears a crude and simplistic label. Sport of this nature struggles to make its case and to meet the serious ambitions harboured for it in theory. In this form, sport is in fact likely to “imprison” a prisoner in a culture and in a relationship to the body that are ultimately both limited and socially determined, particularly regarding their potential for rehabilitation. Activities such as football and bodybuilding, which are helpful as an emergency fallback in a tense prison situation, are thus offered by some prisons without any supervision or structure, often owing to lack of resources.

While they may satisfy the cultural canons of a population without any other sporting experience or prospects, these popular forms of physical activity can, if emptied of content, have the opposite effect of that originally intended, that is, they can lock a prisoner further into the heart of a penalising system.

“The search for urgent ‘answers’ to the most critical ‘problems’ and the most ‘intolerable’ situations” is precisely what has “enabled the institution to adjust to collective sensitivities ... an adjustment that has proved essential to the (re)production of the institution’s functional homology over the years and, consequently, to the (re) production of its ‘failure’” (Chantraine 2004b).

Represented accordingly as an activity that is supposed to be simple/simplistic, practical, recreational, easy to organise, cheap in comparison with other arrangements, even politically lightweight and conventional, popular with prisoners and comfortable for prison authorities, who are thus relieved of certain pressures, sport seems to be taken for granted in prison without there being any need for discussion or for basic principles relating to how it should function or be optimised.

This publication also illustrates the inherent limitations of the prison system and the cultural barriers that need to be removed if new practices and programmes are to be brought in and tested. Comparison between countries is a step in this direction, allowing each to analyse its own practices and programmes in the light of the following questions: Where does my country stand? How far should it go in developing and improving these programmes? Which target groups are considered a priority? How can support be provided for as many prisoners as possible? Which trials have worked? What forms of supervision and organisation should be used?

The pan-European debate begun in 2013 has been a tremendous spur to further dialogue and towards establishing a genuine database through a European platform

for exchange and research on sport in prison. The ideas collected here have revealed, first and foremost, the great wealth and positive opinions of programmes whose promoters have managed against the odds to remove barriers and make up for shortcomings in order to develop valuable sports activities in this environment.

Given these numerous local and national initiatives, there is now a need for co-ordination, and even regulation, of sport in prison in a number of states, and probably on the international level. As we have seen, this regulation cannot match or replace local processes and initiatives and therefore the parties involved. Nor should it be experienced by member states as a sort of imposition, dictating how sport in prison is to be introduced and organised. This is crucial, as it has already been shown, including in these pages, how important it is to win collective support for developing sport. On the other hand, regulation can be viewed as a genuine additional resource for stakeholders to have sport in prison recognised as a legitimate activity. It is also an opportunity to bring together and unite these stakeholders and also to provide them with the various resources available.

## II. Common wisdom

The opening-up of a closed world to an open environment, sought by European institutions in particular, has been apparent over the past decades in the growing interaction between prison authorities and the media, for example. Prompted by a move towards reform and the now explicit assertion of greater respect for human rights and prevention of inhuman treatment, with the establishment of the European Court of Human Rights (the Court) and the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT), this opening-up also reflects a political commitment to public debate on prison conditions, which have been subject to considerable criticism. “A consensus emerged, but it was left to the prison authority, as the institution implementing penal guidelines, to take on board the criticism and play the communication game” (Décarpes 2004).

This gradual increase in media coverage of prisons and the shining of a public light on the prison environment have probably helped to promote more humane and standardised conditions of detention by exposing the sometimes inhumane or dehumanising treatment of inmates.

At the same time, mobilising public opinion on the prison question has opened up new issues. To quote Bourdieu, “The idea that there is such a thing as a unanimous public opinion ... legitimizes a policy and strengthens the power relations that underlie it or make it possible” (Bourdieu 1993: 150). Contrary to reformers’ expectations, public opinion seems to approach any improvement in prisoners’ living conditions, particularly any material improvement, with considerable reservations and scepticism. This gives us pause to reflect, especially with regard to sports programmes.

(Sports instructor at detention centre:) But when I talk to people about sport, about trips outside or top-tier football clubs meeting inmates, for example, people say straight away, “They should just go and play with the young lads in their own neighbourhoods, and they should just give the money to the lads so that they can do something with it.” They say, “Just stop giving them the dosh!” People outside say, “Enough’s enough! It’s

our money! We put them away because they're dangerous and so we don't have to hear anything more of them, and they're still getting our money!" In fact people are saying that they have to be punished. They don't really stop to think that they're going to come out and could be their neighbours or, I don't know, about later.

Indeed, "one of the most well documented findings in the field is that people believe prison life is easy" (Roberts 2005: 3). However, "most people know little about the nature and functioning of the correctional system" (ibid.: 8). They are unaware of actual prison conditions, for example. They are equally unaware of the criminal profile of offenders. Nor do they know that considerable use is made of incarceration, contrary to what they believe.

Despite this huge lack of knowledge about the prison system, and with just a few exceptions, such as in Norway, where the Breivik case illustrates the opposite point of view, we find a widespread "public attitude that the justice system is generally too lenient" (ibid.: 10). When asked what they think of sentencing, most people believe it to be too soft. Lastly, they "see an important role for both rehabilitation or reintegration and punishment" (ibid.: 4). It follows that "comfort" is often considered unnecessary, if not downright unacceptable, for a population whose punishment is definitely deserved in the eyes of such people. The research by Languin et al. (2004) delves a little deeper. Taking the example of Switzerland, this research describes varying conceptions of punishment and how it is treated, based on three types of judgment: "prospectivism", "contractualism" and "ostracism". In prospectivism,

[t]he unshakeable belief in man and his ability to transform the consequences of wrong-doing for the better is evidenced by the goals that this approach assigns to the punishment: it is wholly directed at improving convicted offenders through care, encouraging individual reflection on their part and preparing them for a return to society. (Languin et al. 2004: 18-19)

In contractualism,

it is the idea of restitution that is uppermost, together with respect for the contract between society and the individual. ... This choice reflects ... punishment as a response to an offence, which is not expected to bring about change in an individual. (ibid.: 32)

As for ostracism,

[t]he main purpose of punishment in this approach is exclusion, that is marginalisation and relegation, of people whom society has been unable or unwilling to integrate, educate or care for. ... The sentence combines various objectives relating to retribution and affliction: putting-away, discipline, suffering, vengeance and even shame. (ibid.: 43-4)

While these are "very distinct ways of viewing what is just in criminal cases", according to the authors "these conceptions are not diametrically opposed but are based on genuine common ground, and individuals choose to emphasise one or the other" (Languin et al. 2004: 59). It is nevertheless possible to discern, behind these varying views of punishment, the effect of social position. According to Languin et al. (2004),

Prospectivism is more common among people who have a professional background. The proportion of academics here is significantly higher than for the other approaches. Sympathy with this idea of just punishment is greater among people who do not watch much television and describe themselves as non-believers, non-practising believers or of a socialist tendency. Contractualism is the preserve of younger individuals (under fifty) whose information on offending comes mainly from news items, whether from specific columns in the press or through discussions about these subjects with their immediate circle. This way of considering punishment is also attractive to people who frequently watch crime series on television. Ostracism, on the other hand, is clearly associated with social deprivation (in both economic and educational terms) and retirement status. Individuals who are poorly integrated in society (who talk little with other people and read little but who watch a lot of television) have this attitude more than others. (ibid.: 58)

As well as challenging any humanising of prison conditions, some of these common conceptions revive the utilitarian and redemptive principle of punishment. They also accuse rehabilitation-oriented prison policy of practising positive discrimination by symbolically entitling the most deviant and least deserving people in our society to attention and advantages that are denied to hard-working, law-abiding individuals. Several writers (Durkheim 1895; Badinter 1992) have talked about how the collective consciousness enshrines this “iron law”, which holds it to be inevitable that conditions in prison will be much more draconian than those of the most destitute of free men. Known as the doctrine of less eligibility (described by Gras 2004, among others, for French prisons) or “iron law”, this ideology disregards the principles of the welfare state in favour of a move towards a “workfare state”. This new way of thinking in post-industrial societies, whose legacy combines the political foundations of zero tolerance with an (over)emphasis on law and order, while now common among the public in certain countries, also seems sometimes to have been internalised by prison authority staff, some of whom are resisting the development of large-scale or innovative sports programmes.

Issues of communication around sports programmes must therefore be considered with reference to this context and to the risk that “media policy will lead to misinformation by restricting the scope for emergence of non-mainstream issues ... Prison is then perceived only through a simplifying filter” (Décarpes 2004). This has led people connected with the prison environment to be doubly careful when disseminating information and particularly so when designing sports programmes, which has substantially affected their nature and scope.

The exponents of sport in prison point to a change of emphasis in the development and organisation of sports programmes in and outside prison as a result of such conceptions. Plain, pared-down and/or low-key, these programmes must not be thought too expensive either. Using public money to develop sports provision in prisons adds to these problems and draws more attention, being a particularly sensitive matter in the current climate of budget austerity. Any development of sport considered to be over the top or out of the ordinary has to be justified to a public anxious to know how taxpayers’ money is being spent. The situation may be less acute in some countries, as evidenced by the examples of Switzerland and Spain, where some prisons have been equipped with swimming pools.

Despite these rare exceptions, to get round the problem of common conceptions, there is the option for some authorities either of resorting to other backers, particularly private ones, to support sport, or else of developing activities pandering to public opinion. To illustrate this constraint, we may take the example of the many sports projects and programmes whose media coverage is on a par with their charitable and/or humanitarian dimension. These projects secure legitimacy and backing, in the shape of moral support, that is able to overcome the resistance described above. The Telethon, involvement in disabled sports or parasports, interaction with vulnerable groups and any other good deeds in the sporting sphere are all examples. As well as fulfilling the initial need to rehabilitate participants, prisoners' involvement in this type of cause satisfies the idea that a prisoner should make amends, since he or she is assumed to be lacking in this respect. There remains a serious risk that a number of innovative and ambitious sports programmes and initiatives, often initiated by committed members of staff in the field, may run out of steam or fail to meet the challenges of rehabilitation for prisoners who are nevertheless in need of it.

### **III. A deprived environment**

As has already been pointed out, the EPAS quantitative study referred to at the beginning of this publication highlights, among the problems associated with organising sport in prison, the obstacles relating to material resources in particular (facilities, funding, supervision, etc.) that are available to the various organisations to develop their programmes.

Funding is a stumbling block for a number of states at present. Three aspects of the study bear witness to this. First, reference is made to the lack of a specific budget for sport in most states. Second, fundraising is mentioned as one of the main ways found by authorities to improve development of sports programmes. Third, among other states, Moldova, which is one of the poorest countries in Europe, considers that lack of funding and facilities is hampering its policy. The efforts made by a number of impecunious authorities to raise private funds for sport in prison confirm this observation.

It would be a mistake to think that conditions in prison could be as good as or better than those outside. The relationship to the economy and, more specifically, the labour market is a perfect example, since in the employment relationship our prisons are a reflection of our societies (Foucault 1994/2001). Work in prison is not only greatly impoverished and unequal but also characterised by considerable scarcity, much irregularity, low income, low skills and limited choice. Other fields of detention naturally encounter the same difficulties to an even greater extent, inasmuch as employment is often considered a priority in the rehabilitation process when it comes to these other fields, particularly social, cultural and sports activities.

In some states, funding through patronage, sponsoring and sundry partnerships offsets this shortage of budget funds, making it possible for ambitious programmes to be implemented and for correctional authorities to maintain their policies. France, Spain and Italy – three countries that are, of course, relatively wealthy – have used

this strategy to meet the objectives of programmes that it has been possible to support in this way, which are both accessible and of high quality.

Like financial issues, the question of sports facilities can affect development of sports provision in prison. Both outside and inside prison, sports facilities are a prerequisite for secure and legal implementation of sports programmes, which are treated as models of societal practice. Since it entails renewing and/or converting prison buildings to meet outside standards for sport, this aspect requires proper sports advocacy as well as impetus from national policy, which has not yet been realised by all states. Thus in some states, a number of prisons have to cope with the limitations of cramped and dilapidated environments, adapting their sports programmes accordingly or quite simply abandoning them. This can mean converting an exercise yard, exercising in cells, taking over multipurpose rooms, or using places of worship or communal areas for other purposes – in short, cobbling together some form of sport whose aims are determined by the minimalism of the practical arrangements.

Next, it stands to reason that the success of sports programmes, being generally attributed to the quality of supervision, would seem very doubtful without it. Accounts of good practice highlight the importance of and need for specialised supervision, both to meet technical requirements and to ensure safe and appropriate handling of inmates' health and behaviour. Three models have emerged.

The first model is that of member states using prison staff, often trained by the prison authority and aware of prison issues, to supervise some or all of their sports programmes. Second, there are the states that delegate their sports programmes to outside staff who often come from the sports movement – its federations, leagues, clubs and associations – and have also been trained within it and in an open environment. The first type of staff tend to have specialist knowledge of the prison system, its inmates and the main security issues, while the second generally have specialist knowledge of sport, its features in an open environment and how to teach it.

A third group of countries aims to mix the two models – in-house and external – and therefore combine both cultures, which may be loosely described as closed in the first case and open in the second. Although we have no detailed information on the nature and scope of the training for such staff or their exact status (“upskilling”, casualisation, seniority) – a question calling for closer consideration if we are properly to understand the nature of the sports model concerned – these models nevertheless reflect such states' views and general positions on the degree of openness to the outside world of the sports model used in prisons. They also imply the objectives assigned to prison programmes. From another angle, these positions highlight a desire by prison authorities to develop sports expertise within their ranks, which can even cover establishing a proper sports department and a body of specialist sports staff able to ensure the existence and sustainability of these programmes.

Without postulating the superiority of any one model over the others, the question of sports programme supervision can be meaningfully raised on two levels.

On the first level there is the dichotomy between custody and rehabilitation, and between a closed environment and an open environment. This antithesis crystallises the double bind of a prison system based on both a big stick and a helping hand

to dress the wound (Cario 1992). Trapped between the conflicting approaches of custody and rehabilitation and having to meet the requirements of both confinement and preparation for life outside prison, the model used for sport resembles a pendulum that, depending on context and key policy guidelines, will swing to one side or the other. Different sports programmes are therefore variously adjusted to and positioned along this scale, also known as the progressive system, from “inside” all the way to “outside”, to meet the very different needs of the prison population at each stage of custody: more or less monitoring, more or less supervision, more or less openness to the outside, more or less competition, more or less diversity, and so on.

These initial considerations then lead to a second level of debate concerning the need to adjust the sports programme to the characteristics of the prison population – if possible on an individual basis – in the light of its needs, standard and problems, with a view to preparing inmates more effectively for life outside.

One of the obstacles to a successful rehabilitation process in prison lies in a further contradiction of the prison system, which calls on individuals to face up to their responsibilities at a time when they lack both the social and symbolic resources to do so (Chantraine 2004b). Constituting nothing short of a mechanism for reproducing poverty (Marchetti 1996), social exclusion and social inequality, incarceration embodies the paradox that

the most disadvantaged never suffer their disadvantage more than in the place where they have been relegated as a result of that disadvantage. (Chantraine 2004b)

These peculiarities heighten the key role of the prison sports instructor, who must not only handle prisoners’ problems with sport itself but also, prior to this, their access to sport. A process of self-elimination denies access to sport and its benefits to the most underprivileged of prisoners.

Here it is not enough to provide the technical elements essential to good practice; it is also necessary to generate the interest, taste, need and motivation. Encouraging a poorly equipped target group to do sport does in fact lead to what are called motivation problems (contribution from Moldova, Pan-European Conference on Sport and Prison, 2014), which are all the more persistent and insuperable for being the result of a lengthy socialisation process. Inmates do not spontaneously develop an aptitude or taste for sport or an interest in an activity that many considered irrelevant before their detention. This is particularly obvious among women.

#### **IV. An unequal and hierarchical environment**

As in the case of work and most socio-educational activities in prison, a sort of selection may take place among prisoners. Unequal access to sport, arising from both the prison situation and the actual characteristics of the prison population, inhibits sport and exercise, sometimes making it selective. At a more complex level, this exclusion results in a differentiated distribution of its benefits.

Current research has shown that, in addition to sport itself, socio-educational activities are affected by a phenomenon of self-exclusion that penalises the most

disadvantaged prisoners, including minorities (age-related, ethnic and gender) and also certain categories of inmate (such as sex offenders). While the prison population can be regarded as disadvantaged in its entirety, there is still a hierarchy within it between rich and poor in the broad sense and between the dominant and the dominated, instituting inequalities among prisoners that are maximised in prison because of problems of shortages (Marchetti 1996), overcrowding and conditions of confinement in general. In the end,

[very few inmates] can benefit from educational and training programmes leading to qualifications, even if they take them, or from provision of cultural facilities, not only through lack of a cultural background but also due to complicating factors associated with their prison career and because of overcrowding, which sometimes entails a long wait for access to resources, as well as the inevitable lack of privacy and uncertainty as to how to find the time needed to make the effort in the medium term. (Faugeron, Chauvenet and Combessie 1996: 35)

Like sport, training and education are also hampered by a number of institutional and sociocultural obstacles. They attract mainly “converts” who already have a little cultural capital, rather than the most underprivileged.

Not all inmates benefit from sports arrangements that are based on voluntary participation and subject to the constraints of an institution that is often overcrowded. In theory, sport is available and beneficial to all, but in some circumstances it is selective and therefore inequalitarian. Thus not all inmates have the same access to sport, to the projects, events and temporary absence connected with sport, nor ultimately to the presumed benefits. Many prisons use a waiting list to manage prisoner flows (excessive numbers and high turnover), given that few places are available for sport. The inmates on such a list are considered to be particularly privileged, and there are many strategies for taking their place. But not everyone has the resources needed to be included in the list.

## **A. “Warrior capital” and social relationships in the criminal world**

Sport can be seen in some forms as an environment left to the prison population, a symbolic place of freedom in prison and an arena in which the unleashing of emotions is tolerated (Elias and Dunning 1986/1994). This environment, initially created to escape the power, restraint and surveillance of the prison authority as the legitimate authority, has given way to a structure that is just as restrictive but also informal and therefore uncontrolled.

We again come up against this huge paradox: objectively, conditions of detention have never been better, and we have never been so close to recognising prisoners’ rights, but the prisoners’ world remains singularly disorganised and violent. In fact, it is perhaps more so than ever. Has the weakening of the totalitarian institution and the advent of prisoners’ rights ultimately had the effect merely of replacing one form of tyranny with another? (Lemire 1991: 71)

Sport and leisure activities also have a tendency to promote antisocial behaviour (Coalter 2007). With the exacerbation of prisoner power struggles in these sports

programmes and environments, sometimes intensified by self-management, violence is seen to concentrate wherever disorientated individuals gather together, when they are brought face to face and left to their own devices.

The concept of “warrior capital” (Sempé and Bodin 2015; Sauvadet 2006), articulated for urban contexts, is applicable to an even greater extent in prison, particularly for certain sports (team sports and bodybuilding, for example), indicating a connection between the prison population and the populations of depressed urban areas and what are known as “problem” neighbourhoods. This warrior capital is characterised, according to Sauvadet, by social capital (amount and nature), physical strength, moral discipline, “depravity” and also the “gift of the gab”. Apparent in prison hierarchy and distribution of bargaining power and positions, it underlines the similarity of social relationships in the prison environment to the urban, working-class environment of the “housing estates” or “neighbourhoods” and, more generally, the similarity between populations whose characteristics of social deprivation and exclusion are comparable in terms of social attitudes, and who mix socially.

While this fact of an environment that has become a territory and prize in power struggles between dominant or warrior individuals also applies to sport in prison, it seems to be exacerbated in conditions of confinement “initially by the structural constraints of a prison sentence – isolation and social deprivation, dearth of sports activities, sporadic and selective access to sport and physical exercise in some prisons, overcrowding and poor supervision in terms of both quantity and quality – before acquiring meaning amidst pressures and processes of struggle that are much more symbolic but just as fierce” (Sempé and Bodin 2015).

These struggles can be seen in the appropriation and marking of sports environments by groups of dominant inmates, the granting of certain time slots, a monopoly on organisation of activities and the many small privileges that go with sport. The influence of inmates with a background in organised crime over the rest of the prison population and their placing in “prestige” positions and areas within prisons is a perfect illustration of these power struggles.

## **B. Social relationships between the sexes**

Often insidiously, the social uses of sport establish identity in prison, particularly male identity, but they are not neutral and lie at the heart of genuine power issues (Detrez 2002).

The body is therefore both the means and the end for tacit processes of domination, particularly masculine domination (Bourdieu 1998), in a sexually normalised sports environment that is ultimately stigmatising. Stigmatisation of femininity and homosexual inmates has thus emerged as a recurrent problem in prisons, typical of social relationships between the sexes and the associated domination issues/interaction.

### **Women who do sport**

Women’s detachment from the prison sports model is symptomatic of this phenomenon of self-exclusion of a minority of the prison population from rehabilitation schemes offered in prison. The explanation lies both in the characteristics of the

female prison population and in the structural constraints of organising sport in a prison environment.

Our analysis shows first of all that these women have little sports capital, which is why they hold aloof from the sports model/activities offered in prison. This detachment is obvious from their limited participation in and disengagement from sport. In each of the women's prisons studied, one of the most striking examples was the sudden interruption in play by female inmates in the absence of the sports instructor. If the latter was called away for any reason, the women prisoners would halt the game and wait until the instructor's return, heralding the resumption of the match.

The attitude of most women prisoners to their bodies prior to imprisonment is different from that inherent in the traditional, competitive, male model of sport. Taking up sport is therefore an idea that is new to them and thus a trial. Sport as a dominant masculine practice excludes them culturally (Bourdieu 1978/2002; Mennesson 2005).

(Sports instructor:) And they tend to lack ability. It seems as if ... people say they come from deprived areas and haven't developed it [a taste for sport] along the way ... at school, say.

Furthermore, this cultural detachment from the sports model promoted in prisons reveals, apart from their lack of interest in this unfamiliar activity, a certain inability on the part of these women to embrace the supposed benefits of sport in the conditions in which it is usually organised for them (Sempé et al. 2007).

This detachment is perpetuated by the failure to adapt sport to the characteristics of the female prison population. The sports programme, which is usually based on the dominant male model, does not consider and therefore can scarcely add to these women's minimal experience of, expectations of or taste for sport, and at the same time it limits their opportunities to use sport as a means of countering their exclusion.

Access to the sports ground and facilities is thus subject both to selection and to a process of self-elimination that ultimately reveals the existence of power relationships that substantially shape the sports environment.

## **Homosexuality and homosociability**

Trapped in a dichotomised perception of gendered identity, male inmates seek to exaggerate the ideal type of masculine behaviour. The sports ground is thus animated by manifestations of courage, shows of strength and manliness, and displays and episodes of recurrent violence. This is a spectacle calculated to prevent insufficient manliness in a male inmate and at the same time protect him from any vulnerability perceived as an admission of weakness if at all feminine in nature. Manliness is "an eminently relational notion, constructed in front of and for other men and against femininity, in a kind of fear of the female, firstly of oneself" (Bourdieu 1978/2002: 51). Thus sport is used to express a clear rejection of all the perceptible signs of femininity with which homosexuals are automatically associated.

It is because it has been constructed and expressed in relation to another gender that masculinity has been made possible historically (ibid.). The absence of women in prison adds to unease about identity among many male prisoners deprived of

gendered interactions. This absence of an “other” challenges the male/female symmetry, or rather its asymmetry. It also hampers male domination and, with it, the gift of “masculine nobility” (ibid.).

In order to maintain a certain sexual order, inmates therefore reproduce the organisation of a practice that they consider “normal”. Physical occupation of the sports environment, awarding of certain machines or certain time slots for sport or exercise, composition of football teams, organisation of waiting lists for activities, a monopoly of “good relations” with the instructor and access to minor privileges relating to sport in detention are all strategic opportunities to understand the transactions in this “male stock exchange” (Groult 1965: 17).

## Sex offenders

Some inmates, including sex offenders, have no say, as it were, and are therefore compelled to exclude themselves. Their thoroughgoing stigmatisation in prison is evidence of this. Within its walls, sex offenders, who are further stigmatised in prison, can expect support only from those of their peers who share their stigma or from “the wise” (Goffman 1963/1975: 28), who may be social workers, psychologists or other professionals working with the prisoner on the specific stigma. For fear of the tendency of a stigma to spread (ibid.: 30), a distance is generally created around this population. Since it is simplest to accept or suppose that these offenders are not athletic or even interested in sport, this results in their being excluded even more from sports programmes.

(Inmate:) There’s a lot in for sex offences, and they’re not really sporty.

(Inmate:) I’m not going to see him because he’s not in for the same thing as me, you know. He’s in for a filthy offence!

(Researcher:) You mean there’s a scale of crime?

(Inmate:) Yeah, but it’s not a scale; it’s just we distinguish. It’s more a principle. It’s a principle.

This is an observation that serves to justify the absence of these inmates from sports grounds and which is ultimately convenient for most of the inmates that use them regularly. While sex offenders are probably no less athletic than other inmates, they do not engage in sport simply because access is barred to them.

These inmates are thus obliged to do without the programmes that are popular with the other prisoners or else turn to more individual types of exercise, such as bodybuilding, or minor team sports such as pétanque, which in some prisons has the reputation of being the preferred activity of “paedo gramps” (in the words of one inmate). This sport is therefore deserted by the other inmates, who thereby signal their aloofness. By thus displaying a strategy of differentiation, rejection and avoidance with regard to these sex offenders, the other prisoners are at the same time establishing themselves as more respectable inmates. Rejecting these “perverts” is a means of quelling suspicions about their own crimes. Lines are thus beginning to be traced within the prison walls and particularly in the sports environment.

(Researcher:) And what about bodybuilding?

(Inmate:) No, I would have done badminton, table tennis, cycling or rowing ... cardio-training, you know! But not pétanque.

(Researcher:) Not pétanque?

(Inmate:) No, no, not pétanque; pétanque is for paedos.

(Researcher:) Ah, that's how people see it?

(Inmate:) Me, yes, I see it like that because you often see them there. Okay, the old men playing aren't all paedophiles! But, as it happens, it's their main activity. So we don't see them at all at football or badminton and not very often at bodybuilding.

Thus the prison environment is gradually territorialised around inequality and violence, sometimes making an inmate's integration complicated and tenuous, especially for sport.

## V. The relationship to violence

Reported not only in the media but also in political and scientific circles and sometimes in prison itself, violence exists, and has even been identified, as a feature of imprisonment. It should not be forgotten that prison is an atypical organisation in that it is pervaded by a harsh and intractable confrontation "between those who dream of getting out and those who are paid to stop them doing so. Although in the great majority of organisations, there is a minimum of overlap between the goals pursued by each side, prisoners and warders are diametrically opposed. This explains why the key relationship in prison is one of power constantly accompanied by tension and by violence that is more or less contained" (Benguigui 2000: 23). The position of the sports instructor or sports supervisor is significantly different in this respect and their relations with inmates less conflictual. As a figure allowing inmates access to positive activities that they value, an instructor is often viewed differently from warders. This relationship again suggests that the sports environment and sporting activities could be helpful in work on rehabilitation.

From the political philosophy angle as well, "the element of violence running through relations in prison is felt to be an obligation" (Chauvenet 2006). To be more precise, it has to be understood that it is constructed and permanent and we therefore have to accept that it has become part of life in detention.

Prison violence is a social construct resting on the contradiction inherent in prison between law and deprivation of liberty. The degree of violence observed in prison can be taken as a measure of the deficiencies of law and therefore the relations that law promotes. This being so, the current bolstering of security in static and punitive terms, at the expense of dynamic security based on relationships, can only accentuate what it is intended to prevent. (ibid.)

Subscribing to the analysis by Wieviorka (2004), who makes a distinction between conflict and violence, some research now acknowledges the predominance of violence in prison and explains it, given what is at stake politically, by the lack of opportunities for and means of expressing conflict in a coercive environment.

In prison not only are opportunities for conflict lacking but they cannot occur by definition, given the nature of the political relationship to inmates. It is because expression of conflict is impossible, other than superficially, that violence erupts. This impossibility exists on a number of levels. The most obvious and immediate is the fact that group

initiatives, demonstrations and opportunities for discussion in which disagreement, conflict and opposition could find expression are prohibited and can be punished: in prison this amounts to resistance to law enforcement. Inmates are not on a footing of equality with their institution but in a relationship of authority and subjection. At a second, more basic level, deprivation of liberty is ordered in the name of society and if there were to be conflict it would be between the inmate and society as a whole. But an incapacitation decision (all remedies having been exhausted) brings to an end any possibility of conflict. (Chauvenet 2006)

Nevertheless, because it is sometimes inflated or caricatured, particularly owing to overexposure in the media, there is a risk that for some authors prison violence “overdetermines the approach to prison” (Décarpes 2004), even though not all prisons are contending with the same degree of violence.

We are faced with a press that is unanimous ... Violence also emerges from the choice of words; the “choice items” selected by editorial staff are shot through with emotivity. Both the looseness of the language and the caricatured content influence public opinion and the understanding that is formed of prison, making representations of prison all the more woolly and mistaken. While violence does indeed exist in prison, conversely, prison cannot be defined simply as a place of violence. This approach illustrates the major distortions that govern the media relationship to the prison system. (ibid.)

The fact remains that violence, its multifarious existence, recurrence and extent in prison, although depending on the particular prison situation, in no way spares the sports environment, any more than it does outside prison.

Violence takes a variety of forms, which can be objectified in varying degrees, and is permanently linked to the more or less difficult living conditions “inside”. For the prison population, sport sometimes appears symbolically selective and inegalitarian because of the implicit or explicit exclusion of certain inmates. Different access and treatment for women, inmates’ discrimination against homosexuals, and the appropriation by the most “powerful” inmates of non-organised sport and exercise, combined with the traditionally competitive aspect of sport, support this conclusion. Engaging in sport or exercise is therefore a sometimes insuperable trial for some inmates. It is especially difficult when such power relations are compounded by internalised cultural barriers, of which many inmates, particularly women, are not necessarily aware. These inmates do not need to be ousted from sports activities, as they automatically exclude themselves in invisible obedience to the established order, a feature of symbolic violence as defined by Bourdieu: “Symbolic violence is the violence which extorts submission, which is not perceived as such, based on ‘collective expectations’ or socially inculcated beliefs” (Bourdieu 1998: 103). Without deconstruction and institutional treatment of these cultural determinants it is out of the question for a section of the prison population to take up or be involved in sport.

Violence is also objectified in sport, physically and verbally, for example. The details given – both by staff and by inmates encountered in the course of our various researches – of many and frequent incidents in the sports environment and while engaging in sport prompt us to question the hypothesis put forward by Elias (1939/2000) of the civilizing process, controlled violence, and cathartic and pacifying power of sport in our societies. Some authors have changed their view of this thesis,

considering that sport, in some circumstances, could also contribute to disinhibition of aggressive behaviour and (re)production of violence.

Some sports, such as team sports, some forms of sporting organisation, particularly when managed by inmates themselves, some sporting situations such as meetings or matches where much is at stake, some sports areas such as small enclosed courtyards and unsupervised environments, and some arrangements for sport and exercise, particularly where there is no supervision or instruction, may have a tendency to encourage expression of these various types of violence and their “naturalisation” in prison. In sport, some inmates even see an opportunity to “earn their stripes” in an environment where it seems impossible to avoid suffering or exercising violence sooner or later.

# In conclusion

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## **I. Towards a model of good practice**

Taking the research referred to and the evidence provided, particularly the contributions made during the year of reflection on sport in prison initiated by EPAS, this conclusion outlines a prison sports environment, summing up the content of this publication and putting good practice in a pan-European context.

Like any schematisation, the model offered in this conclusion (see Figure 1) is both too basic and too all-embracing to encompass all the complexity and diversity of prison situations and sports activities. As has been noted on a number of occasions in this publication, the heterogeneity of prisons – in terms of security, facilities, regulations, organisation and policy, the variety of specific and context-related characteristics of prisoner populations and staff supervising sport, and the range of national features of prison and sports cultures – means that considerable caution is called for in framing these conclusions.

Drawing on various factors, the good practice identified by those connected with sport in prison is shaped primarily by the requirements and characteristics of the target groups, the prisons and the objectives assigned to sport in the rehabilitation process undertaken by and for inmates. In keeping with their situation, the various authorities, like the other players involved, make choices at different levels to make their sports arrangements as appropriate as possible in the light of the following factors:

- ▶ the sport concerned;
- ▶ the nature of supervision and the degree of specialisation, training, qualification, mixing and openness;
- ▶ how far the organisation of sport is multidisciplinary (when associated with inmates' education or vocational training, for example);
- ▶ co-operation on sport in prison and involvement of partners;
- ▶ the governance and financing model for sport in prison;
- ▶ available facilities;
- ▶ timing of activities;
- ▶ needs assessment and evaluation of existing programmes.

**Figure 1: The structure of good practice**



## **II. Mapping a typical example of good practice**

### **A. Two basic dimensions: openness and institutionalisation**

Figure 2 shows how sports is organised and positioned in the prison environment according to two basic dimensions, which can be seen as structural.

The horizontal axis defines the level of openness of prison sport: how far it is oriented towards the outside, supporting rehabilitation, and how far towards the inside, in response to the need to maintain confinement. Not all sports programmes answer both approaches to the same extent, depending on the target groups (their characteristics in terms of health, prison career and sports capital – in short, their needs), the detention regime (the prison’s degree of openness, rehabilitation policy, security constraints) and the prison’s situation (facilities, qualified supervisory staff, budget).

The second axis compares the various concepts and models of sport developed in prison, which are largely imported from outside and tailored to life inside. This

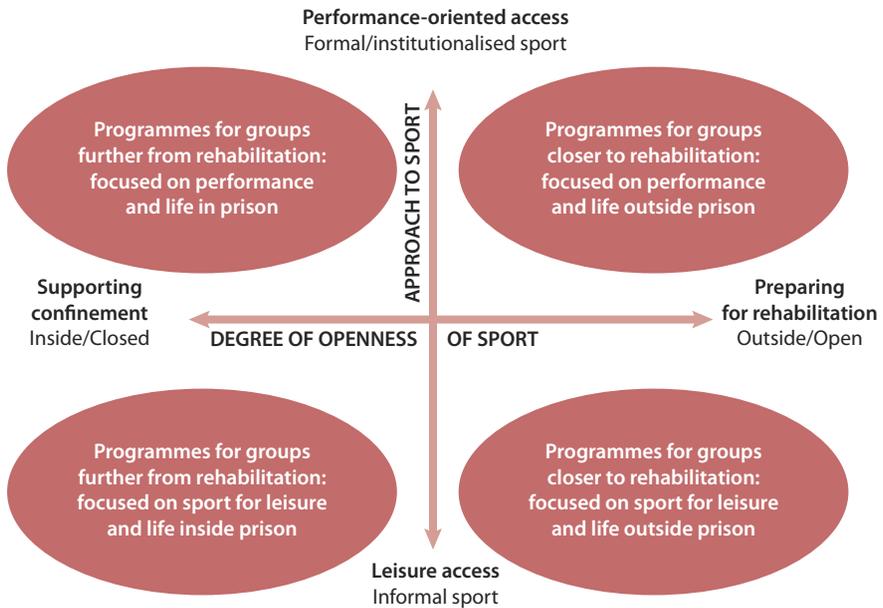
axis can be used to identify the very different ways of organising and doing sport in prison, depending on whether it is thought of as traditionally competitive, fairly regular, performance-oriented and institutionalised, or as a leisure activity, generally not organised, less regular and not performance-based. Once again, approaches may vary between states, prisons, programmes and even inmates.

## **B. The sports environment in prison**

Four areas can thus be represented in this environment, depending on whether a sports programme is more open/externally focused or more closed/internally focused and whether the approach to sport is developed more in terms of leisure/non-organised activity or is more oriented to performance/institutionalised sport.

Without seeing these tendencies as dichotomous or considering them mutually exclusive, but articulating them in response to the time and space of the prison environment, sport in prison can be categorised and modulated as shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2: The dimensions of sport in prison**



Some types of externally focused good practice, such as temporary absence for the purpose of sport, will concentrate on rehabilitation. However, they are not available to all inmates, particularly those whose criminal records do not allow parole. Thus consideration might be given to other forms of sport better calculated to meet the requirements of the prison regime while satisfying the specific needs of this group. Focused more on life inside prison, resocialisation programmes, for example, or championships in prison could better meet the need to provide support for confinement while allowing access to the potential benefits of sport, whether as just a leisure activity or as something more competitive.

**Figure 3: The sports environment in prison**

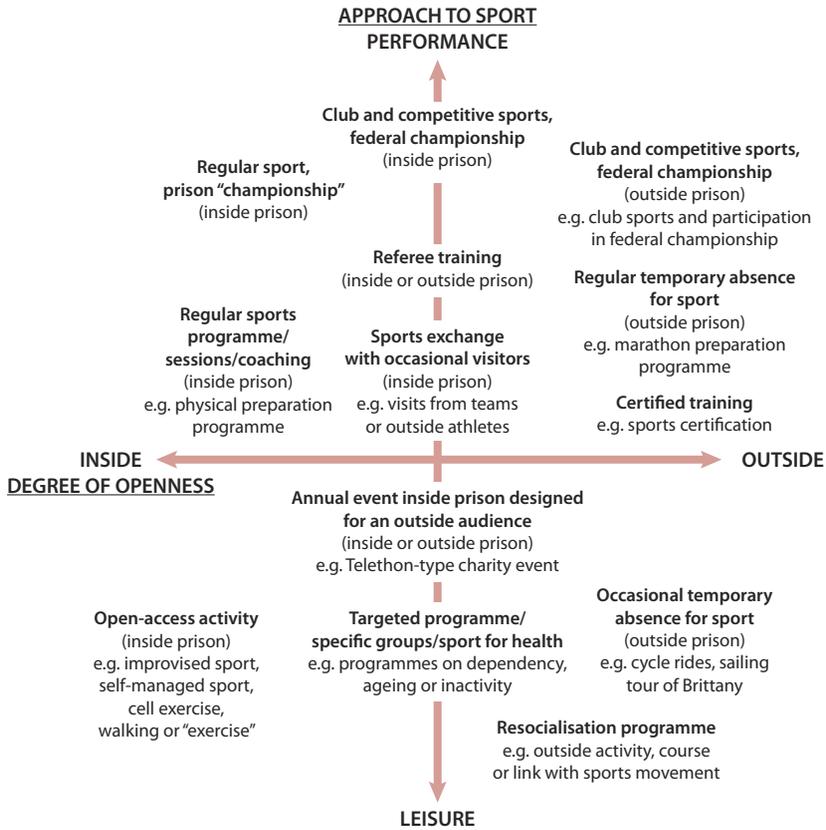


Figure 3 illustrates, firstly, the diversity of sport in prison depending on how it is introduced. Secondly, it brings out the different possible uses and current aspects of sport in prison according to the target groups and the prisons in which sport is provided. Lastly, if this diagram is used for different countries and authorities, it can, depending on requirements, offer avenues for objectifying, raising the profile of and balancing the sports environment in prison at different levels: local, national and even international.

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There has been growing recognition of the value of sport by the prison system. Its effects are highly beneficial to those in detention and to prison life in general. However, looking at the objectives through to the challenges, we can see that the link between sport and prison is a complex one, and in order to understand it better and to see what lessons can be learned, an in-depth thinking process is required, based on current scientific knowledge in this field and on state policies and practices being implemented in prisons.

In the framework of its activities promoting diversity in and through sport, the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS) of the Council of Europe has been working on the subject of sport and prison since 2013, in close connection with the Council for Penological Co-operation (PC-CP). Following an expert seminar organised in Strasbourg in 2013, a pan-European conference was held in Paris in 2014. The results of a survey which highlighted the numerous examples of good practice regarding sports programmes were discussed. The conference highlighted the need to record the different points of view regarding sport in prison at a pan-European level in order to identify the real challenges.

*Gaëlle Sempé is a lecturer in sociology, sports science and physical education training (STAPS), and teacher-researcher at Rennes University 2.*

*Mr Vivian Geiran, author of the foreword, is chair of the Council for Penological Co-operation (PC-CP) of the Council of Europe.*

*The Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS) is an agreement between a number of Council of Europe member states (38 as of 1 January 2018) which have decided to co-operate in the field of sports policy. As an "enlarged" agreement, EPAS is open to non-member states. It works in co-operation with relevant organisations, in particular with representatives of the sports movement.*

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