

Selected Good Practice Examples

Best-Practice Examples from Germany

“buntkicktgut” – an intercultural street football league (Munich)

buntkicktgut (diverse kicks well) was founded in 1996 by two social workers at a refugee home. They used street football – the most popular activity for the boys living in the refugee homes – as a means for identification and integration. Now over 150 teams with about 1500 players from various nations participate in the tournament. The target group not only includes refugees living in refugee housing, but youth from various ethnic backgrounds from various parts of Munich, especially disadvantaged youth. Street soccer – in contrast to club football – is associated with autonomy, self-organisation and self-determination by the youth. The project reaches its target group through mouth-to-mouth propaganda in the schoolyards, in youth centres, and through peer groups. Teams register for the league on their own and organise themselves. Girls play too, but only the younger kids play on mixed teams. There is one all-girl team in the league; there is no quota for the number of girls required to play on a team.

The project works closely together with youth service institutions, school social workers, and integration workers, who are aware of and utilise the activities offered by buntkicktgut. At the beginning of the season, street workers, social workers, and social education workers are contacted; about two thirds of the team show up with a kind of ‘manager’, but one who allows the kids to follow the principle of self-organisation. Teams that sign up for the league have to commit to playing year round and coming to all games.

The participants play throughout the year with small-field teams in five age groups according to set regulations. The rules are in writing. Two cup events are played each year, too. The longevity of league year after year is what is required to make it successful. The continuity of the league assists in creating ties between the youth and the staff, and assists in socialising the kids with regard to the value system of the league. When new teams join, they are shown the ropes and taught the rules by the teams that have been participating for a while.

One of the primary goals of the project is the prevention of violence. The project concentrates especially in the peaceful resolution of conflicts with an intercultural context (i.e. racist prejudices and intercultural misunderstandings). The kids are taught peaceful strategies for conflict resolution, democratic negotiation, and the idea of participation.

According to the motto: “Show us your Bolzplatz!” the games take place throughout the city. The teams are usually made up of mixed ethnicities and mostly come from the areas in Munich most greatly ridden with social problems. A strong emphasis of the project is the involvement of the kids and youth. buntkicktgut trains youth referees. Anyone can become a referee. The training includes learning the rules of football, the special regulations for street soccer, and the role of the referee on the field. The kids can also participate in the Internet reporting of the project.

One special institution is the league council, which is democratically made up of youth representatives from individual teams. The league council gets involved, for instance, if red cards were given, if there were physical or verbal incidents, if players do not fulfil their duties (carrying the goals, cleaning up, etc.), if teams fail to show up for a game, or if there are to be changes made to a team during the season. The league council imposes sanctions such as suspending a player for a game or from the entire tournament, or it demands written apologies.

Here is one example from the protocol of the league council:

"Momen Khewaja from the Red Devils received a red card after insulting Ardita Sekiraqa from the Harras Ladies. Momen had to appear in person at the league council. After listening to her case, the league council decided: Due to a slightly complicated incident between the players Momen Khewaja (Red Devils) and Ardita Sekiraqa (Harras Ladies), both will be given the chance to make up on Thursday, October 26, 2006 and to thus end the conflict."

The street football league has not lost its competitive character and is thus very attractive for the majority of the teams. Qualifying games are now necessary to enter the league. The attractiveness of the league is so great that the sanctions and recommendations by the league council are taken very seriously.

The special approach of this project is not to avoid competitive situations, but rather the opposite, to create emotionally loaded situations in exciting league play. These situations offer them the opportunity to practice dealing with conflicts without using violence.

According to feedback from the schools and youth centres, the kids who participate in the league are demonstrating a reduced usage of violence to solve conflicts. The league offers the youth recognition and respect – and it strengthens their self-confidence. The relationship to the staff members of the project is close and friendly, and sometimes almost like a family. The project has few full-time staff members, but relies on a large volunteer network for support.

An international tournament is being planned, so the project now has European partners, including a street football project in Antequera, Spain.

Work and Box Company, hand in e.V. (Taufkirchen near Munich)

This project is one of tertiary prevention, solely for young delinquent and violent men, aged 16-21. A maximum of 14 participants are chosen by their parole officers or street workers to take part in the project for up to a year. The project is financed by the Munich Agency for Work (Agentur für Arbeit München), the district of Munich, the Munich city department for work and economics, and the European Structural Funds; there is no long-term financing, however.

A large portion of the youth never completely school, some of the youth have already been convicted of crimes, many come from difficult family situations (drug-addict parents, domestic violence, death of parents, etc.) and are exposed to stress in their lives with their families and in their social environments.

The goal is to socially integrate the young men and assist them in finding their first jobs. The issue of violence is not a central topic for the project, but is addressed rather as part of the social integration and stabilisation process for the youth. The youth receive support and counselling for family problems, debts, housing issues, etc. The project is connected with a company where the youth are trained in order for them to gain work experience. The project's staff includes social pedagogues, trade instructors, and boxing trainers. An individual plan with

the respective requirements is created for each youth, which reflects his special situation. The emphasis lies in each participant's own responsibility for taking his life into his own hands.

The participants work, do sports, and take part in one-on-one and group discussions. The project assists them in finding apprenticeships. Through the experience and good networking skills of the project director, it is not difficult for him to find such trainee positions for the youth. The project director knows each kid well enough to clearly describe his strengths and weaknesses to the employer and thus find an appropriate position. When the apprenticeship has gone well for both sides, the trainee is often carried over with further training or a job position.

There are agreements for participation that the youth must sign at the beginning of the programme. These can usually be negotiated and are there to support him in his endeavors.

The project is very action-oriented: in the morning they warm up, both physically and emotionally, with football, which also offers a challenge and confrontation. The emphasis of the project lies in boxing. Boxing can be learned fairly quickly. It is not about teaching values, but rather about making individual issues clear to the participants through boxing. Things that they can conceal in discussions through constructions ("I will behave better"), surface quickly and clearly during boxing.

When they box, the participants come in contact with themselves and with others. The individual topics and issues are not only made clear, but they can be worked through individually. The approach is therapeutic: boxing creates crisis situations and confrontations. Tried and true patterns of behaviour are put in question and altered in the boxing situation. The participant gets to know himself better and learns how to use new strategies for solving problems. Inner attitudes, it is presumed, become visible through boxing, and on the other side, a change in technique can also effect changes in attitude. Changing techniques and strategies in boxing often leads directly to success, and this success is directly visible for the participant.

In this project, boxing means consciously using force and facing one's own readiness to use violence. Boxing serves self-reflection through the use of concrete exercises, and not the increase of Narcism. The conscious usage of force leads the participants to reflect their own violent behaviour. In the boxing ring, the participants are faced with a confrontation without the elements of hate, in which they have non-verbal communication with other participants. The participants experience situations of victory and defeat, fear and helplessness, attack and defence.

"We believe that when a participant gets closer to himself, he no longer has a reason to become violent through emotional powerlessness. These changes can only take place through sport when there is true emotional contact." (Project leader)

The project is very successful: the crimes committed by the participants have been reduced over the course of the project by 60-70%. The project has the capacity for an average of 14 participants; about 80% of the youth complete the project. The success story so far lies at 80% of the participants landing jobs (measured for the participants who completed the programme).

Gefangene helfen Jugendlichen e.V. (Hamburg) (Prisoners Helping Youth)

The project “Gefangene helfen Jugendlichen” (Prisoners Helping Youth) is a prevention project directed at youth between the ages of 14 and 20 who have already committed crimes or are at risk of beginning a criminal career.

The project was initiated in 1996 by prisoners in the penitentiary Fuhlsbüttel in Hamburg (“Santa Fu”). The idea was to confront youth in danger of becoming delinquent with the consequences of criminal activities by a visit to a prison and discussion with prisoners, and to break the romanticised idea of doing time. After three years of active public relations work, the prisoners succeeded in convincing both the prison management and the Hamburg Senate to support their prevention project, and a pilot phase was begun. Now the project is a recognised supporter of the youth welfare office. Over 1000 kids have gone through the prison. They work in close cooperation with the counselling office for violence prevention of the Hamburg school authorities. The youth are selected via this counselling office, their juvenile probation officers, the police’s commissioner for youth issues, and via the schools and youth centres. The project is supported through foundations and sponsors.

The project has dual goals, as it is not only directed toward the youth, but toward the prisoners, themselves. The project founders, who have since been released, work with a group of prisoners within the penitentiary. In their discussions with the youth, the prisoners are often very open about their own biographies, talk about life in prison, and their crimes. The prisoners have varying motivation for participation. Often it is part of a wish to make things better and to work through their own pasts, as well as to find meaning in their day-to-day life in prison.

The visits to the prison are set up to be confrontational. They do not come to preach and moralise, but rather to present a glimpse of life in prison, the security procedures in the institution, and the psychological effects of imprisonment. Before and after the visit there are opportunities for discussion.

In order to extend the sustainability of the project, a multi-week sports project has been developed for the period after the visit. The aim of the sport project is to keep the impressions of the visit to the prison alive and to remain in discussion with the youth about them. Sport is utilised as “bait” here to assist the kids in further examining their experiences in prison. The sport project – Thai boxing – is led by a former inmate and boxing trainer. Through his biography, his personality, and his physical stature, the trainer is respected with great authority. In contrast to club sport, the kids are not trained to be boxers, but rather endurance training and short discussions and reflection are emphasised. The focus is on schooling their own perceptive abilities, allowing new physical experiences, as well as getting to know their own limits and those of others.

Best-Practice Examples from Spain

Model of intervention in social welfare programmes (region of Madrid)

This experience is reported through a doctoral thesis presented by Pedro Jesús Jiménez Martín in 2000, who looked at the design and implementation of a model of intervention for teaching values to young people at risk through physical activity and sport, as well as to improve training for Phys Ed teachers. The model is based on the works by Donal Hellison. This model was implemented for some time, then rectified and improved in those centres by students during their final year at the INEF in Madrid.

The research began in 1998-99 in 11 centres of the social welfare programme for the region of Madrid during Phys Ed class in the schools. It was directed to approximately 300 14 to 18-year-olds who had been ejected from the educational system or who had failed in it, as well as to young dropouts. The research was conducted by 12 seniors studying the Science of Physical Activity and Sport Careers at the INEF in Madrid.

The programme of intervention was structured in three phases:

1. Confidence and participation.
2. Promotion of values throughout physical education and sport.
3. Transfer of the lessons learnt to other fields of daily life.

Phase 1: Trust and participation

Level I: Establishment of a positive environment among the participants of the programme based on trust

The main objective in this level is the establishment of a relationship of affection and trust between the young people, and between them and the educators.

The strategies composing this level are affective interactions of the group and an introduction of the programme objectives. From the beginning, the idea was to present the working philosophy of teaching values through physical activity and sport. The most important techniques utilised were the establishment of general rules with the idea of “few rules but clear ones” and the distribution of the responsibilities to the students.

Level II: Participation

Before talking about values with the students, it is necessary to get them to participate in the planned activities. The trick for participation consists in creating enough motivation in the students in order to get them involved in the planned activities. First, the choice of the activities will be carried out according to the values established together with the students.

The session design for conducting class is essential. This includes, as Hellison also states, the initial presentation of the objectives for values or behaviours to be taught in class, some activities with moments of reflection and evaluation, and a review of what happened in class.

The suggested activities include:

- Adapted traditional sports: football, basketball, volleyball, handball, and baseball.
- Alternative sports: unihockey, balonkorf, ultimate, etc.
- Co-operative games: in the playground, relays, etc.
- Co-operative activities of challenge and adventure: tirolina, rappeling, etc.
- Outdoor activities (in the city and in nature)
- Other activities, which the students were interested in included roller-skating and ice-skating, dancing, movement, martial arts.

Phase II: Promotion of values through physical activity and sport

In the project, the values to be addressed with the students must be clear. These values become the reference from which all the programme strategies are adapted.

In this experience the main value of the work was responsibility -- both personal and social. Both values were more closely defined in two points: Self-control of behaviour and integration and co-operation with others.

Level III: Self-control of aggressive and violent behaviour

The aim is to favour the development of the self-control of aggressive and violent behaviour.

The most commonly utilised strategies were:

- Practical rules to be explained in the activities: They are applied in the different planned activities in order to promote the work of reflection with the students.
- Peaceful conflict resolution: This strategy was used throughout the intervention.

Level IV: Integration and co-operation with others

Integration work included gender relations as well as intercultural relationships, which were aimed at the prevention of racist or xenophobic behaviours. These strategies included:

- Strategic distribution of the groups' composition: It is about strategically organising the composition of teams and groups aimed at the production of new relationships among students and the problems avoidance.
- Rules for conducting the activities: Set of rules established in the different activities that promoted the integration and co-operation of others.

Phase 3: Transfer of what was learned to the personal reality

These strategies were applied throughout the research, with special interest in the different comments and messages stated in the daily experience of the physical education lessons.

Among the most outstanding strategies were:

- Personal and in-group reflection with the students

- Creation of healthy life habits: Prevention of drug addictions, sexual education, health education, hygiene, etc. Moreover, discussions on these topics were encouraged
- Peaceful conflict resolution. This strategy was used throughout the intervention.

These were some of the conclusions that they reached after the course: The teachers felt that they did not have enough time to achieve significant changes in the young people; however, they were able to positively modify some attitudes, such as:

- An improvement was produced since the number of violent and troubled situations in the class decreased and students were able to respect and accept the established rules of work by the end of the course.
- Integration improved.
- With regard to a co-education, there was no significant improvement in the practice of sports.
- With regard to intercultural integration, there was not so much intervention needed since there were few problems with foreigners to start with.

All the teachers considered the model as useful for promoting improvements in the youth's attitudes. There was greater trust and communication among students.

Some of the possible aspects to be improved were:

- Spending more time, three or four years, with the same group.
- Increasing the number of hours per week of physical education.
- Beginning to get involved with younger kids (8-10 years old).

In conclusion and as a final summary, it is important to remark that when carrying out a model of intervention, concrete methodology is necessary, which includes strategies and adapted resources in which the following aspects are clearly developed:

- Determination of the values and definition in behaviour and attitudes terms. Focused on few values depending on the specific needs of the group we are going to intervene.
- Establishment of the activities and the strategies that allow reaching the objectives proposed by structuring a progression for their development.
- Evaluation.

At present, there is not any direct intervention with any group. The project initiated the creation of a specific subject in the INEF called Models of Intervention and Techniques of Investigation to teach values through physical activity and sport.

Children and youth in social centres (Alicante)

This project was implemented in the northern area of the city of Alicante, one of the most underprivileged areas of the city. The action is centred on troubled adolescents. The social services of the social action ministry of the town council of Alicante were responsible for this intervention. Integrated in the social centres, the youth centres offer the young people educational alternatives for spending their leisure and spare time through the programmes created by their own centres.

They work on other aspects of personal growth and integral development, as well. This area has a population of approximately 35,000 inhabitants.

Some statistical data of interest about the youth includes:

There is 60% youth unemployment and great school absenteeism. 25% of the youth live in remedial situations. There are only limited sports infrastructures.

The programme is called Education in the Streets and tries to promote processes of socialisation for children and adolescents through playful-educational activities in the youth centres.

Its main goals are the traditional ones of physical activity – that is learning healthy habits, physical development, accepting rules, good usage of leisure time, socialisation.

The project involves young people from these neighbourhoods throughout the school year in the afternoons and at competitions on the weekends with physical activities such as gymnastics, dancing, orientation, aerobics, basketball and indoor football.

These activities are complemented with inter-centre games and outdoor activities. The sport programme, which started in 2003, still continues.

At present, the programme seems to be declining. The reasons are diverse: there is an increasing lack of interest by the youth, and the recruitment campaigns have been poor since politics have focussed their interests elsewhere.

The girls have aerobics sessions, while the boys play indoor football. At present, the activities take place in local facilities, divided in three weekly sessions and complemented with punctual competitions on the weekends.

While the idea behind the project was good, it should have been integrated into global plans that spread the educational goals and orientate them to social objectives. These plans had no specific funding and more specialised staff with a high level of technical training was needed.

Best-Practice Examples from Portugal

Care to Integrate (Lisboa)

The project "Care to Integrate", promoted by Casa Pia de Lisboa, is a regular and secure project that addresses institutionalised youths who have demonstrated socially maladjusted behaviour, are failing at school or have dropped out.

This project has 12 assistants (not all full time) who comprise a multidisciplinary team of psychologists, social service staff, educators and educational assistants.

It is set up on a basis of continuous funding, financed by the institution's own funds as well as by government funds. Its primary aims are creating a change in behavioural for the youth involved, the development of their personal and social competencies, the promotion and adoption of healthy lifestyles, co-accountability and the prevention of high-risk behaviour.

The project involves boys ages 12 to 16.

These projects utilise adventure sports and controlled-risk activities. These activities were chosen for their popularity with the kids, and on account of the strong pedagogical opportunities that they offered and their potential for transferring values such as emotional control, perception of one's own limits and of the others' limits, recognition and team work.

Questão de Equilíbrio (Setúbal)

The Association "Questão de Equilíbrio", was founded in 1995 and addressed itself to children and adolescents between 8 and 15 years old who lived in high-risk situations or social exclusion, were victims of abuse or neglect, who were caught in paedophile networks or were practicing marginalised activities. The initial intervention was made on the streets, using animation and controlled risk activities (like rock climbing) as therapeutic intervention methods for modelling emotional behaviour. Because some of these children had contact with drug addicts, the association started to focus on addiction issues. In 1997, they launched a project – "Parque das Aventuras" with the purpose of testing the potential of controlled risk activities as a resource of educative and therapeutic intervention with drug addicts who were undergoing treatment. They also work with two problematic neighbourhoods with major issues of drug trafficking, school absenteeism and marginalisation.

The organisation's objectives are:

- Working with children who lack family support
- High-risk activities as methods for teaching emotional control and motivation for children, youngsters and young adults
- Methods to involve families in educational processes.
- Formation of social skills for adults (drug addicts and dysfunctional families)
- Community projects

The use of the articulated form and sequence of basic activities – climbing, high ropes, buoys, canoeing or rafting – goes beyond the dynamics of the group and are universal to all of the interventions.

The first phase functions as “shock therapy”. The participants, never in groups of more than five, are directed through a crack (hole), without any information on safety, techniques, or characteristics of the obstacle. The intention is that they act instinctively, without questioning or thinking about the descent or contemplating the risks and tasks required for overcoming the immediate obstacles. Through such an experience, the participant feels uncontrolled anxiety when in danger, and has to learn to control it emotionally.

The intention is that the participant recognises that some behavioural patterns are normal in high-risk situations, whether during such an activity or in real life, and that fear is a natural human emotion. Further he learns that in some situations it is normal and desirable to ask for help and to accept it.

In this way the individual learns to control his emotions, his fears, and can break new ground, understanding that although he may face problems, he must try to do his best. Additionally, he can enjoy the satisfaction of having finished a task and having overcome obstacles. He recognises that despite his suffering, life is worth living and he can face it with more power and courage than he had thought would be possible.

The second phase takes place in the “School of Climbing”, on natural walls with proper equipment. In this phase, a maximum of 15 individuals participate in a group. Here, they learn that a complex and well-designed system of rules and regulations is necessary in order to participate safely in the activities. The idea of teamwork and social responsibility is taught, giving a sense of security to the others and to oneself. Real risks are distinguished from imaginary risks and it is made clear to the participants that the risk factor of these activities takes place on a more imaginary level than on a real one, provided that safety measures are taken. In contrast, they realise that some social behaviour poses real risks, such as drug use or dangerous driving.

In the third phase, the activity returns to the first location. The participants now discover that the hard work they have done since their first climbing experience has paid off and that they are able to master the path with ease which had seemed impossible at the beginning of the project.

The fourth phase is located in the Park of Adventures. The objective here is that the individuals recognise that adventures of controlled risk can be healthy and funny activities, and that working together in a positive, constructive and responsible way can be emotionally compensating.

In the fifth phase, the group is relocated to the Rocódromo. According to the abilities of the group members, they choose the activities which provide the most enjoyment and help them to improve their techniques. While a fear factor still exists, the safety regulations provide a greater sense of security.

The sixth phase can take place either at the climbing school or in the Park of Adventures. The objective is to provide the participants with the opportunity to teach other youths what they themselves had just learned. This gives them the possibility to value what their knowledge and to be proud of their accomplishments. As they show others how to control their emotions, they also strengthen their feelings of self-control.