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ALL
STARS

GOOD PRACTICE FOR ACTIVE LIFESTYLES
IN LOCAL SPORTS POLICIES

Good Practice for Active Lifestyles in Local Sports Policies – Governing the integration of marginalized groups in sports (ALLSTARS)

D 4.3

Comparative Analytical Report

compiled and edited by Till Müller-Schoell

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1 Introduction

Sport beyond the Stadium

Sport occupies an unusual position in contemporary European societies. It is at once a mass pastime and a policy instrument, a source of collective identity and a vehicle for public health, a generator of social bonds and, at times, a site of exclusion. For decades, policymakers, practitioners, and researchers across Europe have argued that sport — understood broadly, as physical activity, movement, and participation rather than competitive performance alone — has the potential to do far more than fill leisure hours. It can strengthen communities, support the health of marginalised populations, foster intercultural understanding, and create pathways into social participation for people who, for reasons of poverty, disability, migration history, or structural disadvantage, find the doors of conventional social institutions difficult to open.

This is a compelling vision. But it is also one that must be examined critically. The aspiration to use sport as a tool for social inclusion runs up, repeatedly, against the institutional realities of how sport is organised, funded, and governed across Europe. The dominant model — voluntary associations structured around competitive sport, dependent on membership fees, anchored in traditions of performance and selection — is not naturally configured to serve those most in need of inclusion. The people who would benefit most from low-threshold, barrier-free participation are often precisely those least likely to find their way into, and feel at home within, the traditional sports club. Between the promise of sport as a social good and its delivery as one lies a structural gap that neither goodwill nor individual enthusiasm can bridge alone.

This report takes that gap seriously. It does not set out to celebrate sport uncritically or to present easy lessons from exemplary cases. Rather, it asks: what does it actually look like, across different national contexts, when actors within and around the sports system try seriously to close the gap between sport's social potential and its structural limits? What enables some initiatives to succeed in reaching marginalised groups, building genuine community roots, and sustaining themselves over time? And — equally important — what prevents these initiatives from fully realising their potential, even when their intentions are clear and their commitment is evident?

The ALLSTARS Project

These questions are the animating concern of the ALLSTARS project, an Erasmus+ Sport research initiative that brought together research teams from five European countries — Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, and Spain — to identify, document, and analyse good practices in sport-based social inclusion. The project was designed with a dual purpose: to generate rigorous comparative knowledge about the conditions under which such practices emerge and succeed, and to make that knowledge useful for practitioners, policymakers, and sports organisations working in the field.

Each national team selected between five and seven cases of what they considered good practice in their country — initiatives that were using sport and physical activity in service of social goals such as inclusion, integration, health promotion, or community development. The selection criteria were guided by a shared framework developed by the research consortium, but the specific cases reflect the particularities of each national context: its sports governance traditions, its social policy landscape, its demographic challenges, and the kinds of actors — municipal authorities, sports clubs, NGOs, voluntary organisations, social entrepreneurs — most active in the field.

Across the five countries, a total of 32 individual cases were examined in depth. Data collection included document analysis, in-depth interviews with project leaders, practitioners, and partners, participatory workshops, and network visualisation. The cases were then analysed at the national level by each country team, producing five analytical reports structured around nine shared analytical categories. The present report draws on all of this material to undertake a systematic comparison — across countries, contexts, and cases — of the patterns, tensions, and lessons that the ALLSTARS research has produced.

The five countries were chosen to represent a range of welfare state traditions, sports governance models, and social policy contexts within Europe. Norway, with its deeply embedded 'sport for all' ethos and strong voluntary sports movement, represents the Nordic model in which organised sport has historically been closely tied to broad social participation goals. Germany illustrates the Central European model of a large, diversified voluntary sports sector navigating increasing demands for social relevance while managing a federalised political system. The Netherlands offers a case of a consensual welfare state with active municipal-level sports policy and a strong tradition of combining sport with social and health agendas. Poland represents post-transitional Central Europe, where a historically state-directed sports system has been partially replaced by a growing NGO sector, often operating with fragile funding and in the absence of well-developed cross-sectoral policy frameworks. Spain, with its quasi-federal structure and highly decentralised governance of sport, illustrates both the opportunities and the inequalities that come from strong regional variation in social sports policy.

Together, the five contexts offer a rich comparative canvas — not a representative sample of European sports systems, but a deliberately diverse one that makes it possible to ask which patterns hold across very different conditions, and which reflect context-specific configurations of opportunity and constraint.

What Is a Good Practice?

The concept of 'good practice' requires some unpacking. In policy and practitioner discourse, it is often used loosely to mean little more than 'something that seems to work.' In a research context, more precision is needed. For the purposes of this report, a good practice is understood as an initiative that demonstrably addresses social needs through sport and physical activity; that has developed identifiable organisational features enabling it to do so; and that offers lessons — whether of success or of partial failure — that can inform the work of others. Crucially, the cases in this report are not held up as perfect models. They are held up as instructive ones.

This distinction matters. A number of the cases examined here are genuinely remarkable in their reach, their impact, and their creativity. Several have developed innovative organisational forms, built networks across sectors that rarely cooperate, and found ways to sustain their work under conditions of persistent financial uncertainty. At the same time, all of them operate within real-world constraints that limit what they can achieve. Power relations within organisations and networks shape whose voice is heard and whose interests are served. Funding structures — reliant on short-term project grants, annual municipal allocations, or the strategic priorities of private foundations — impose instability and create perverse incentives. The participation of target groups in governance and decision-making, despite being widely endorsed as a principle, remains underdeveloped in most of the cases studied. The structural position of sport within welfare state systems means that even the most socially committed sports organisations are often operating at the margins of the resources, the legitimacy, and the institutional frameworks that their social ambitions require.

Acknowledging these limits is not a counsel of pessimism. It is a precondition for learning honestly from what the cases show. The goal of this report is not to offer a checklist of features that, if replicated, will guarantee successful social inclusion through sport. It is to describe, with care and specificity, the conditions under which sport-based social inclusion initiatives have taken root, how they have navigated the structural tensions inherent in their ambitions, and what further institutional, financial, and political conditions would need to change for these practices to become more than isolated exceptions.

The Analytical Framework: Nine Categories

The comparative analysis in this report is organised around nine analytical categories, developed inductively from the case material by the ALLSTARS research consortium. These categories are not an externally imposed theoretical framework; they emerged from the data itself, capturing the dimensions along which the cases most meaningfully varied and converged. Together, they constitute a multi-dimensional portrait of what it takes — and what it means — for a sports initiative to function as a genuine instrument of social inclusion.

The first category, the wide notion of sport, addresses the understanding of physical activity and sport that underlies each initiative. Cases in which sport is understood as a competitive performance activity tend to reproduce the exclusions of the traditional sports system; cases in which it is understood as a means of health promotion, social interaction, personal development, and community-building are better positioned to serve marginalised groups. This seemingly simple reorientation — from sport as an end to sport as a means — turns out to have far-reaching organisational and political consequences.

The second category, socio-spatial orientation, examines the extent to which initiatives are genuinely rooted in the communities and neighbourhoods they seek to serve. Social proximity — the deliberate positioning of activities in spaces that are familiar, accessible, and meaningful to target groups — turns out to be a decisive factor in whether marginalised populations can be reached at all, and in whether the trust necessary for sustained participation can be built.

The third category, cross- and intra-sectorality, examines the networks of cooperation that initiatives have built — across the boundaries between sport, health, education, social services, and government, and within the sports sector itself. The analysis consistently shows that sport-based social inclusion cannot be achieved by sports actors alone. It requires alliances, shared resources, and complementary expertise from other sectors — and it requires the capacity to bridge the very different institutional logics, working cultures, and accountability frameworks that different sectors bring.

The fourth category addresses the change of role for the main actor or sports organisation. In virtually all of the cases studied, the central actor — whether a sports club, an NGO, a municipal sports service, or an informal community group — has had to redefine its identity and its function. The transformation from sports provider to social actor is neither automatic nor without friction; it involves renegotiating relationships with funders, members, and partners, and it often meets with resistance from actors with a stake in the traditional sports model.

The fifth category, professionalisation, explores the tension — present in every country — between the voluntary foundations of organised sport and the demands that socially ambitious programmes place on organisations and individuals. Reaching and sustaining the engagement of marginalised groups requires skills, time, and organisational capacity that voluntary work alone cannot reliably provide. Yet the pathway to professionalisation is blocked, in many cases, by the same funding constraints that make sustainable practice difficult to achieve in the first place.

The sixth category, the role of engaged individuals, recognises a paradox that runs through the entire study. In every country and in every case, the development of socially innovative practice depended, in its early stages, on the energy, creativity, and determination of particular individuals — people whom the Norwegian research tradition has evocatively described as 'Ildsjeler,' or 'fire souls.' Without these people, the initiatives would not exist. Yet a project that depends entirely on the commitment of one or two individuals is structurally fragile. A central theme of the analysis is the challenge of translating individual passion into institutional capacity.

The seventh category, path dependency and change, draws on political science frameworks — in particular Kingdon's Multiple Streams model — to examine how change happens in sports systems that, like all institutions, tend toward inertia. The cases show that socially innovative practice rarely emerges from gradual, planned development. It more commonly emerges from the convergence of problem recognition, available solutions, and political opportunity — what Kingdon called 'windows of opportunity.' Understanding the conditions under which these windows open — and close — is essential for anyone hoping to replicate or sustain good practice.

The eighth category, representation and co-ownership, is perhaps the most politically sensitive and the most consistently under-developed across the cases. The principle that the people an initiative is designed to serve should have a genuine voice in how it is designed, governed, and evaluated is widely endorsed in theory. In practice, the structural barriers to meaningful participation by marginalised groups — lack of time, resources, institutional access, and, in some cases, language and cultural barriers — mean that co-ownership remains more aspiration than reality in most of the initiatives studied. The exceptions are illuminating, and the analysis examines carefully what distinguishes them.

The ninth category, funding, is in one sense the most prosaic. Money is not, in itself, an analytical category. But the structure of funding — where it comes from, on what terms it is provided, how long it lasts, and what accountability it demands — shapes every other dimension of an initiative's development. The analysis shows, consistently, that the precariousness of funding is the single most important structural constraint facing sport-based social inclusion initiatives across all five countries, and that the solutions to this precariousness lie not primarily in better fundraising by individual organisations, but in the development of more appropriate, multi-year, cross-sectoral public investment frameworks.

How to Read This Report

The nine chapters that follow each address one of these categories in comparative depth. Each chapter begins by establishing the conceptual stakes of the category — what is being analysed and why it matters — before moving through the five national contexts, drawing on both the national analytical reports and the case study material to identify what the cases show, where the most instructive variation lies, and what the cross-national patterns suggest about the broader conditions shaping socially innovative sport practice in Europe.

Readers approaching this report from an academic perspective will find engagement with political science, social policy, and sport sociology frameworks throughout, alongside detailed empirical analysis. Readers approaching it from a policy or practice perspective will find, in each chapter, analysis that speaks directly to the questions of what works, under what conditions, and at what cost — as well as honest discussion of the limits of what even the most committed and innovative actors can achieve within the current institutional landscape.

A concluding chapter draws the nine analytical threads together into an integrated account of what the ALLSTARS research has revealed about the conditions for socially innovative sport practice in contemporary Europe, and what changes — institutional, financial, and cultural — would need to occur for good practice to become less the exception and more the norm.

The 32 cases at the heart of this report are, in the end, acts of practical optimism — attempts by individuals and organisations to make sport work for people it has historically failed to serve. They deserve to be understood with clarity: what they have achieved, what they have not, and what would need to change to make the space between aspiration and reality a little narrower.

2 A Wide Notion of Sport

The Stakes of Definition

What counts as sport? The question sounds almost pedantic — everyone knows what sport is. And yet the answer given by any particular organisation, policy document, or funding framework to this apparently simple question has profound consequences for who gets to participate, who gets left out, and who bears the costs of exclusion. The way sport is defined is not a neutral technical matter. It is a political one.

The dominant, or hegemonic, understanding of sport in contemporary European societies is organised around competition, performance, and meritocracy. In this framework, sport is principally about the pursuit of athletic excellence: training toward measurable improvement, testing performance against others, and achieving results in standardised competitive formats. This model has shaped the institutional architecture of European sport — its clubs, federations, funding structures, and governance bodies — for well over a century. It is embedded in the logic of membership-based sports clubs, whose primary purpose is to develop and field athletes in competition, and in the logic of public sports funding, which has historically prioritised elite performance and international representation.

The hegemonic model is not merely limiting in its scope. It is actively exclusionary in its effects. By defining sporting worth in terms of measurable achievement, it structurally disadvantages those who come to sport with the greatest barriers: people with disabilities, for whom standardised competition formats are rarely designed; people from low-income households, for whom membership fees and equipment costs represent real obstacles; migrants and refugees, for whom the cultural familiarity and social networks that ease entry into organised sport are often absent; and elderly or chronically ill populations, whose relationship to physical activity is shaped by health need rather than competitive ambition. The traditional model of organised sport, far from being a universal good, tends to reproduce the social inequalities of the societies in which it operates.

A second, less visible but equally exclusionary dynamic operates in the domain of non-competitive physical activity and fitness culture. Here, the hegemonic perspective is not competition but consumption: the body as a project to be optimised, physical activity as a means of achieving an aesthetic ideal, and health as a commodity available to those with the resources — financial, cultural, and temporal — to invest in it. The commercial fitness industry, with its premium memberships, specialised equipment, and highly polished visual culture, reproduces its own forms of exclusion alongside those of the traditional sports system.

Against both of these dominant models, the cases studied in the ALLSTARS project represent a conscious, deliberate alternative. In every country and every case, the point of departure is a different answer to the question of what sport is for. Sport, in these initiatives, is not primarily about competition or about individual performance optimisation. It is a social practice — a means of building community, promoting health, fostering inclusion, enabling participation, and creating the conditions for human flourishing among populations that the traditional systems have failed to serve. This reorientation — from sport as an end in itself to sport as a means in service of broader social goals — is what the ALLSTARS research framework captures under the heading of the wide notion of sport.

This chapter traces how that reorientation manifests across the five national contexts, what forms it takes in practice, where its limits lie, and what it requires of the organisations that attempt it.

From Narrow to Wide: The Conceptual Shift

The Norwegian research team, drawing on the work of sport sociologist Fred Coalter, offers a useful conceptual lens for understanding the reorientation underway in the ALLSTARS cases. Coalter distinguishes between what he calls 'sport plus' and 'plus sport' approaches. Sport plus initiatives are primarily focused on developing sustainable sports organisations, programmes, and participation pathways — sport remains the central purpose, though social benefits may be acknowledged as welcome by-products. Plus sport initiatives, by contrast, prioritise social, health, or educational outcomes, and use sport and physical activity instrumentally as a method for achieving goals that lie beyond sport itself.

All thirty-two cases in the ALLSTARS study fall, to varying degrees, on the plus sport end of this spectrum. But the Norwegian framework offers a further refinement that is useful for understanding variation within the broad category. Their spectrum runs from a narrow understanding of sport — centred on competition, discipline, training, goal achievement, and performance — to a broad understanding that encompasses health, integration, inclusion, fun, social interaction, community, and education. The Norwegian cases illustrate both ends of this spectrum and the space between them.

Aktive Lokalsamfunn in Drammen, LIM in Bergen, and DNT Tiltrettelagt in Molde all operate at the broad end: physical activity is diverse, non-specialised, and explicitly oriented toward inclusion and social participation. Idrettshoder in Oslo and Ett Slag av Gangen in Kristiansund are structured around a specific sport — ice hockey and golf respectively — but the competitive and performance dimensions are deliberately subordinated to participation, social integration, and the development of life skills. As the Norwegian analytical report notes, the activity in these cases 'is also broadly oriented as there is less focus on training and performance, and more on participation and versatile activity.'

This spectrum — from narrowly sport-focused to broadly social — is not a simple ranking of better and worse. Some of the most interesting cases in the ALLSTARS study are those that maintain a tension between the two orientations, using the identity and legitimacy of a specific sport discipline as a platform while radically reorienting its purposes. The cases from Spain provide some of the clearest examples of this dynamic.

Germany: Health, Community, and the Logic of Non-Obligation

In Germany, the wide notion of sport takes a distinctive shape. All seven cases share a non-competitive, exercise-oriented approach, but the dominant framing is not integration or intercultural dialogue — it is health and social participation, understood in a specifically urban and neighbourhood-based context. The health orientation is striking in its directness. Practitioners speak without embarrassment about sport as a medical intervention. One interviewee, articulating the rationale behind Sport Vernetzt, invoked Germany's Federal Health Minister: physical activity, they argued, is 'the best pill, the best medicine' — a formulation that positions sport not as a leisure activity but as a public health resource analogous to clinical care.

> *"Bewegung von früh auf — die beste Pille, die beste Medizin."*

> Translation: "Movement from an early age — the best pill, the best medicine."
>
> Practitioner, Sport Vernetzt / ALBA Berlin, Germany (citing Federal Health Minister Karl Lauterbach)

This health framing is not merely rhetorical. Several German cases are institutionally rooted in the health sector rather than the sports sector: Bewegte Apotheke in Filderstadt was initiated by the Department for Equality, Social Participation and Health; Coerde in Bewegung in Münster was developed by the city's health department and financed by statutory health insurance funds; Sport im Park inklusiv was originally launched by the Senate Department for Health before being transferred to the Interior and Sport. The breadth of the sport concept in Germany is thus not simply a matter of philosophy — it is embedded in the institutional origins and funding architecture of the projects themselves.

A second defining feature of the German cases is the centrality of community and social interaction as goals in their own right. Sportpark Styrum in Mülheim an der Ruhr is described by its practitioners as a 'meeting place for neighbours and friends' — a 'place for encounters' in a neighbourhood with significant socio-economic challenges. The concept of community appears repeatedly in the German interviews: sport as 'an opportunity to be active, to exercise together in a community.' This framing shifts the measure of success from individual performance improvement to collective social outcomes — the quality of relationships, the sense of belonging, the experience of shared activity.

A third dimension specific to the German cases is the structural emphasis on non-obligation. Free, non-binding participation — with no membership fees, no time commitment, and no formal registration — is not merely a tactical concession to reduce barriers; it is a principled design choice that embodies the wide notion of sport. The logic is clear: the children and adults the German projects seek to reach are precisely those for whom the obligations of traditional club membership — financial, temporal, and social — are most prohibitive.

> *"Niedrigschwellig, kostenlos — so müssen solche Programme sein, sonst funktionieren die nicht."*
>
> Translation: "Low-threshold, free of charge — that is what such programmes have to be, otherwise they simply don't work."
>
> Sports club representative, Sport im Park inklusiv, Germany

This design principle creates an immediate tension with the organisational logic of membership-financed sports clubs, which depend on the regularity and financial commitment of their members. The German analytical report is candid about this: the wide notion of sport, with its low thresholds and free participation, is in structural tension with the classic sports club model. The implications of this tension are explored in depth in Chapter 4 (Change of Role). What matters for present purposes is that the German cases define a wide notion of sport that is simultaneously health-oriented, community-focused, and structurally anti-exclusionary in its practical design.

There is, however, an interesting complication. Several of the German cases are institutionally attached to organisations whose primary identity remains competitive sport. ALBA Berlin is a professional basketball club competing in the Bundesliga. SV Motor Mickten hosts a gymnastics department whose electric wheelchair football team became German champions in 2025. The relationship between the competitive identity of the parent organisation and the inclusive mission of the project it houses is not without friction. But it also creates strategic advantages: the brand recognition, credibility, and existing infrastructure of a respected sports organisation can make the inclusive project more visible and more easily embedded in the local institutional landscape. The coexistence of narrow and wide sport logics within a single organisation is, in the German cases, a source of both tension and opportunity.

The Netherlands: Sport as Positive Health and Social Ecosystem

The Dutch cases develop the wide notion of sport in a direction shaped by a specific national policy paradigm: 'positive health.' This concept, which has become influential in Dutch public health discourse since the 2010s, redefines health not as the absence of disease but as the capacity to cope with physical, emotional, and social challenges and to maintain meaningful social participation. Physical activity, in this framework, is not a clinical intervention but an element of a holistic approach to human flourishing.

This paradigm gives the Dutch cases their distinctive flavour. None of the six cases focuses on performance or competition. Instead, sport is understood as a form of exercise, a means of promoting health and wellbeing, a tool for social cohesion, and a vehicle for personal development. The Dutch analytical report describes this orientation as a shift from 'sport as an end to sport as a means' — a characterisation that applies across all six cases but manifests in strikingly different ways.

Beweegcoach Zorg (Care Exercise Coach) in Gorinchem takes the wide notion furthest: here, sport is not merely broadly conceived but almost dissolved into the fabric of everyday care. Exercise is integrated into the daily routines of care institutions — residential locations, day care centres, and care homes. The emphasis is on natural movement: every physical action, from walking to lifting objects, can contribute to vitality and autonomy. Sport coaches in this setting are not trainers in any conventional sense; they are advisors, knowledge sharers, and process supervisors who redefine care spaces as spaces of activity.

YETS in Schiedam represents a different but equally expansive interpretation: basketball is used as an educational tool for behavioural development and social inclusion. Young people learn skills, experience structure, and build a positive self-image through the medium of sport — but the medium is consciously secondary to the developmental goals it serves. The Urban Sports Agenda in Rotterdam extends the wide notion in yet another direction, recognising urban sports — skateboarding, freerunning, street dance — as culturally embedded forms of expression that contribute to urban identity, ownership of public space, and the mental health of young people.

> *"Het sport is gewoon een onderdeel van die lifestyle — het triggert een deel van de bevolking die zich minder aangetrokken voelt tot sport, maar wel tot die lifestyle."*
>
> Translation: "Sport is just part of that lifestyle — it triggers a segment of the population who feel less drawn to sport, but who are drawn to that lifestyle."
>
> Municipal official, Urban Sports Agenda Rotterdam, Netherlands

This quote captures something important about how the Dutch cases understand the wide notion of sport: it is not simply about expanding who can access conventional sport, but about recognising forms of physical activity and movement culture that the conventional sports system has not historically acknowledged as legitimate. The Rotterdam approach is radical in its implications — if urban sports culture is as valid a form of physical activity as club athletics, then the institutional architecture designed to support one form is inadequate to support the other, and needs fundamental redesign.

The Dutch cases also illustrate a characteristic feature of the national policy context: the wide notion of sport is not merely the philosophy of individual projects but is embedded in national policy frameworks. The Healthy and Active Living Agreement (Gezond en Actief Leven Akkoord) provides funding opportunities for sports projects that link to health, social cohesion, and community development. The Brede Regeling Combinatiefuncties — the national scheme for combination functions or neighbourhood sports coaches — creates structural pathways for professionalised, cross-sectoral sport and social work. The Dutch cases benefit from, and in some respects embody, a policy environment that has legitimated the wide notion of sport at the national level in a way that is more explicit and more institutionally embedded than in most of the other countries studied.

Norway: Sport for All as National Ethos

In Norway, the wide notion of sport has the deepest institutional roots of any of the five countries studied. The 'sport for all' ethos — the principle that participation in sport and physical activity should be available to everyone, regardless of age, ability, socio-economic background, or cultural origin — is not a recent innovation but a foundational commitment of the Norwegian sports movement, inscribed in the policy documents of the Norwegian Sports Federation and shaped by decades of investment in the voluntary sports sector as a vehicle for broad social participation.

This institutional context means that the ALLSTARS cases in Norway are, in a sense, working with the grain of the existing system rather than against it. The cases are, in Fred Coalter's terms, clearly plus sport: their target groups — children in low-income families, people with disabilities, individuals with substance abuse or psychiatric challenges — are precisely those for whom the general 'sport for all' ethos has been insufficiently realised in practice. But they draw legitimacy from a national sports culture that already acknowledges sport's social dimensions, and they benefit from institutional channels — sports councils, sports circles, the Norwegian Sports Federation's inclusion programmes — that provide pathways for funding and coordination.

The Norwegian analytical report frames the wide notion of sport using a visual spectrum that runs from narrow understanding (competition, discipline, goal achievement, training) to broad understanding (health, integration, social interaction, inclusion, community, fun). This spectrum is worth dwelling on, because it makes explicit something that the other national reports largely leave implicit: that sport is not a fixed category with a single correct definition, but a contested concept whose meaning is actively negotiated by the organisations and individuals who work with it.

All five Norwegian cases operate at the broad end of the spectrum, though with meaningful internal variation. DNT Tiltrettelagt in Molde, LIM in Bergen, and Aktive Lokalsamfunn in Drammen are genuinely multi-activity and explicitly social in orientation: participation is more important than performance, and the social dimensions of physical activity — community-building, inclusion of marginalised groups, development of local belonging — are foregrounded. Idrettshoder in Oslo and Ett Slag av Gangen in Kristiansund are structured around a specific sport, but reorient their purposes decisively. In both cases, the sport provides a familiar, engaging structure through which other goals — better integration of children into local community life, rehabilitation of people with substance abuse challenges — can be pursued.

The Norwegian cases also surface a tension that runs through the ALLSTARS study as a whole: the relationship between the wide notion of sport and the voluntary traditions on which Norwegian organised sport is built. Volunteerism is both the strength and the vulnerability of the Norwegian model. It provides the social fabric and the community embeddedness that makes the wide notion of sport real in practice. But it also creates structural fragility, particularly when projects attempt to serve populations whose needs require sustained, skilled engagement that voluntary labour cannot reliably provide. This tension is explored more fully in Chapter 5 (Professionalisation) and Chapter 6 (Engaged Individuals).

Poland: Sport Against the Silo

The Polish context presents the sharpest structural contrast with the wide notion of sport. As the Polish analytical report notes, the Polish sports system is characterised by sectoral fragmentation: sport is legally defined as a distinct domain, with its own legislation, funding mechanisms, and governance structures. Creating public value beyond sport — integration, health promotion, educational development — is not a theme in national or local grant schemes. Sport-related outcomes are not considered relevant or measured in reference to funding decisions in other sectors. Cross-sectoral cooperation at the local level is the exception rather than the rule.

Against this structural backdrop, the Polish cases represent something more radical than a philosophical reorientation. They represent a practical challenge to an institutional logic that actively discourages what they are trying to do. Each of the six cases has had to construct, largely from scratch, the cross-sectoral relationships that in the Netherlands or Germany are supported by established policy frameworks and funding mechanisms. This makes the Polish cases, in some respects, the most instructive in the ALLSTARS study: they illuminate, by contrast, the institutional preconditions that enable the wide notion of sport to become sustainable practice rather than individual heroism.

The Polish cases cluster around three distinct expressions of the wide notion of sport, which the Polish analytical report identifies with precision. The first is sport as an educational, developmental, and safeguarding space: initiatives like Trener Osiedlowy in Głogów, which uses football as a pretext for creating safe, accessible, and free spaces for physical activity for children outside organised sport structures. The second is sport as a tool for public health promotion and lifestyle change: Ekstra FAN in Gdańsk, which positioned stadium use and football identity as vehicles for health education and the prevention of lifestyle-related diseases among adults with obesity. The third is sport as a medium for social integration and intercultural dialogue: Etnoliga in Warsaw and Let's Play Together in Wrocław, which use sport as a platform for building social capital, promoting gender equality, and fostering intercultural cooperation among migrants, refugees, and ethnic minorities.

The Polish cases also surface a distinctive feature of the wide notion of sport in a context where the hegemonic model is particularly entrenched: the Kavkaz Wrestling Club in Warsaw. Kavkaz is a partial exception to the general pattern: elite sport performance is a core element of its identity and programme, and it is through this performance dimension that the organisation is able to pursue broader integration goals for young people from the Caucasian diaspora. The case illustrates an important point — that the wide notion of sport does not require the abandonment of competitive and performance-oriented sport. It requires, rather, a reframing of what performance is for, and a willingness to subordinate sporting results to the social and developmental goals they serve.

> *"Sport jest narzędziem integracji społecznej, edukacji i zdrowia publicznego, a nie celem samym w sobie."*
>
> Translation: "Sport is a tool for social integration, education, and public health — not an end in itself."
>
> Polish analytical report, summarising the orientation common to all Polish cases

This formulation — sport as tool rather than end — is the most direct statement of the wide notion of sport that the ALLSTARS research has produced. That it appears in the Polish report, rather than in a context where the wide notion is more institutionally established, is not coincidental. It is precisely in the context where the hegemonic model is strongest that its challengers must articulate their alternative most clearly.

Spain: Foundations in Social Vision

The Spanish cases offer a distinctive perspective on the wide notion of sport because of a feature that distinguishes them from many of the cases in the other four countries: the organisations involved did not adopt a wide notion of sport as a response to changed circumstances or as an innovation within an existing structure. They were founded with a social vision already integrated from the outset. As the Spanish analytical report observes, 'the need for a change or transition process is not identified in these projects, but rather the validation of a model in which the social dimension is the starting point and the non-negotiable axis of its functioning.'

This foundational quality gives the Spanish cases a particular clarity and coherence. Street Soccer Barcelona, Cricket Jove, Campus Sansofé, Dragones de Lavapiés, LEKE, KOZ, Hegalak, and Samarucs are organisations for which the social mission is not a supplementary activity or a strategic pivot but the reason for their existence. Sport is always a means at the service of social transformation; there is no pre-social version of these organisations to which they might regress.

Two broad clusters emerge within the Spanish cases. The first comprises organisations that work with a specific sport or a small number of sports — predominantly football, or in the case of Cricket Jove, cricket — and use the discipline as a platform for intercultural dialogue, activism, and the fight against inequality. Street Soccer, Campus Sansofé, and Dragones de Lavapiés exemplify this approach: the sport provides structure, engagement, and identity, but what matters is the social environment it creates — safe, inclusive, oriented toward values rather than results.

The cricket case is particularly instructive. Cricket Jove exists because there is a genuine and substantial demand for cricket among the South Asian community in Barcelona — a community for whom the sport is not an exotic curiosity but an 'identity sport,' practised with the same natural ease with which other communities practise football or basketball. The wide notion of sport here is not imposed from outside as an alternative to a competitive model the community has rejected; it is an expression of the community's own relationship to a sport that is part of who they are.

> *"Es un deporte identitario de esta comunidad, y lo quieren practicar como nosotros practicaríamos el fútbol o el baloncesto."*
>
> Translation: "It is an identity sport for this community, and they want to practise it just as we would practise football or basketball."
>
> Project coordinator, Cricket Jove, Barcelona, Spain

The second cluster of Spanish cases — KOZ, LEKE, Hegalak, and Samarucs — operates with a deliberately multi-sport approach, understanding the breadth of physical activity options as itself a key mechanism for achieving social goals. In Hegalak's adapted sports centre in San Sebastián, and in Samarucs' inclusive sport provision for the LGBTQI+ community in Valencia, the wide notion of sport extends to encompass functional rehabilitation, therapeutic activity, and forms of play that would not feature in any conventional classification of sport at all.

The Spanish report makes an important analytical observation about the relationship between the wide notion of sport and the capacity for genuine social inclusion. It is not enough for an organisation to claim a social mission: a club focused primarily on performance and sporting results will face great difficulties in establishing itself as a fully inclusive space. The social objective must be the primary and guiding principle, not a complementary addition or a marketing strategy. This is a normative claim, but it is grounded in empirical observation: the Spanish cases that have achieved the deepest and most durable inclusion are precisely those in which the social mission is most clearly primary.

Convergence and Variation: What the Cases Share and Where They Diverge

Across all five countries and all thirty-two cases, the wide notion of sport manifests as a shared orientation: sport as a means rather than an end, physical activity as a vehicle for social participation, health, integration, and community rather than as a competitive performance system. This orientation is universal in the ALLSTARS study — it is, by design, a defining criterion of case selection. But within this shared orientation, the cases vary in important ways that reflect both national context and organisational history.

One axis of variation is the relationship to competition. Some cases exclude competition entirely, by design: ReWiS in Germany, LIM in Bergen, the Campus Sansofé programme. Others maintain a competitive element but radically reframe its function: Etnoliga's scoring system rewards fair play and social contribution alongside results; Samarucs uses competition as a vehicle for normalising the LGBTQI+ community. Still others operate in contexts where competitive pathways remain important — Kavkaz, Idrettshoder, Cricket Jove — but where the competitive system is explicitly oriented toward social rather than purely sporting goals.

A second axis of variation is the relationship to health. In Germany and the Netherlands, health promotion is a central explicit goal of most cases, institutionally embedded in the health sector's involvement in project design and funding. In Norway, health is a background condition — the 'sport for all' ethos carries health implications, but health is not typically the primary framing. In Poland and Spain, health appears as one dimension among many, with social integration and intercultural dialogue often more prominent.

A third axis is the relationship to cultural identity. The Spanish and Polish cases, both dealing substantially with migrant and refugee populations, foreground cultural identity and intercultural dialogue in ways that the German, Dutch, and Norwegian cases generally do not. Cricket is not simply a sport in Cricket Jove — it is a cultural practice through which a community asserts its presence and its right to belong. Etnoliga is not simply a football league — it is a structured space for intercultural encounter and the negotiation of difference.

These variations are not merely incidental. They reflect the specific social challenges that each national context has prioritised, the target groups that the respective projects have chosen to serve, and the policy frameworks and funding streams that have shaped what kinds of social sport intervention are institutionally possible. Understanding the wide notion of sport in comparative perspective means attending to both the convergences — which are real and significant — and the variations, which illuminate the contextual conditions that shape how a shared orientation is realised in practice.

The Wide Notion of Sport and its Institutional Costs

The wide notion of sport is not cost-free. Across all five national contexts, the cases that have most fully realised the transition from sport as an end to sport as a means have done so at a significant organisational price. That price takes several forms.

The first is the cost of legitimacy. Traditional sports organisations derive their institutional legitimacy from their sports identity — their membership in recognised federations, their participation in competitive structures, their track record of developing athletes. When they reorient toward social goals, they enter terrain where legitimacy is harder to establish and harder to sustain. Partners from the social, health, and education sectors have their own quality standards, accountability frameworks, and professional cultures. Building the credibility and trust required for genuine cross-sectoral cooperation is slow, resource-intensive work that is rarely captured in project budgets.

The second is the cost of skills. Working with marginalised populations — children from challenging backgrounds, people with disabilities, adults with mental health challenges, recently arrived migrants — requires psychosocial competencies that are not part of the standard training of sports coaches and club administrators. As the German analytical report notes, multiple projects pointed to the need for skills related to 'dealing with target groups who are just finding their way into sport and exercise,' including sensitivity to diverse life experiences, trauma awareness, and motivational skills that go far beyond the technical instruction of a sport.

> *"Sport ist ein niedrigschwelliger Ansatz. Dadurch können Gruppen so einfach wie durch wenige andere Maßnahmen erreicht werden. Das stärker zu nutzen und diese Kraft stärker zu sehen und Sport wirklich breiter zu denken — das wäre mein Wunsch."*
>
> Translation: "Sport is a low-threshold approach. Through it, groups can be reached as easily as through few other measures. Using this more, recognising this strength more, and thinking about sport in a genuinely broader way — that is my wish."
>
> Practitioner, Sport Vernetzt, Germany

The third is the cost of access to funding. The wide notion of sport opens new funding streams — health budgets, social affairs funds, neighbourhood development programmes, migration integration resources — that are unavailable to conventional sports organisations. But accessing these streams requires organisations to navigate the procurement rules, accountability requirements, and political priorities of sectors they have not historically operated in. This navigation is skilled, time-consuming work. It is explored in detail in Chapter 9 (Funding), but its roots lie in the basic challenge of this chapter: when sport redefines itself as a social tool, it must also redefine its relationships with the institutional landscape that shapes what resources are available and on what terms.

These costs are real. But the cases in the ALLSTARS study suggest that they are not prohibitive — provided that the reorientation is genuine rather than rhetorical, that it is institutionally supported rather than left to individual enthusiasts, and that the structural conditions — funding, professionalisation, cross-sectoral relationships — are progressively built rather than expected to materialise spontaneously. The chapters that follow examine each of these conditions in turn.

Conclusion: The Wide Notion as Foundation

The wide notion of sport is the foundation on which everything else in the ALLSTARS cases rests. It is the first and most basic precondition for socially innovative sport practice: without a genuine reorientation of what sport is for, none of the other dimensions — socio-spatial rootedness, cross-sectoral cooperation, changed roles, professionalisation, engaged individuals, political opportunity, representation, or funding — can function as intended.

But the wide notion of sport is also, in a specific sense, the most fragile of the nine categories analysed in this report. It is fragile because it goes against the institutional grain of the European sports system, which has been built on competitive, performance-oriented models over more than a century. It is fragile because it depends, in its early stages, on the conviction of individuals rather than the support of structures. And it is fragile because, as the Spanish report observes, the social mission can too easily become a rhetorical add-on rather than a genuine reorientation — a label that provides legitimacy without changing the underlying logic of an organisation.

What distinguishes the thirty-two cases studied in ALLSTARS from less successful attempts at social innovation through sport is precisely the depth and the consistency of their commitment to the wide notion. Sport is not, for these organisations, a delivery mechanism for social policy. It is a genuine practice of inclusion — a way of organising human activity that, when designed and implemented with care, creates the conditions for people who have been failed by other systems to participate, to belong, to develop, and to flourish. The subsequent chapters examine the structural features that allow that potential to be realised.

3 Socio-Spatial Orientation

Space as a Social Condition

Where things happen matters. This claim, which sounds almost too obvious to require elaboration, turns out to be one of the most analytically generative insights in the ALLSTARS research. The socio-spatial orientation of an initiative — the degree to which it is genuinely embedded in the local environment, physically accessible, and rooted in the social fabric of the community it seeks to serve — is not merely a logistical consideration. It is a fundamental condition for whether marginalised groups can be reached at all, and whether the trust necessary for sustained participation can be built.

The concept of social space, as used in the ALLSTARS framework, draws on traditions in social work and community development that understand space not simply as a geographical container but as a social construction — 'the places, events and relationships in which people and the institutions that deal with them are close to each other, familiar with each other and at home with each other,' as Wolf Wendt's formulation puts it. Social space represents a common space of reference and experience in territorial terms: a neighbourhood, a district, a school catchment area, or the area around a care institution. Socio-spatial orientation exists where a project actively uses and shapes that social space, rather than simply occupying a physical location within it.

This distinction — between occupying a location and being embedded in a social space — is crucial for understanding what separates the ALLSTARS cases from more conventional sport delivery. A sports club that operates in a socially disadvantaged neighbourhood is not, by that fact alone, socially embedded. Embedding requires deliberate, sustained engagement with the local community: presence in existing networks, cooperation with local institutions, visibility in the spaces where the target group already lives and moves, and the development of trust that comes from showing up reliably over time. This chapter examines how the thirty-two ALLSTARS cases have pursued that embedding, what enables it, what limits it, and where the most instructive variation lies.

Germany: Piggybacking on Existing Structures

In the German cases, socio-spatial orientation is most fully realised in four projects where neighbourhood anchoring is explicitly designed into the intervention: Sport Vernetzt in Berlin, Coerde in Bewegung in Münster, Sportpark Styrum in Mülheim an der Ruhr, and Bewegte Apotheke in Filderstadt. Each of these cases embodies a principle that the German analytical report identifies as central to their success: the deliberate 'piggybacking' on existing neighbourhood structures, rather than attempting to build new networks from scratch.

Sport Vernetzt is the most fully articulated example of this approach. The project is active in sixteen socially disadvantaged districts of Berlin, and its design deliberately embeds it in the existing institutional landscape of each district. In Gropiusstadt, where the project began, Sport Vernetzt entered a neighbourhood that already had a functioning Quartiersmanagement — a neighbourhood management institution with established relationships with schools, nurseries, local housing associations, and other district stakeholders. Rather than establishing parallel relationships, Sport Vernetzt used the Quartiersmanagement as an entry point, gaining rapid access to local networks, identifying needs and partners, and establishing itself as a credible and reliable actor in the district.

> *"Sportpolitik geht immer noch so sehr davon aus, dass das Kind zum Sport kommt. Wir müssen dahin gehen, wo die Kinder sind — in die Schulen, in die Kitas."*
>
> Translation: "Sports policy still assumes that the child comes to sport. We need to go where the children are — into the schools, into the nurseries."
>
> Practitioner, Sport Vernetzt / ALBA Berlin, Germany

This inversion — sport going to the child rather than waiting for the child to come to sport — captures the essential logic of socio-spatial orientation. It is not a passive response to geographical proximity but an active choice to meet the target group in their own territory. For Sport Vernetzt, this means the schools and nurseries of disadvantaged neighbourhoods are not merely delivery venues but the primary sites of engagement, places where trust is built incrementally through regular, reliable presence.

The Coerde in Bewegung project in Münster provides an equally instructive illustration. Initiated by the city's health department, the project team from the outset included the City Sports Federation (SSB) and the Association of Social Therapy Institutions (VSE) — a civil society organisation with deep neighbourhood roots and established relationships with educational institutions in the Coerde district. It was the VSE's Early Intervention Department, in particular, that provided access to existing local networks that the project could not have built independently. The district's kindergarten and school management roundtable, in which Coerde in Bewegung participates regularly, serves as a permanent node of neighbourhood coordination that gives the project ongoing access to the district's institutional fabric.

The network visualisation of Coerde in Bewegung (Figure 3.1) illustrates the density of this neighbourhood embedding with particular clarity. The three actors at the core — the Health Department, the City Sports Federation, and the VSE — each draw their own cluster of neighbourhood-level connections into the network. The VSE's cluster includes kindergartens, schools, youth centres, a civic meeting place, and early intervention services. The SSB's cluster includes multiple sports clubs, the district council, and the city sports association. The Health Department's cluster connects the project to statutory health insurance funds, the health equity coordination body, and the urban development department. Each actor brings a different portion of the neighbourhood into the network, and it is precisely this structural complementarity that makes the project's socio-spatial reach possible.

The German analytical report draws an important lesson from comparing cases with and without this structural embeddedness. Projects in which a new entrant deliberately plugs into existing neighbourhood structures — Sport Vernetzt into Quartiersmanagement, Coerde into the VSE's networks, Sportpark Styrum into the district conference established by the Feldmann Foundation — achieve significantly broader and more sustainable reach than projects that attempt to build their socio-spatial presence from scratch. The advantage of piggybacking is twofold: it provides immediate access to local knowledge and relationships, and it enables the newcomer to establish credibility by association with already-trusted institutions.

The German cases also illuminate the risks of socio-spatial orientation when it is dependent on private rather than public institutions. In Mülheim an der Ruhr, the Feldmann Foundation played the role that neighbourhood management plays elsewhere: it was the leading networking force in the Styrum district, and it was the Foundation that convened the district conference at which the Sportpark's participatory planning process was based. When the Foundation's priorities shifted, parts of this networking structure weakened. The German analytical report is explicit: this experience is an indication that it is worthwhile for local authorities to take on permanent responsibility for neighbourhood networking infrastructure, rather than leaving it to the contingent commitment of private foundations. Socio-spatial orientation is only as durable as the structures on which it rests.

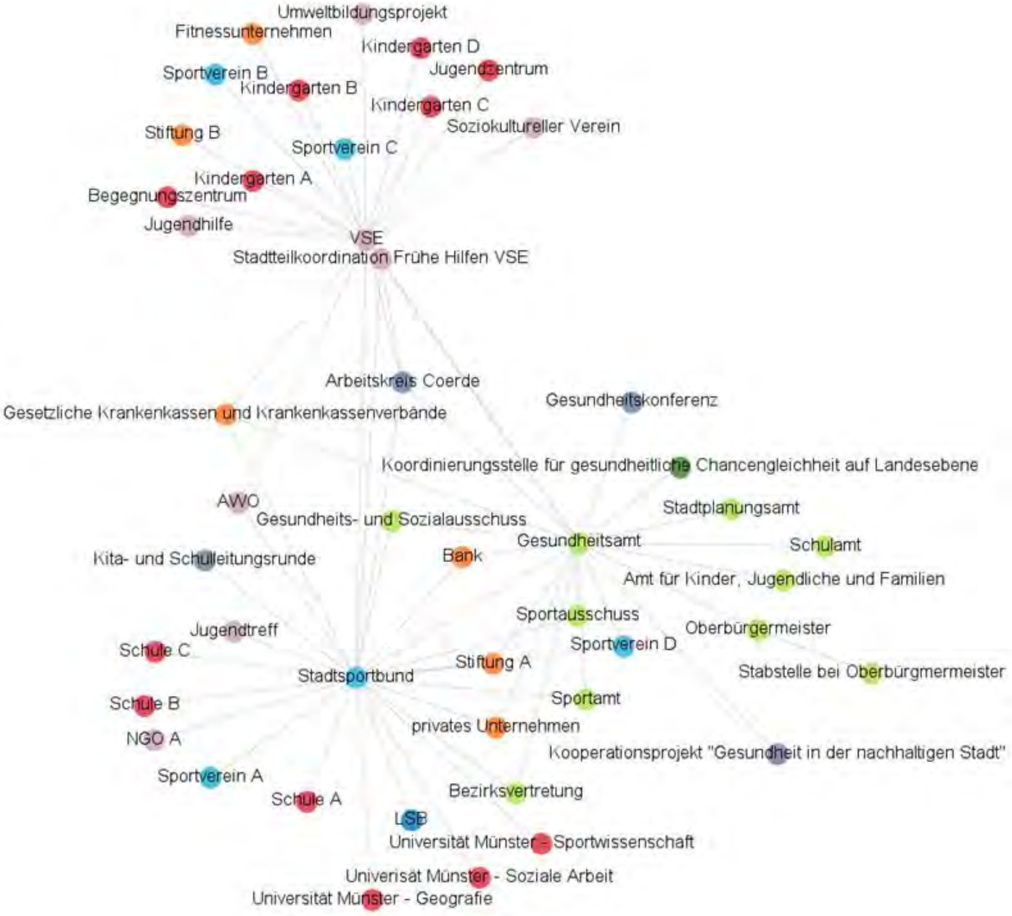
Umweltbildungsprojekt
Fitnessunternehmen
Kindergarten D
Sportverein B
Jugendzentrum
Kindergarten B
Kindergarten C
Soziokultureller Verein
Stiftung B
Sportverein C
Kindergarten A
Begegnungszentrum
Jugendhilfe
VSE
Stadtteilkoordination Frühe Hilfen VSE
Arbeitskreis Coerde
Gesundheitskonferenz
Gesetzliche Krankenkassen und Krankenkassenverbände
Koordinierungsstelle für gesundheitliche Chancengleichheit auf Landesebene
AWO
Stadtplanungsamt
Gesundheits- und Sozialausschuss
Gesundheitsamt
Schulamt
Kita- und Schulleitungsrunde
Bank
Amt für Kinder, Jugendliche und Familien
Sportausschuss
Jugendtreff
Oberbürgermeister
Schule C
Sportverein D
Stiftung A
Stadtsportbund
Stabstelle bei Oberbürgermeister
Schule B
Sportamt
NGO A
privates Unternehmen
Kooperationsprojekt "Gesundheit in der nachhaltigen Stadt"
Sportverein A
Schule A
Bezirksvertretung
LSB
Universität Münster - Sportwissenschaft
Univerisät Münster - Soziale Arbeit
Universität Münster - Geografie

Figure 3.1: Network visualisation of Coerde in Bewegung (Münster, Germany). The colour coding indicates sector: sports sector (blue tones), local/federal administration (green), public institutions including schools (orange), civil society/NGO (pink), private/entrepreneurial sector (red), and other (grey). The figure illustrates the dense cross-sectoral neighbourhood embedding of the project, with the VSE, City Sports Association, and Health Department as the three co-equal core actors.

The Netherlands: Proximity Creates Trust

In the Dutch cases, socio-spatial orientation is described as 'not only a logistical aspect, but a key condition for success': proximity creates trust, and trust lowers the barriers that otherwise prevent participation by those who need it most. This formulation — from the Dutch analytical report — is deceptively simple. What it means in practice varies considerably across the six cases, reflecting both the diversity of target groups and the different ways in which physical space and social space intersect.

The Sporttuin Duindorp in The Hague is perhaps the most literally spatial of all the ALLSTARS cases. A former school playground in the middle of the Duindorp neighbourhood was transformed into a multifunctional sports venue — not relocated to a purpose-built facility outside the neighbourhood, not contracted out to a regional sports provider, but physically embedded in the neighbourhood at the site of a familiar, community-owned space. Its proximity makes it natural for children and families to participate: it is where they already are, part of the landscape they already inhabit. The Sporttuin became, over time, a meeting place and social hub where informal relationships develop between residents, parents, and carers — a transformation that reflects the deepest aspiration of socio-spatial orientation, where a physical space becomes a social one.

Sportstrijders takes a different approach to the same principle. People with intellectual disabilities are not brought to a special, segregated venue; they participate in adapted tournaments held within the existing infrastructure of regular sports clubs. The decision to use mainstream halls and pitches is simultaneously practical and symbolic: it creates physical and symbolic inclusion, placing people with disabilities in the same sporting environment as those without. This spatial co-presence, the Dutch analytical report observes, lowers the barrier to mainstream club membership and enhances the sense of belonging — effects that could not be achieved in a segregated setting however well-designed.

Citytrainers in 's-Hertogenbosch and YETS in Schiedam ground their socio-spatial orientation in the pedagogical logic of familiar environments. Young people from vulnerable neighbourhoods are more likely to engage with activities that take place in spaces they already know and trust — community centres, local gyms, school buildings — than with those requiring them to travel to unfamiliar settings. In both cases, the local anchoring is reinforced by the profile of coaches and supervisors, who often come from the same neighbourhood or similar circumstances as the young people they work with. The credibility of those who deliver the programme — and their capacity to build trusting relationships — is itself partly a function of shared spatial experience.

The YETS timeline illustrates a spatial trajectory that is instructive for understanding how socio-spatial orientation can evolve. The project began with a single neighbourhood in Schiedam, physically embedded in one community. As it grew — validated as an evidence-based intervention, expanded to other municipalities — it did not simply replicate a central model across new territories. Instead, it extended its local anchoring capacity to each new site, ensuring that each instance of YETS was genuinely embedded in its own neighbourhood rather than delivered from outside. This is the key discipline of scaling socially embedded sport practice: expansion cannot come at the cost of the local rootedness that makes the model work.

The Urban Sports Agenda in Rotterdam represents the most urban and spatially innovative interpretation of socio-spatial orientation in the Dutch cases. Here, the social space is not a neighbourhood in any conventional sense but a distributed urban scene — skateboarders, freerunners, and street dancers who use the city's public spaces as both their sporting environment and their community territory. The Agenda's spatial strategy was to work with the urban sports organisations that already inhabit these spaces, rather than relocating activities to purpose-designed venues. Neighbourhood sports coaches embedded themselves within local urban sports communities, strengthening their organisational capacity while maintaining the spatial and cultural authenticity that gives urban sports their meaning and appeal.

Norway: The School as Spatial Hub

In Norway, the school plays a distinctive role as the primary spatial anchor of socio-spatial orientation. Three of the five Norwegian cases — Idrettshoder in Oslo, LIM in Bergen, and Aktive Lokalsamfunn in Drammen — achieve their socio-spatial embedding primarily through the school system, a choice that reflects both strategic calculation and the specific character of the Norwegian social model.

The logic is clear: schools are the institution that reaches every child in a given geographical area. In socially mixed or socially challenging neighbourhoods, the school is often the one institution to which all families — regardless of cultural background, socio-economic situation, or existing relationship to sport — have a legitimate and familiar connection. By organising activities at or through schools, these three Norwegian cases can reach children who have no existing connection to organised sport, who have no relationship with sports clubs, and whose parents may have no experience of sports club culture. The school functions as both a spatial anchor and a social access point.

Aktive Lokalsamfunn in Drammen makes this logic most explicit. The model divides Drammen into ten municipal districts; in each district, the neighbourhood's largest multi-sports club cooperates with the local middle school and its nearby primary schools. This institutional geography is not accidental — it is the architecture of the model. Activities take place in schoolyards, school sports halls, and nearby facilities where children already spend their time. The sports clubs bring activity to the school, rather than expecting children to find their way to the club. The Activity and Community Developers employed in the large multi-sports clubs coordinate this network of local cooperation, working simultaneously in multiple schools and community spaces.

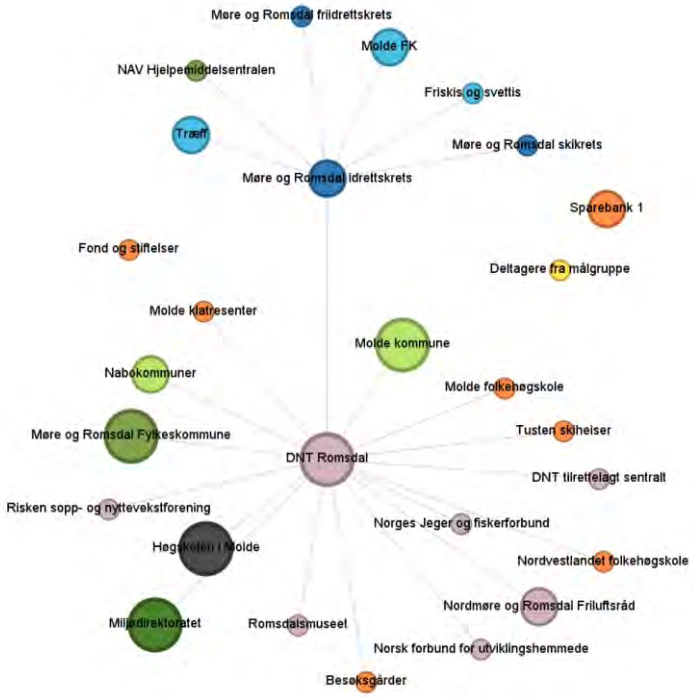
Møre og Romsdal friidrettskrets
Molde FK
NAV Hjelpemiddelsentralen
Friskis og svettis
Træff
Møre og Romsdal skikrets
Møre og Romsdal idrettskrets
Sparebank 1
Fond og stiftelser
Deltagere fra målgruppe
Molde klatresenter
Molde kommune
Nabokommuner
Molde folkehøgskole
Møre og Romsdal Fylkeskommune
Tusten skiheiser
DNT Romsdal
DNT tilrettelagt sentralt
Risken sopp- og nyttevekstforening
Norges Jeger og fiskerforbund
Høgskolen i Molde
Nordvestlandet folkehøgskole
Nordmøre og Romsdal Friluftsråd
Miljødirektoratet
Romsdalsmuseet
Norsk forbund for utviklingshemmede
Besøksgårder

Figure 3.2: Implementation network for Aktive Lokalsamfunn (Active Local Communities, Drammen, Norway). The network illustrates the multi-district structure of the model, showing how the Sports Council (Drammen Idrettsråd) coordinates relationships between large multi-sports clubs and schools across ten municipal districts. The spatial architecture of the model — one club per district, each working with the district's schools — is the foundation of its socio-spatial orientation.

The implementation network of Aktive Lokalsamfunn (Figure 3.2) makes visible what the model's spatial logic looks like in organisational terms. The Sports Council sits at the coordinating centre, connected to multiple large multi-sports clubs, which in turn are each connected to multiple schools and local community institutions within their district. What might appear, in a purely organisational diagram, as a network of institutions is, in spatial terms, a map of neighbourhood-level relationships: the clubs and schools that share a geographical community, and the connections between them that make joint activity possible.

The Norwegian cases also reveal an interesting asymmetry in socio-spatial orientation related to the nature of the target group. The three cases with the highest degree of socio-spatial orientation — Oslo, Bergen, and Drammen — all work primarily with children and young people in specific, geographically defined districts. The two cases with weaker socio-spatial orientation — DNT Tiltrettelagt in Molde and Ett Slag av Gangen in Kristiansund — work with more specialised target groups (people with intellectual disabilities and people with substance abuse challenges, respectively) whose geographical distribution across a smaller municipality makes a district-based spatial model less applicable.

This contrast is analytically important. Socio-spatial orientation is not a universal solution that applies equally to all target groups and all geographical contexts. In smaller municipalities with dispersed populations and specialised target groups, the spatial logic that drives the Oslo, Bergen, and Drammen models may need to be adapted. DNT Tiltrettelagt's approach of rotating activities across different locations in the region, and Ett Slag av Gangen's concentration of activities at the golf club with municipal transport support, represent practical responses to this challenge. Neither achieves the deep neighbourhood embeddedness of the large-city models, but both demonstrate that socio-spatial orientation can be realised in modified forms when the standard model is not applicable.

Poland: Infrastructure as Equaliser

In Poland, socio-spatial orientation takes a predominantly infrastructural form. The most common approach across the Polish cases is to anchor activities in publicly accessible, familiar, and free infrastructure — primarily the 'Orlik' multi-purpose pitches that are distributed across Polish cities and municipalities, school sports facilities, and community parks. The logic is partly economic: by using infrastructure that is already publicly funded and accessible without charge, projects eliminate the spatial and financial barriers that would prevent participation by low-income households. But the choice of venue also carries social significance: school pitches and public parks are spaces where the target group already belongs, spaces that carry none of the social gatekeeping associated with private sports clubs.

Trener Osiedlowy (Neighbourhood Coach) in Głogów makes this infrastructural logic most explicit. The programme is built around neighbourhood school-based pitches as its core venues, chosen deliberately for their proximity to participants' homes and for the absence of barriers to access. The programme's name — neighbourhood coach — itself signals the spatial logic: the coach comes to the neighbourhood, uses the neighbourhood's own infrastructure, and delivers activity in the neighbourhood's own spaces. The spatial embeddedness is built into the very identity of the intervention.

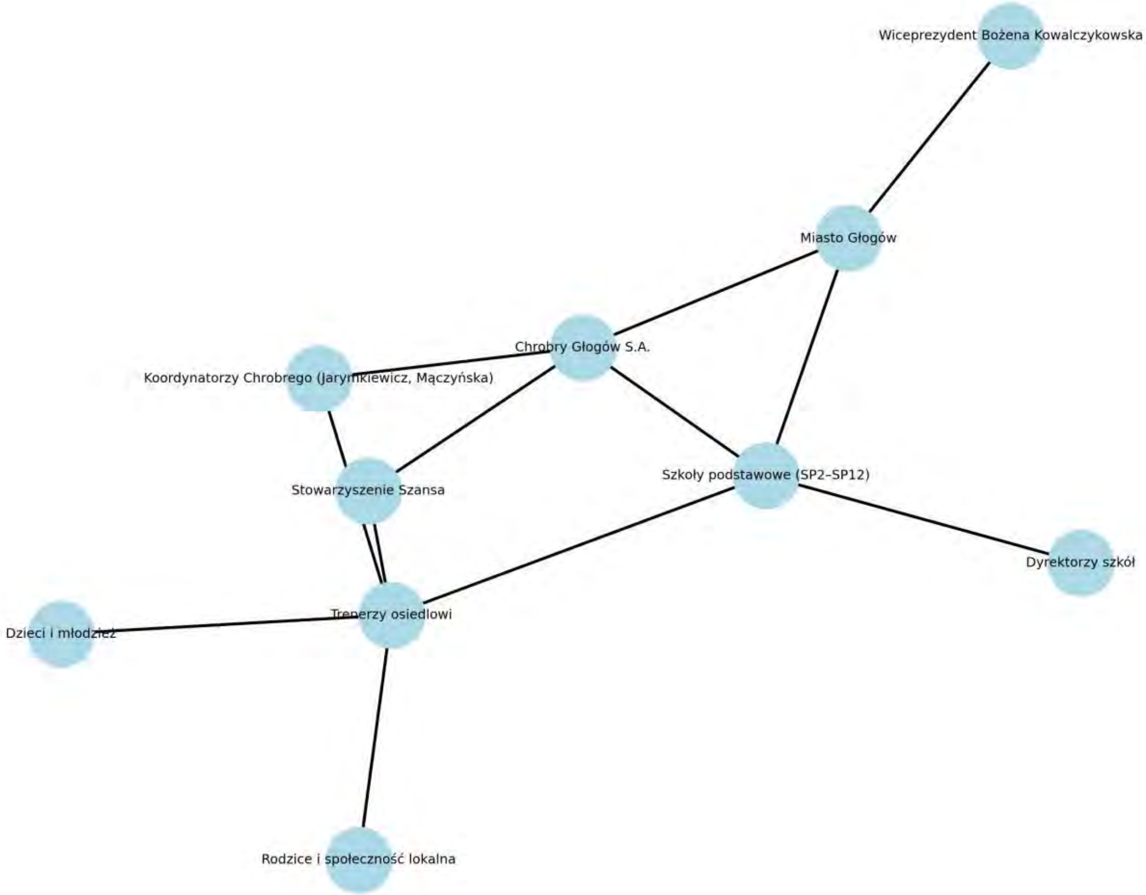
Wiceprezydent Bożena Kowalczykowska
Miasto Głogów
Chrobry Głogów S.A.
Koordynatorzy Chrobrego (Jarymkiewicz, Mączyńska)
Szkoły podstawowe (SP2–SP12)
Stowarzyszenie Szansa
Dyrektorzy szkół
Trenerzy osiedlowi
Dzieci i młodzież
Rodzice i społeczność lokalna

Figure 3.3: Development network for Trener Osiedlowy (Neighbourhood Coach, Głogów, Poland). The network shows the lean, neighbourhood-centred structure: neighbourhood coaches at the hub, connected to primary schools, school headteachers, children and young people as target group, and parents and local community. The spatial simplicity of the network reflects the programme's deliberate focus on immediate neighbourhood infrastructure as its social space.

The network of Trener Osiedlowy (Figure 3.3) is notable for its comparative simplicity. Unlike the large, multi-institutional networks of the German or Norwegian cases, it clusters around a small number of actors with direct neighbourhood connections. This simplicity reflects the programme's spatial logic: it does not attempt to build a complex cross-sectoral network but to create a reliable, neighbourhood-based connection between coaches, schools, and the children and families who live nearby. The lean network is not a weakness; it is a design choice that prioritises spatial accessibility and neighbourhood familiarity over institutional complexity.

Let's Play Together in Wrocław develops the socio-spatial approach in a direction that responds to the specific challenges of working with refugee and migrant children. Many of the programme's participants are children who are outside the formal education system entirely — living in accommodation centres, moving between settings, lacking the stable territorial belonging that makes neighbourhood-based programming straightforward. The programme's response is a decentralised model in which activities take place across multiple micro-locations — schools, parks, community centres — reached by coaching tandems (pairs of Polish and Ukrainian coaches) who build relationships with each local institution independently. This 'relational rootedness' compensates for the absence of stable territorial anchoring: the social space is constituted not by a fixed place but by the density and reliability of relationships.

Ekstra FAN in Gdańsk takes a different approach, using the symbolic capital of a major sports venue — the Energa Gdańsk stadium — as both a physical and a social anchor. The stadium is not a neighbourhood space in any conventional sense, but it carries a form of social belonging for the fan communities associated with it. By staging a public health programme at the stadium, using the club identity and fan loyalty as vehicles for engagement, the project exploited an existing form of social attachment as a substitute for neighbourhood proximity. The stadium becomes, for its participants, not just a venue but a place they feel they belong to — a different kind of social space, but a powerful one.

Spain: Rootedness and Relational Networks

The Spanish cases present the broadest range of approaches to socio-spatial orientation of any of the five countries, reflecting both the decentralised governance structure of Spanish sport and the diverse geographic and demographic contexts in which the cases operate. What unites them is a shared commitment to deep community rootedness, understood as something that goes beyond the physical location of activities to encompass genuine integration into the social and community networks of the territory.

Dragones de Lavapiés in Madrid represents the fullest expression of this rootedness. The club has become, over years of patient community engagement, an integral part of the identity of the Lavapiés neighbourhood — a historically working-class, culturally diverse district of central Madrid that is simultaneously one of the most socially vibrant and one of the most precarious urban territories in Spain. Dragones does not simply operate in Lavapiés; it is of Lavapiés, in a way that makes the neighbourhood and the club mutually constitutive. This depth of rootedness is achieved not through formal neighbourhood management structures or institutional cooperation but through the sustained, grassroots presence of an organisation whose members are themselves residents of the neighbourhood.

KOZ (Sport Orientation Services) in the Basque municipalities of Lezo and Pasaia illustrates a more institutionalised form of spatial rootedness. Here, the key to socio-spatial embedding is the role of specialist practitioners — sport orientation professionals — who act as links between health centres, social services, and the recreational and sporting activities available in the municipality. They are physically present in both the health and sport systems of the municipality, connecting residents with services and spaces they might not otherwise access. This model — the human bridge between institutional spaces — is a form of socio-spatial orientation that is not primarily about choosing the right venue but about having people who can move fluently between the different spaces that make up a community's social geography.

The Cricket Jove network illustrates a form of socio-spatial orientation that is grounded in cultural as well as territorial belonging. The project's social space is the South Asian community in Barcelona's Raval neighbourhood — a community for whom cricket is an identity sport, not a foreign import, and for whom the availability of space to play it is both practically important and symbolically significant. The project's spatial strategy deliberately uses public pitches and school sports facilities in the community's own neighbourhood, maintaining the accessibility and familiarity that allow participation without the barriers of club membership or travel. The comparison between the development and implementation networks shows how the project grew from a small community-centred structure to a more institutionally connected one while retaining its neighbourhood anchoring.

Campus Sansofé presents the most challenging case for conventional notions of socio-spatial orientation. Its target group — recently arrived migrants and unaccompanied minors — is characterised by high mobility, frequent changes of accommodation, and the absence of stable territorial belonging. As the Spanish analytical report observes, 'it is unfeasible to speak of a community in fixed territorial terms' for this population. Campus Sansofé's response is what the report calls 'relational rootedness': a dense network of relationships with NGOs, social organisations, and sports clubs across a wide territory, maintained by dedicated coordinators who can activate support wherever participants happen to be. The social space of Campus Sansofé is constituted by these relationships rather than by a place.

> *"Conocer a esta comunidad, escucharla, realmente qué es lo que necesita y trabajar mano a mano con ellos, no independientemente."*
>
> Translation: "Getting to know this community, listening to it, really understanding what it needs, and working hand in hand with them, not independently."
>
> Project coordinator, Cricket Jove, Barcelona, Spain

This principle — knowing, listening, and working with the community rather than for it — is the animating ethos of socio-spatial orientation at its most developed. It is not merely about physical location but about a relationship between an organisation and a community that is characterised by mutual familiarity, genuine responsiveness, and shared presence in the spaces that matter to the people involved.

Comparative Analysis: Patterns and Variations

Across all five countries, socio-spatial orientation emerges as a consistent predictor of successful inclusion. Projects that are genuinely embedded in the local environment — physically accessible, institutionally connected, and relationally rooted — achieve significantly broader and more durable reach than those that deliver activities from outside the social space of their target groups. This finding is consistent across different national contexts, different target groups, different organisational forms, and different definitions of what social space means in practice.

Several cross-national patterns stand out. First, the 'going where the target group is' principle — rather than expecting the target group to come to the project — is universal. Whether it means activating in neighbourhood schools (Norway, Germany), using community pitches (Poland, Spain), redefining care settings as movement spaces (Netherlands), or recognising the urban scene's own spaces as legitimate sporting venues (Rotterdam), all the cases share the understanding that the spatial starting point must be the target group's existing territory.

Second, the strategy of piggybacking on existing neighbourhood structures — rather than building new networks from scratch — is consistently more successful than attempts to establish independent socio-spatial presence. The most effective cases in Germany, Norway, and Poland all benefited from pre-existing neighbourhood institutions whose networks and relationships they could use. The cases that struggled most with socio-spatial orientation were those that lacked such anchoring points.

Third, the connection between socio-spatial orientation and trust-building is empirically consistent but often underestimated in its resource requirements. Building genuine neighbourhood presence requires sustained, reliable, visible engagement over time — and this requires personnel, coordination, and institutional continuity that is rarely fully funded within project budgets. The German analytical report is particularly clear on this: projects with explicit neighbourhood work have increased resource requirements, but they also tend to create better integration of marginalised groups and greater resilience over time.

Fourth, the cases reveal an important distinction between territorial rootedness — being embedded in a specific geographical community — and relational rootedness — being embedded in a network of relationships that transcends fixed territory. The former is more common and more easily achieved; the latter is more demanding but sometimes the only viable option for target groups that are spatially mobile, as the Campus Sansofé and Let's Play Together cases illustrate.

Conclusion: Space is Not Given — It is Made

The most important insight from this chapter is that social space is not a given condition but something that is actively made through sustained engagement, deliberate network-building, and the patient cultivation of local trust. The cases that achieve the deepest socio-spatial orientation are not simply those that happen to be located in or near disadvantaged neighbourhoods. They are those that have invested, over time, in the relationships, presence, and reliability that transform a physical location into a social home.

This investment has costs that are rarely fully acknowledged in the design and funding of sport-based social inclusion initiatives. Going to where the target group is requires transport, personnel, coordination, and the long timescales of relationship-building that project funding rarely accommodates. Piggybacking on existing neighbourhood structures requires the presence of those structures to piggyback on — and in many cities, particularly outside the major metropolitan areas, such structures are fragile, underfunded, or absent.

The implications for policy and practice are clear. Socio-spatial orientation cannot be retrofitted onto projects designed on a different model. It requires being built in from the start — shaping the choice of venues, the profile of personnel, the structure of local partnerships, and the timescales of engagement. And it requires the institutional infrastructure — neighbourhood management, community development professionals, cross-sectoral local networks — that makes embedding possible and durable. As the German cases demonstrate most clearly, this infrastructure is most secure when it is publicly funded and locally accountable, rather than dependent on the contingent priorities of private foundations or the exceptional commitment of individual practitioners.

4 Cross- and Intra-Sectorality

Why Sport Cannot Do It Alone

The case for cross-sectoral cooperation in sport-based social inclusion is both empirical and logical. It is empirical because every case in the ALLSTARS study confirms it: without cooperation across the boundaries between sport, health, education, social services, urban development, and civil society, none of the thirty-two initiatives would exist in anything like its current form. It is logical because the social challenges these initiatives address — poverty, marginalisation, poor health, social exclusion, displacement — are themselves cross-sectoral in origin and cannot be resolved by any single sector acting alone.

Yet cross-sectorality is not a natural condition of European sports systems. The dominant institutional architecture of sport is organised around single-sector logic: sports clubs serve sports purposes; sports federations govern sporting competitions; sports funding flows through sports budgets to sports organisations for sporting activities. The boundaries between sport and other sectors — health, education, social services, urban development — are not merely administrative; they reflect decades of separate institutional development, distinct professional cultures, different accountability frameworks, and divergent understandings of what counts as a legitimate use of public resources. Breaking down these boundaries is skilled, resource-intensive, and often politically contested work.

This chapter examines how the ALLSTARS cases have navigated that challenge. It distinguishes between cross-sectorality — cooperation across the boundaries between different sectors of society — and intra-sectorality — cooperation between different actors within the same sector. Both are present in all five national contexts, and both raise distinct analytical questions about what enables cooperation, what makes it fragile, and what institutional conditions are required to make it durable.

Defining the Terms: Cross- and Intra-Sectorality

Cross-sectorality, as used in the ALLSTARS framework, refers to cooperation between different sectors of society: local government, organised sport, civil society, educational institutions, healthcare organisations, private enterprise, and international bodies. A cross-sectoral project is one that brings together actors from at least two of these domains in a relationship of genuine cooperation — not merely parallel activity, not contractual service delivery, but shared purpose, complementary resource contribution, and joint decision-making.

Intra-sectorality refers to cooperation between different actors within the same sector. Within organised sport, this might involve different sports clubs cooperating, a club and its city sports association working jointly, or multiple municipal sports departments coordinating their activities. Within the public sector, it might involve different government departments cooperating: health and sport, or education and social services. Intra-sectorality is less frequently discussed but is analytically important: some of the most significant innovations in the ALLSTARS cases involve not cross-sectoral boundary-crossing but the restructuring of relationships within a single sector.

The two dimensions are related but distinct. A project can be highly cross-sectoral — involving many different sectors — while being weakly intra-sectoral, if the different organisations within any given sector are not themselves well connected. Conversely, a project might achieve deep intra-sectoral coordination — for example, a strong network of sports clubs operating together — while remaining relatively isolated from other sectors. The most robust cases in the ALLSTARS study tend to combine both: broad cross-sectoral reach and dense intra-sectoral coordination within each participating sector.

Germany: The Triangle and Its Variations

In the German cases, the most common structural form of cross-sectoral cooperation is a triangle: organised sport, municipal administration, and civil society or education. Different cases combine these three poles in different ways, with different actors occupying the central coordinating position, but the basic triangular structure — sport + state + civil society — recurs consistently across the seven German projects.

Sport Vernetzt in Berlin represents the most fully developed version of this triangular structure. At the development level, ALBA Berlin (organised sport) cooperated with the Senate Department for the Interior and Sport and the cross-departmental Community Initiative (municipal administration) and the Gropiusstadt neighbourhood management and education network (civil society/public institutions). Each corner of this triangle brought resources and relationships that the other corners could not provide: ALBA brought sports infrastructure, community credibility, and professional coaching capacity; the Senate brought political legitimacy, funding access, and cross-departmental coordination; the neighbourhood management brought local knowledge, community trust, and existing relationships with educational institutions.

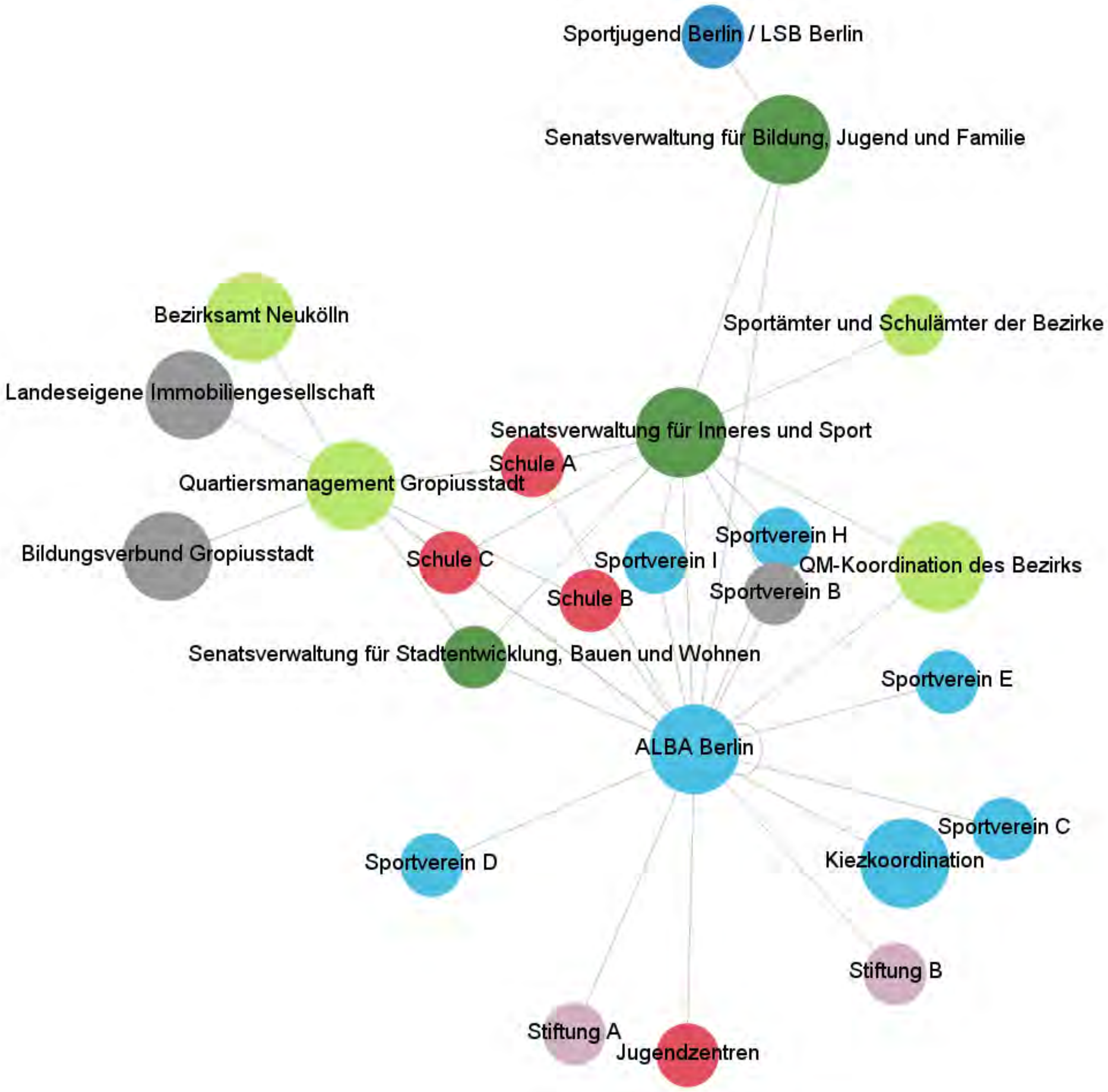
Sportjugend Berlin / LSB Berlin
Senatsverwaltung für Bildung, Jugend und Familie
Bezirksamt Neukölln
Sportämter und Schulämter der Bezirke
Landeseigene Immobiliengesellschaft
Senatsverwaltung für Inneres und Sport
Schule A
Quartiersmanagement Gropiusstadt
Bildungsverbund Gropiusstadt
Schule C
Sportverein H
Sportverein I
QM-Koordination des Bezirks
Schule B
Sportverein B
Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, Bauen und Wohnen
Sportverein E
ALBA Berlin
Sportverein C
Sportverein D
Kiezkoordination
Stiftung B
Stiftung A
Jugendzentren

Figure 4.1: Full network of Sport Vernetzt (ALBA Berlin). The colour coding shows the breadth of cross-sectoral reach: sports sector (blue tones), municipal administration (green), public institutions including schools (orange), civil society/NGO (pink), private/entrepreneurial sector (red), and other including neighbourhood management (grey). ALBA Berlin and the Senate Department for the Interior and Sport are the two most connected nodes, bridging the sports and administrative clusters.

The Sport Vernetzt network (Figure 4.1) shows what this triangular structure looks like in practice. ALBA Berlin sits at the centre, connected to a wide array of actors across all sectors. The Senate Department for the Interior and Sport forms a second hub, providing the administrative connection that links the neighbourhood-level network to city-level policy and funding structures. Around these two hubs, cluster the schools and nurseries that constitute the primary delivery sites, the sports clubs that help reach additional children, the neighbourhood management and education networks that provide community access, and the foundations and business sponsors that supplement public funding. The network is both cross-sectoral in its composition and intra-sectoral in its depth: within the sports cluster, ALBA coordinates multiple other sports clubs; within the administrative cluster, the Senate Department bridges multiple departments and district offices.

SV Motor Mickten in Dresden illustrates a different configuration of the same triangular logic, with a stronger disability-sector dimension. Here, the central sports actor (Motor Mickten) cooperated with Lebenshilfe Dresden — a civil society organisation specialising in support for people with disabilities — and with the city's sports office, the Special Olympics organisation, and multiple public institutions including schools and a hospital. What is distinctive about this case is the depth of the intra-sectoral dimension: Motor Mickten established inklusionssport-dresden.de, a city-wide platform through which multiple sports clubs and providers can present their inclusive sports offerings. This represents intra-sectoral cooperation of an unusually ambitious kind — not a bilateral relationship between two clubs but a coordinated city-wide network of inclusive sports provision.

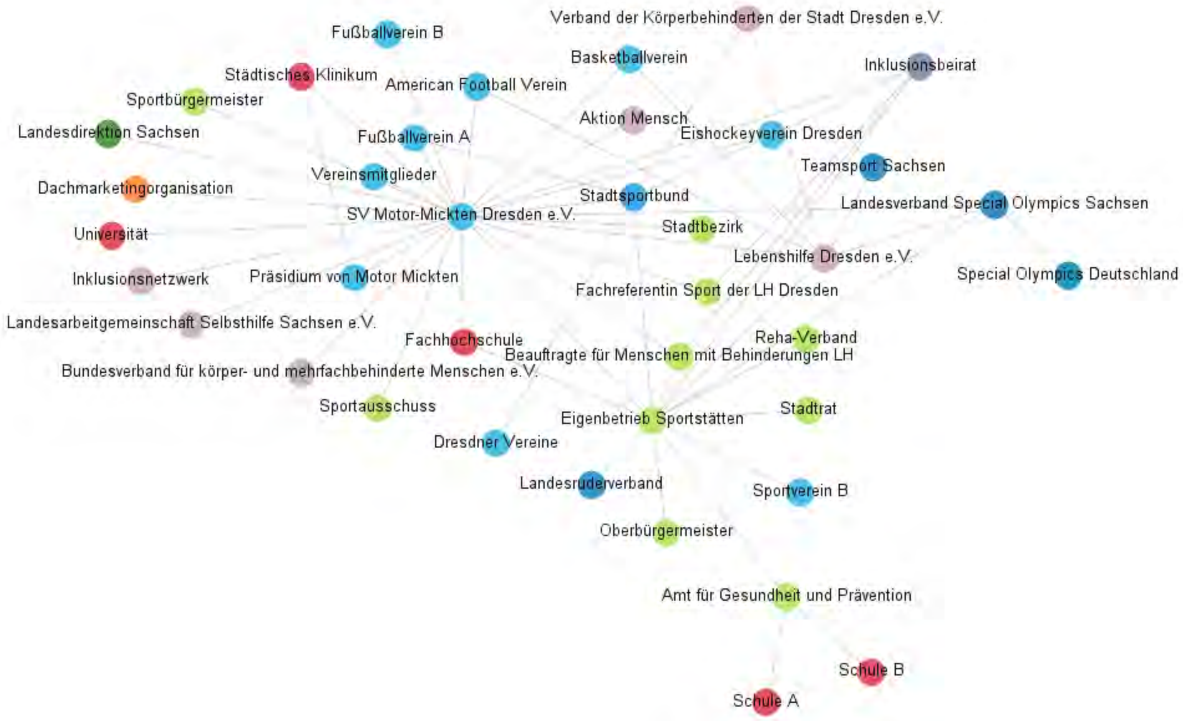
Verband der Körperbehinderten der Stadt Dresden e.V.
Fußballverein B
Basketballverein
Inklusionsbeirat
Städtisches Klinikum
American Football Verein
Sportbürgermeister
Landesdirektion Sachsen
Aktion Mensch
Fußballverein A
Eishockeyverein Dresden
Teamsport Sachsen
Vereinsmitglieder
Dachmarketingorganisation
Stadtsportbund
Landesverband Special Olympics Sachsen
SV Motor-Mickten Dresden e.V.
Universität
Stadtbezirk
Lebenshilfe Dresden e.V.
Inklusionsnetzwerk
Präsidium von Motor Mickten
Special Olympics Deutschland
Fachreferentin Sport der LH Dresden
Landesarbeitgemeinschaft Selbsthilfe Sachsen e.V.
Fachhochschule
Reha-Verband
Beauftragte für Menschen mit Behinderungen LH
Bundesverband für körper- und mehrfachbehinderte Menschen e.V.
Sportausschuss
Stadtrat
Eigenbetrieb Sportstätten
Dresdner Vereine
Landesruderverband
Sportverein B
Oberbürgermeister
Amt für Gesundheit und Prävention
Schule B
Schule A

Figure 4.2: Full network of SV Motor Mickten e.V. / MOVE Project (Dresden, Germany). The network illustrates the multi-sector structure centred on Motor Mickten, incorporating sports sector actors (blue), disability-focused civil society organisations including Lebenshilfe (pink), public administration at municipal and state levels (green), public institutions such as schools and a hospital (orange), and the Special Olympics organisation at national level. The Inclusion Advisory Board (Inklusionsbeirat) acts as a cross-sector coordination body within the network.

The Motor Mickten network (Figure 4.2) illustrates how cross-sectorality can be anchored by a specific institutional mechanism: the Inclusion Advisory Board, which brings together actors from sport, disability services, public administration, and civil society in a regular forum for coordination and decision-making. This formal structure — modest in size, but consistent in function — is what transforms a set of bilateral relationships into a genuine network with shared purpose and shared governance.

Sportpark Styrum in Mülheim an der Ruhr offers a third variation, in which cross-sectorality was built into the design process rather than the operational structure. The park's development involved participatory workshops that brought together the Mülheimer Sportservice (municipal sports service), local sports clubs, the parkour scene, educational institutions, and local interest groups. By bringing cross-sectoral perspectives into the planning process from the outset, the park was designed to serve a genuinely diverse range of user groups — and the network of actors that participated in planning subsequently became the network of actors invested in the park's success.

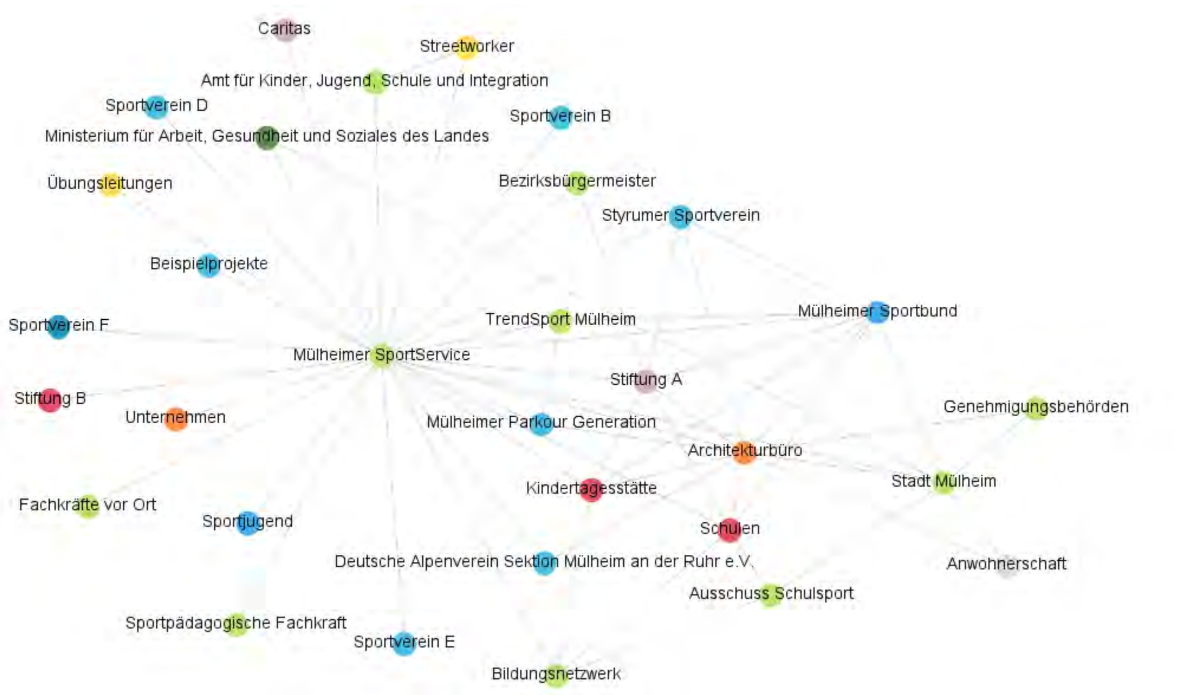
Caritas
Streetworker
Amt für Kinder, Jugend, Schule und Integration
Sportverein D
Sportverein B
Ministerium für Arbeit, Gesundheit und Soziales des Landes
Übungsleitungen
Bezirksbürgermeister
Styrumer Sportverein
Beispielprojekte
Mülheimer Sportbund
TrendSport Mülheim
Sportverein F
Mülheimer SportService
Stiftung A
Stiftung B
Genehmigungsbehörden
Unternehmen
Mülheimer Parkour Generation
Architekturbüro
Stadt Mülheim
Kindertagesstätte
Fachkräfte vor Ort
Sportjugend
Schulen
Deutsche Alpenverein Sektion Mülheim an der Ruhr e.V.
Anwohnerschaft
Ausschuss Schulsport
Sportpädagogische Fachkraft
Sportverein E
Bildungsnetzwerk

Figure 4.3: Full network of Sportpark Styrum (Mülheim an der Ruhr, Germany). The Mülheimer SportService (MSS) occupies the central position, connected to sports clubs, educational institutions, foundations, private enterprises, state ministry, and local residents. The breadth of this network — spanning at least six sectors — reflects the participatory planning process through which the park was developed, in which cross-sectoral input was built into the design from the outset.

The German analytical report draws an important lesson from comparing these three cases with the German cases in which cross-sectorality is weaker or more unilateral. Projects that are cross-sectoral in nature from the development phase onwards are particularly successful in reaching their target groups. This finding — which recurs in the Dutch and Norwegian analytical reports as well — points to a significant difference between cross-sectorality as a structural feature built into a project's design and cross-sectorality as a tactical resource mobilised after the fact. When the key sectors are represented at the table during development, each brings their own networks into the project's orbit from the beginning. When cross-sectoral relationships are added later, these network effects are weaker and less durable.

> *"Verschiedene Akteure — Schulen, Kitas, Sportvereine, kommunale Entscheidungsträger — ziehen gemeinsam an einem Strang. Mit einem gemeinsamen Ziel ausgerichtet, einer gemeinsamen Messlogik, einem regelmäßigen Zusammenkommen. Das sind Faktoren, warum Sport Vernetzt in den Sozialräumen in Berlin erfolgreich ist."*
>
> Translation: "Various actors — schools, nurseries, sports clubs, municipal decision-makers — all pulling in the same direction. Aligned toward a common goal, with a shared measurement logic, a regular coming-together. These are the factors that make Sport Vernetzt successful in the social spaces of Berlin."
>
> Practitioner, Sport Vernetzt / ALBA Berlin, Germany

This quote captures the essence of what successful cross-sectorality looks like in practice: not a list of partners on a letterhead but a set of actors who genuinely share purpose, coordinate their activities, and hold themselves mutually accountable through regular contact. The German cases also illustrate the costs of achieving this: different institutional cultures, different working rhythms, and different accountability frameworks make communication and joint planning genuinely difficult. The German analytical report is candid about this: cross-sectoral cooperation 'sometimes takes more time to develop a common language and working culture,' and this cost should be built into project timescales and budgets rather than assumed away.

The Netherlands: Cross-Sectorality as Policy Architecture

In the Dutch cases, cross-sectorality is not merely a feature of individual projects but a characteristic of the policy environment in which those projects operate. The Dutch national sports policy framework has, since the 2010s, deliberately incentivised cross-sectoral cooperation by linking funding to connections with other policy domains. The Healthy and Active Living Agreement provides resources specifically for sports projects that bridge health, social cohesion, and community development. The Brede Regeling Combinatiefuncties (BRC) funds neighbourhood sports coaches as explicit cross-sectoral figures, positioned at the intersection of sport, education, welfare, and health.

This policy architecture means that the Dutch cases are working in a context where cross-sectorality is not merely tolerated but rewarded. The Urban Sports Agenda Rotterdam represents the most striking example. The Agenda combines resources from sport, culture, urban development, and youth participation — not because an innovative project leader found a creative way to bridge these domains, but because the municipal policy framework was deliberately designed to support exactly this kind of policy blend. The neighbourhood sports coaches who anchor the Agenda's implementation are themselves cross-sectoral actors, employed at the intersection of sport and social development and accountable to both.

The Citytrainers programme in 's-Hertogenbosch illustrates a different Dutch approach to cross-sectorality. Here, the cross-pollination between sport, culture, youth work, and education is not merely structural but pedagogical: participants develop skills — presenting, organising, communicating — that they apply in both sporting and non-sporting contexts. The sectors are not just cooperating at the organisational level; they are being deliberately integrated at the level of what young people learn and how they learn it. This pedagogical cross-sectorality — using the tools of one sector to achieve the goals of another — represents one of the most sophisticated expressions of the concept in the ALLSTARS study.

YETS in Schiedam demonstrates yet another form. The coaches in YETS fulfil multiple roles simultaneously: sports trainer, mentor, and informal social worker. The sectors are not separated in their work but embodied in a single professional who bridges them. This model — the cross-sectoral practitioner rather than the cross-sectoral institution — has significant advantages in terms of responsiveness and relationship-building, but it also places heavy demands on individual practitioners and creates risks of role confusion and professional burnout. The Dutch analytical report notes that the blurring of domain boundaries 'requires new forms of governance in which different policy levels work together structurally' — a challenge that the Dutch system is better equipped than most to address, given the existence of dedicated policy mechanisms like the BRC, but one that remains imperfectly solved even in the Dutch context.

Norway: Depth and Variation in Cross-Sectoral Cooperation

In Norway, cross-sectoral cooperation is present in all five cases but varies considerably in depth and form. The most developed cross-sectoral structures are found in Bergen and Drammen, where the municipal Sports Council plays a coordinating role that bridges the voluntary sports sector, the school system, the municipal administration, and private foundations. In both cities, the Sports Council is not merely an advisory body but an active implementing organisation with its own staff, its own networks, and its own institutional legitimacy that allows it to broker relationships across sectors.

The Bergen LIM (Lekse — Idrett — Mat: Homework, Sport, Food) project illustrates this coordinating function well. LIM was initiated through a chance encounter between a sports enthusiast and a school principal, who within a single meeting outlined the shape of a project combining sport, homework support, and food provision for children in a socioeconomically challenging school district. The speed of this encounter — the project outline emerging in minutes — was possible precisely because both parties were already embedded in the same local institutional network and could immediately identify what each could contribute. The Sports Council then provided the coordinating infrastructure that turned this bilateral agreement into a sustained, city-wide programme linking multiple schools, sports clubs, local churches, and state funding bodies.

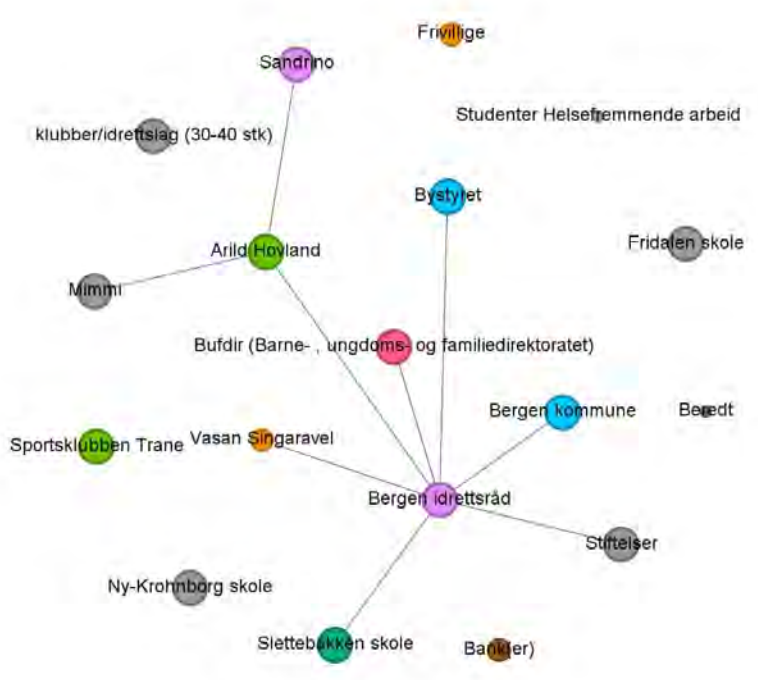
Frivillige
Sandrino
klubber/idrettslag (30-40 stk)
Studenter Helsefremmende arbeid
Bystyret
Fridalen skole
Arild Hovland
Mimmi
Bufdir (Barne- , ungdoms- og familiedirektoratet)
Bergen kommune
Beredt
Sportsklubben Trane
Vasan Singaravel
Bergen idrettsråd
Stiftelser
Ny-Krohnborg skole
Slettebakken skole
Banker)

Figure 4.4: Implementation network for LIM (Homework–Sport–Food, Bergen, Norway). Bergen Idrettsråd (the Bergen Sports Council) occupies the central coordinating position, connected to Sportsklubben Trane (the primary sports club partner), multiple schools (Fridalen skole, Slettebakken skole, Ny-Krohnborg skole), Bufdir (the national Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs), the Bergen municipality, foundations, and individual key actors. The network illustrates how the Sports Council functions as a cross-sectoral bridge, connecting the voluntary sports sector with public administration, educational institutions, and state funding bodies.

The LIM implementation network (Figure 4.4) shows the Bergen Sports Council at the centre of a network that crosses multiple sectors: voluntary sport (Sportsklubben Trane and other clubs), public education (the schools), municipal government (Bergen municipality), state agencies (Bufdir), private foundations, and civil society. What is notable is not just the breadth of this cross-sectoral reach but the depth of the intra-sectoral coordination within the sports cluster: the Sports Council itself coordinates multiple clubs that cooperate around individual schools, creating a distributed intra-sectoral network that amplifies the project's reach without requiring all coordination to pass through a single central point.

In contrast, the cases in Kristiansund (Ett Slag av Gangen) and Oslo (Idrettshoder) show a more limited form of cross-sectorality. In Kristiansund, the cooperation is essentially referral-based: public agencies refer participants to the golf club's programme, but there is no shared operational coordination, no joint planning, and no genuine collaboration on programme design. In Oslo, the cross-sectoral dimension is stronger — SoCentral (a social enterprise), Grüner Ishockey (a sports club), and multiple schools cooperate more genuinely — but the overall network remains smaller and less institutionally embedded than those in Bergen and Drammen. This variation is not incidental: it reflects the presence or absence of a Sports Council with the capacity and resources to act as a genuine cross-sectoral broker.

Poland: Cooperation as Structural Necessity

The Polish analytical report makes a claim about cross-sectorality that is more emphatic than those of any other national report: it is not merely a feature of the cases but 'their fundamental logic.' In Poland, the sports sector's structural isolation — its legal definition as a distinct domain, its separate funding mechanisms, its governance structures that actively discourage cross-sectoral collaboration — means that organisations that aspire to social impact through sport have no choice but to construct cross-sectoral relationships from scratch. Cross-sectorality is not an enhancement but a survival strategy.

Across all six Polish cases, a common structural pattern recurs: a sport-related actor, the public sector, and educational or social institutions form a cooperation triad. The specific actors vary — a sports club, a stadium operator, a sports NGO; a municipal health department, a school system, a welfare organisation — but the triadic structure is consistent. This consistency is not coincidental: it reflects the logic of what each type of actor brings to the table. Sport brings infrastructure, visibility, and the motivational power of physical activity. The public sector brings legitimacy, stable funding, and access to target groups through public service channels. Education and social institutions bring knowledge of the target group's needs, trusted relationships with participants and families, and the competencies required for social and educational work that sports organisations typically lack.

The Polish analytical report identifies a particularly important actor type that enables cross-sectoral cooperation in the Polish context: the cooperation broker. In Radomiak Futbol Plus, this is the CSR coordinator who manages the relationship between the club, its foundation, the PZU corporate partner, and the municipal authorities. In Etnoliga, it is the NGO leader who serves simultaneously as project coordinator, community mediator, and policy entrepreneur. In Trener Osiedlowy in Głogów, it is the municipal official who recognised the opportunity created by the public infrastructure call and built the cooperation structure around it. These brokers — whatever their formal title — are actors who can speak the language of multiple sectors, translate between different institutional logics, and manage the friction that cross-sectoral cooperation inevitably generates.

The Let's Play Together project in Wrocław demonstrates how cross-sectorality can acquire an international dimension. The project combines the V4Sport Foundation (a Polish sport and education NGO), local schools, the WCRS municipal welfare centre, private CSR partners, Erasmus+ European funding, and international partner organisations from across Central Europe. This international network allows the project to access resources, methodologies, and legitimacy that purely local cooperation could not provide. At the same time, it creates coordination demands that require advanced organisational capacity — capacity that V4Sport has systematically built over years of previous project experience.

The most instructive case for understanding cross-sectorality in Poland is also the one that most clearly illustrates its fragility: Ekstra FAN in Gdańsk. This project successfully brought together the GOPZ municipal health institution, the Energa Gdańsk stadium operator, the Polish Society for Health Programmes, private fitness clubs, and professional sports clubs in a genuine cross-sectoral cooperation to deliver evidence-based health promotion to adults with obesity. The cooperation was innovative, ambitious, and effective. It was also dependent on the sustained involvement of a single individual — Wojtek Dąbrowski at the stadium — who managed the relationships between all the partners and translated between their different institutional languages. When he left, the project lost its cross-sectoral coherence and eventually closed. Cross-sectorality in Poland is real and significant, but it remains more personalised and more fragile than in countries where institutional frameworks support it.

> *"Gdyby nie było takiej dobrej współpracy z Wojtkiem Dąbrowskim, który otwierał nam drzwi — to może by było trudniej."*
>
> Translation: "Without such good cooperation with Wojtek Dąbrowski, who opened doors for us — it might have been more difficult."
>
> Health institution representative, Ekstra FAN, Gdańsk, Poland — on the indispensable role of a key cross-sectoral broker

Spain: The Triangle and the Health Dimension

The Spanish analytical report describes cross-sectorality as 'a core strength' of the cases studied, framing it as the dimension that defines the 'with whom' of each project's work. The analysis identifies a fundamental collaboration triangle — sport, public administration, and the social sector — as the structural foundation of all eight Spanish cases, with variations in the specific actors that populate each corner and in which corner plays the leading role.

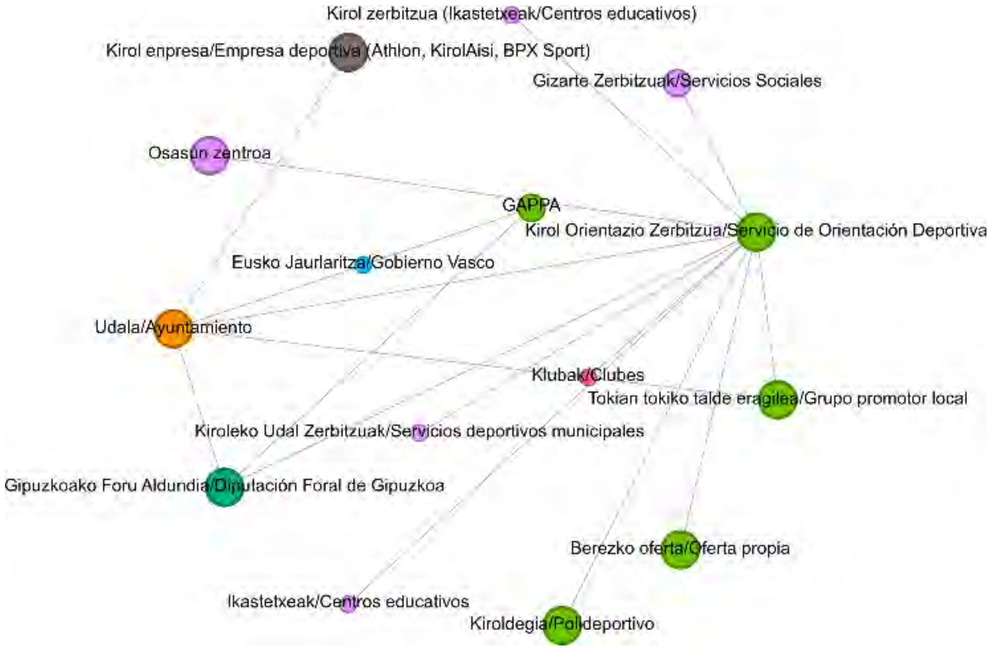
Kirol zerbitzua (Ikastetxeak/Centros educativos)
Kirol enpresa/Empresa deportiva (Athlon, KirolAisi, BPX Sport)
Gizarte Zerbitzuak/Servicios Sociales
Osasun zentroa
GAPPA
Kirol Orientazio Zerbitzua/Servicio de Orientación Deportiva
Eusko Jaurlaritza/Gobierno Vasco
Udala/Ayuntamiento
Klubak/Clubes
Tokian tokiko talde eragilea/Grupo promotor local
Kiroleko Udal Zerbitzuak/Servicios deportivos municipales
Gipuzkoako Foru Aldundia/Diputación Foral de Gipuzkoa
Berezko oferta/Oferta propia
Ikastetxeak/Centros educativos
Kiroldegia/Polideportivo

Figure 4.5: Development network for KOZ Oarsoaldea (Sport Orientation Services, Basque Country, Spain). CAPPA (the Sport Orientation Service itself) occupies the central coordinating position, connected to the Basque Government (Eusko Jaurlaritza), municipal government (Udala/Ayuntamiento), the Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa, social services (Gizarte Zerbitzuak), health centres (Osasun zentroa), sports companies, sports clubs, educational centres, and local community promoters. The network illustrates the formal multi-level governance structure that distinguishes the KOZ model from more informal cross-sectoral partnerships.

The distinctive feature of cross-sectorality in the Spanish cases is the formal incorporation of the health sector in several of them. The KOZ (Sport Orientation Services) in Oarsoaldea represents the most developed expression of this health-sport-municipal triangle. Here, the sport orientation professional — a specifically trained practitioner who bridges sport and social medicine — works within a network that formally includes the Basque Government's Public Health Department, the Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa, municipal governments, social services, educational centres, and private sports companies. This is not a partnership of convenience but a formally designed cooperation architecture, supported by methodological guidelines and institutional agreements that define each actor's role and responsibilities.

The KOZ network (Figure 4.5) illustrates what institutionalised cross-sectorality looks like: a formally structured network in which each actor has a defined role within a shared governance architecture. The KOZ practitioner is not a freelance coordinator but a professionally recognised figure whose role is embedded in a methodological framework endorsed by the Basque Government. This institutional embedding is what gives the model its reach — currently 33 KOZ services in 23 municipalities — and its durability.

Hegalak, an adapted sports centre in San Sebastián, demonstrates a different form of health-sector cross-sectorality. Here, the integration is clinical as well as organisational: multidisciplinary teams of physiotherapists and doctors work alongside sports coaches to provide comprehensive care to people with physical disabilities and complex health needs. The health sector does not merely refer participants to a sports programme; it is an active co-provider within a shared service model. This depth of integration is rare in the ALLSTARS study as a whole and reflects both the strong tradition of adapted sport in the Basque Country and the political will of the Gipuzkoa Adapted Sport Federation, which played a central role in establishing the centre.

The community-based Spanish cases — Street Soccer, Cricket Jove, Dragones de Lavapiés, Campus Sansofé — also demonstrate strong cross-sectorality, but of a more organic and less formally structured kind. In these cases, the social sector plays the leading role rather than the public administration, and cross-sectoral relationships are built through grassroots community engagement rather than institutional design. The Barcelona cases (Street Soccer, Cricket Jove) are embedded in the city's intercultural policy framework, accessing public funding through competitive grant programmes while maintaining operational independence. This funding relationship creates a particular form of cross-sectorality in which public policy sets the strategic direction and the social sector provides the community connection — a complementarity that works well when the strategic priorities align but creates vulnerability when they diverge.

The Costs and Challenges of Cross-Sectoral Cooperation

The preceding country analysis demonstrates consistently that cross-sectoral cooperation is a necessary condition for successful sport-based social inclusion. It is less consistently acknowledged that it is also a costly and difficult condition to achieve and maintain. This section examines the specific challenges that cross-sectoral cooperation poses, drawing on evidence from across all five national contexts.

The first challenge is the cultural one. Different sectors operate with different professional languages, different understandings of what counts as evidence, different rhythms of decision-making, and different measures of success. Health professionals think in terms of clinical outcomes, patient trajectories, and evidence-based interventions. Sports administrators think in terms of participation numbers, club memberships, and facility utilisation. Social workers think in terms of case management, safeguarding, and the holistic wellbeing of individuals. Civil society organisations think in terms of community empowerment, social capital, and democratic participation. Making these different logics work together requires translation — often painstaking, always time-consuming — that is rarely budgeted for in project plans.

The second challenge is the structural one. Cross-sectoral cooperation requires actors to operate across institutional boundaries that are actively maintained by the funding, accountability, and professional frameworks that govern each sector. Health money is for health outcomes. Education money is for educational outcomes. Sport money is for sporting outcomes. Each sector's funders, regulators, and professional bodies have interests in maintaining these boundaries. Organisations that bridge them risk being seen as insufficiently serious about any one sector's priorities and may find themselves excluded from the funding streams that sustain each sector's activities.

The third challenge is the temporal one. Building genuine cross-sectoral relationships takes time — not the timescales of project funding cycles but the longer timescales of institutional trust-building, cultural learning, and accumulated shared experience. The German cases are particularly illuminating here: the projects that are most cross-sectorally embedded are typically those that have been operating for many years and have built their relationships over multiple funding periods, multiple personnel changes, and multiple rounds of institutional negotiation. The expectation that a three-year project can achieve deep cross-sectoral cooperation from scratch is, the evidence suggests, generally unrealistic.

Intra-Sectorality: The Underappreciated Dimension

Intra-sectoral cooperation — cooperation within a single sector — receives less attention in the ALLSTARS analytical reports than cross-sectoral cooperation, but the evidence suggests it deserves more. Several of the most significant structural innovations in the study involve not boundary-crossing between sectors but the reorganisation of relationships within a single sector.

The most striking example is the inklusionssport-dresden.de platform established under the leadership of SV Motor Mickten in Dresden. This platform represents intra-sectoral cooperation at city scale: under Motor Mickten's leadership, multiple sports clubs and providers in Dresden present their inclusive sports offerings in a single, coordinated online resource. The result is a city-wide network of inclusive sports provision that transcends any individual club's capacity, creates a shared identity for inclusive sport in Dresden, and enables potential participants to navigate the full range of available options. This form of intra-sectoral coordination — not competition between clubs but coordinated city-wide provision — requires a lead actor willing to invest in the infrastructure of the network rather than only in their own programme.

In Norway, intra-sectoral coordination within the sports sector is one of the key functions of the Sports Councils in Bergen and Drammen. The Bergen Sports Council coordinates multiple sports clubs around individual schools; the Drammen Sports Council coordinates activity and community developers employed across the large multi-sports clubs in each municipal district. This coordinated approach avoids the duplication, competition, and gap-filling problems that arise when sports clubs operate independently, and creates a coherent city-level picture of sports-based social inclusion that neither individual clubs nor the municipal administration could construct alone.

In the Dutch context, the Urban Sports Agenda Rotterdam illustrates how intra-sectoral coordination within an informal sector — the urban sports scene — can be as important as cross-sectoral cooperation. The neighbourhood sports coaches supported by the BRC scheme strengthened the organisational capacity of individual urban sports organisations, but they also facilitated the development of a network among those organisations: a collective voice and a shared infrastructure that could negotiate with municipal policy on behalf of the scene as a whole. This intra-sectoral network-building is what transformed the urban sports scene from a collection of isolated groups into a recognised policy partner.

Conclusion: Architecture, Not Accident

Cross- and intra-sectorality are not properties that emerge spontaneously from the good intentions of individual actors. They are structural achievements that require deliberate architectural work: the design of coordination mechanisms, the cultivation of institutional relationships, the allocation of resources to the work of translation and brokering, and the investment of time that genuine mutual understanding requires.

The cross-national comparison reveals that the sustainability of cross-sectoral cooperation depends heavily on the policy environment in which it operates. In the Netherlands, where national policy deliberately incentivises cross-sectoral links and provides structural funding for cross-sectoral practitioners, cooperation is more durable and more deeply institutionalised than in Poland, where the policy environment actively maintains sector boundaries and cross-sectoral cooperation must be constructed against the institutional grain. Germany and Norway occupy middle positions, with municipal-level frameworks that support cross-sectoral work in some cities but not others, and with the result that the degree of cooperation is strongly shaped by local political will and the specific history of particular networks.

Spain illustrates a distinctive pattern: the country's decentralised governance structure means that the quality of cross-sectoral cooperation varies enormously between autonomous communities and municipalities, with the Basque Country's formally institutionalised KOZ model at one extreme and the grassroots, relationship-based cooperation of the Barcelona community cases at the other. Both work, but they work differently, require different resources, and produce different patterns of stability and fragility.

The fundamental lesson is that cross-sectorality cannot be an afterthought. It must be built into the design of an initiative from the beginning, resourced adequately, and supported by institutional frameworks that make cooperation rewarding rather than merely possible. Where these conditions are met — in the most successful cases across all five countries — cross-sectorality is not merely a feature of good practice but its structural backbone.

5 Change of Role for the Main Actor

The Institutional Problem at the Heart of Social Sport

There is a structural paradox at the centre of sport-based social inclusion. The institution best placed, in theory, to deliver sport-based inclusion — the sports club — is the institution whose organisational logic is, in many respects, least compatible with the social goals that inclusion requires. The membership-financed, volunteer-run, competition-oriented sports club is a remarkable institution in many ways: it mobilises enormous quantities of voluntary labour, sustains a vast infrastructure of sporting participation, and provides a form of associational life that is genuinely valued by millions of Europeans. But it is an institution designed to serve the sporting interests of its paying members — not the social needs of non-members, not the health requirements of populations who have never engaged with organised sport, and not the integration challenges of communities that are culturally and socially distant from the club's existing membership.

The tension between what sports clubs are designed to do and what sport-based social inclusion requires them to do is not a peripheral issue. It is the central organisational challenge that runs through every case in the ALLSTARS study. Resolving it — or working around it — is what distinguishes the cases that have successfully embedded social missions from those that have not. This chapter examines the different ways in which that challenge has been navigated across the five national contexts, and what the resulting changes in organisational role, position, and identity reveal about the conditions under which sport can genuinely function as an instrument of social change.

A Typology of Role Change

The German analytical report offers the most systematic treatment of role change in the ALLSTARS study, developing a typology of three characteristic constellations that recur across the German cases and that have broader applicability across the other national contexts.

The first constellation is the club with a changed character. Some sports clubs have recognised, often gradually and not without internal resistance, that there is a significant field of action available to them if they orient their work toward target groups that are traditionally underrepresented in sports clubs. In doing so, they have also recognised that implementing such work effectively requires departing from the traditional business model of the sports club — in financial terms, by accessing funding from beyond the sports sector; in operational terms, by developing competencies in social and educational work that clubs have not historically needed; and in governance terms, by creating structures that can sustain and coordinate cross-sectoral activities alongside the club's core sporting mission.

The second constellation is the club in a changed position in the network. Where a fundamental character change has not occurred — where the club continues to operate primarily according to its traditional membership logic — the club can still participate in socially inclusive projects, but in a different structural position: not at the centre of the network, not as the primary coordinator, but as a specialist sporting contributor within a network whose core functions are held by other actors. Municipal sports services, social services providers, NGOs, and health departments take on the coordination and target group access roles, while the sports club contributes its specific competencies — facilities, coaching expertise, sports content — from the periphery.

The third constellation is the replacement of clubs in the network. In some cases, traditional sports clubs have not participated in socially inclusive projects at all, either because their membership logic actively resists it or because the project's primary location in health, social care, or education gives no obvious entry point for club involvement. The absence of clubs from the network is not necessarily a failure; it may simply reflect the reality that for some target groups and some social goals, the sports club is the wrong institutional vehicle.

These three constellations — changed character, changed position, replacement — are not stages in a linear progression but coexisting responses to the same structural tension, each of which may be appropriate in different circumstances. What matters analytically is not which constellation a given case exhibits but what it reveals about the conditions under which each is viable, and what the choice between them implies for the sustainability and social impact of the resulting practice.

Germany: Three Constellations in Practice

The German cases provide the clearest empirical illustrations of all three constellations, sometimes within a single city's portfolio of cases.

ALBA Berlin and Sport Vernetzt represent the most fully developed example of the first constellation — the club with a genuinely changed character. ALBA is a professional basketball club competing in the Bundesliga. By conventional standards, it is about as far from a community inclusion project as it is possible to be in German organised sport. Yet Sport Vernetzt — ALBA's neighbourhood sport and education programme operating in sixteen socially disadvantaged Berlin districts — is built on a fundamental reorientation of part of the club's identity and purpose. ALBA has created, within its organisational structure, a department that operates according to social welfare logic rather than sporting logic: non-competitive, low-threshold, free of charge, staffed by professionals with social and educational competencies, and evaluated by social outcomes rather than athletic performance.

The networks of Sport Vernetzt across its development and implementation phases make this role change structurally visible. In the development phase, ALBA appears at the periphery of a network dominated by governmental and administrative actors: the Senate Department for the Interior and Sport, the Senate Department for Urban Development, the Quartiersmanagement, and the education networks of the relevant districts. The city's policy apparatus is in the lead; ALBA is a willing and capable partner, but not yet the central coordinating actor.

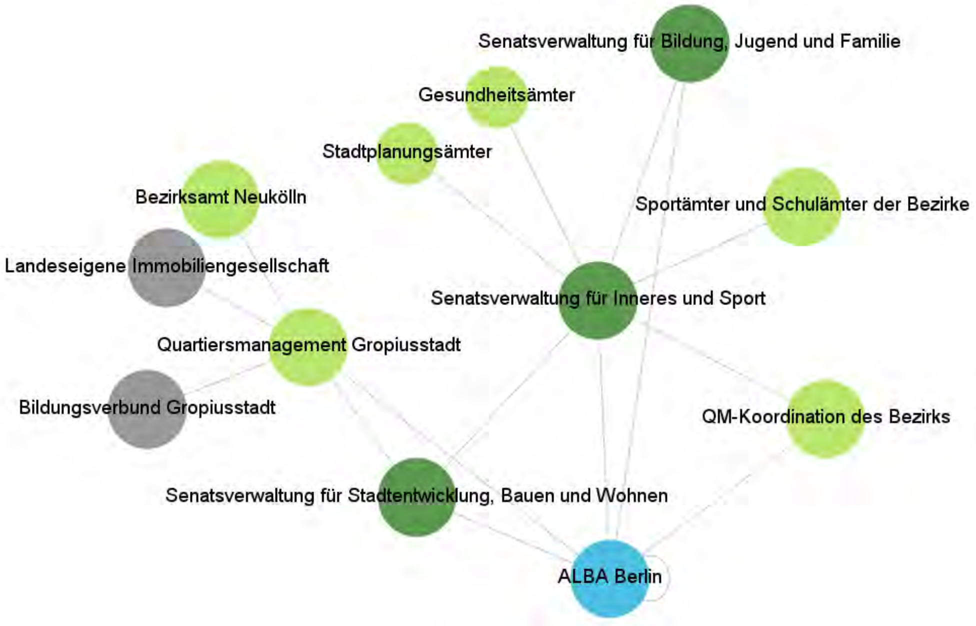
Senatsverwaltung für Bildung, Jugend und Familie
Gesundheitsämter
Stadtplanungsämter
Bezirksamt Neukölln
Sportämter und Schulämter der Bezirke
Landeseigene Immobiliengesellschaft
Senatsverwaltung für Inneres und Sport
Quartiersmanagement Gropiusstadt
Bildungsverbund Gropiusstadt
QM-Koordination des Bezirks
Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, Bauen und Wohnen
ALBA Berlin

Figure 5.1: Key stakeholders in the development phase of Sport Vernetzt (ALBA Berlin). ALBA Berlin appears at the bottom of the network, connected primarily through the Senate Department for the Interior and Sport. The administrative and governance actors — Senate departments, Quartiersmanagement, education networks — dominate the development network, reflecting that the political and structural conditions for the programme were established largely at the governmental level before ALBA assumed its operational leadership role.

In the implementation phase, the network structure changes significantly. ALBA moves to the centre, now directly connected to schools, nurseries, youth centres, other sports clubs, foundations, and neighbourhood coordinators. The administrative actors remain important — particularly the Senate Department for the Interior and Sport, which provides funding and political legitimacy — but they are no longer the primary coordinating nodes. ALBA has taken on that role, establishing its own neighbourhood coordination infrastructure (the Sportmanagerinnen and Kiez-Koordinatorinnen) that bridges the administrative and community levels.

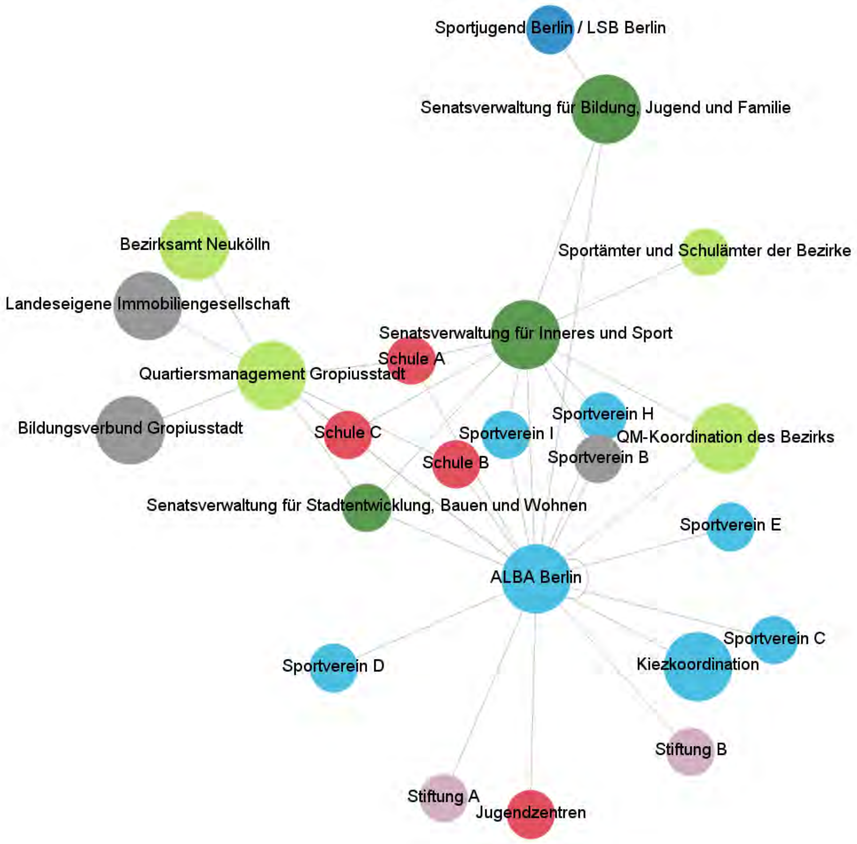
Sportjugend Berlin / LSB Berlin
Senatsverwaltung für Bildung, Jugend und Familie
Bezirksamt Neukölln
Sportämter und Schulämter der Bezirke
Landeseigene Immobiliengesellschaft
Senatsverwaltung für Inneres und Sport
Schule A
Quartiersmanagement Gropiusstadt
Sportverein H
Bildungsverbund Gropiusstadt
Schule C
Sportverein I
QM-Koordination des Bezirks
Sportverein B
Schule B
Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, Bauen und Wohnen
Sportverein E
ALBA Berlin
Sportverein C
Sportverein D
Kiezkoordination
Stiftung B
Stiftung A
Jugendzentren

Figure 5.2: Key actors in the implementation phase of Sport Vernetzt (ALBA Berlin). Compared to the development network, the expansion is striking: schools, nurseries, youth centres, multiple sports clubs, foundations, and neighbourhood coordination roles have all been added. ALBA Berlin now occupies a clearly central position, connected to both the administrative actors of the development phase and the community-level actors of the implementation phase. This structural shift from peripheral partner to central coordinator is the network-visible expression of ALBA's changed organisational role.

The contrast between Figures 5.1 and 5.2 makes the role change structurally legible. ALBA has moved from the periphery to the centre — not as a result of a single decision but as the outcome of a sustained process of organisational development, political relationship-building, and demonstrated competence. Crucially, this movement was enabled by the administrative actors who dominated the development phase: it was the city's political and financial investment in ALBA's approach that created the conditions for ALBA to assume its coordinating role. Role change in this case is not a unilateral organisational decision but the product of a negotiated relationship between a sports organisation and its institutional environment.

SV Motor Mickten in Dresden exemplifies the same first constellation through a different route. Motor Mickten was not a high-profile professional club like ALBA; it was a mid-sized multi-sport club with a strong gymnastics tradition and early experience in sport for people with disabilities. The Special Olympics World Games in Berlin in 2023, with Dresden as host city for the Puerto Rican delegation, provided a focusing event that accelerated the club's transition toward a more explicitly inclusive character. The establishment of the Inclusion Advisory Board and the inklusionssport-dresden.de platform — coordinating inclusive sports provision across multiple clubs and providers — represents a role change not just for Motor Mickten but for the Dresden inclusive sports sector as a whole.

The development and implementation networks for Motor Mickten make this progression visible in a different way. The development network is compact: the club, the municipal hospital, the city council, Lebenshilfe Dresden, and the Special Olympics organisation. It is a small, tightly connected group of actors who share a specific institutional moment — the Special Olympics — as their common reference point.

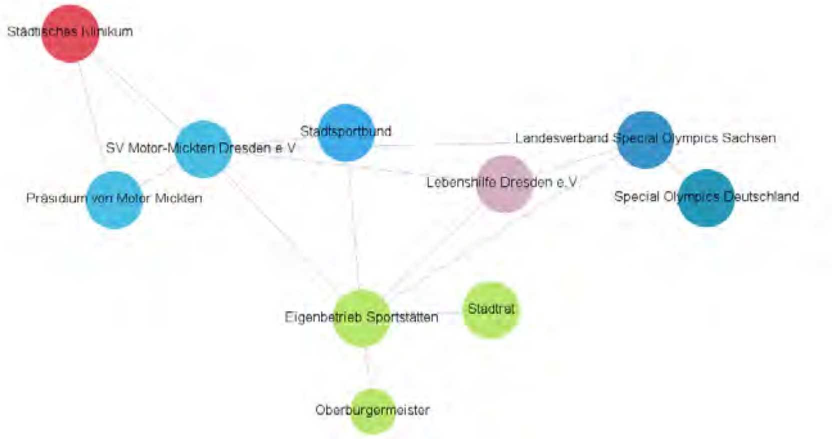
Städtisches Klinikum
SV Motor-Mickten Dresden e.V.
Stadtsportbund
Landesverband Special Olympics Sachsen
Lebenshilfe Dresden e.V.
Präsidium von Motor Mickten
Special Olympics Deutschland
Eigenbetrieb Sportstätten
Stadtrat
Oberbürgermeister

Figure 5.3: Key stakeholders in the development phase of the SV Motor Mickten / MOVE Project (Dresden). The compact network reflects the project's origins in a specific institutional moment (the Special Olympics) and a small group of catalysing actors: the club, the municipal hospital (Städtisches Klinikum), the city council (Stadtrat), Lebenshilfe Dresden, and the Special Olympics Germany and Saxony organisations. Motor Mickten and its internal governance (Präsidium) are already central, but the broader civil society network has not yet been activated.

The implementation network is substantially larger, and its expansion reveals the character change underway. Civil society actors — disability organisations, self-advocacy groups, the Inclusion Network, the Federal Association for People with Multiple Disabilities — have entered the network in force. The Office for Health and Prevention has added a link that connects the club to two inclusive schools, effectively making Motor Mickten a bridge between the sports system and the educational integration of children with disabilities. The club has not simply added more partners; it has become a different kind of actor.

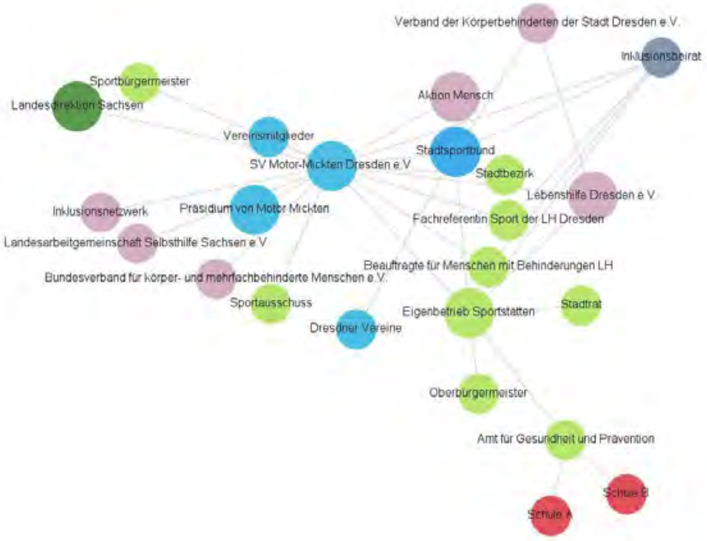
Verband der Körperbehinderten der Stadt Dresden e.V.
Inklusionsbeirat
Sportbürgermeister
Landesdirektion Sachsen
Aktion Mensch
Vereinsmitglieder
SV Motor-Mickten Dresden e.V.
Stadtsportbund
Stadtbezirk
Lebenshilfe Dresden e.V.
Inklusionsnetzwerk
Präsidium von Motor Mickten
Fachreferentin Sport der LH Dresden
Landesarbeitgemeinschaft Selbsthilfe Sachsen e.V.
Beauftragte für Menschen mit Behinderungen LH
Bundesverband für körper- und mehrfachbehinderte Menschen e.V.
Sportausschuss
Eigenbetrieb Sportstätten
Stadtrat
Dresdner Vereine
Oberbürgermeister
Amt für Gesundheit und Prävention
Schule B
Schule A

Figure 5.4: Key stakeholders in the implementation phase of the SV Motor Mickten / MOVE Project (Dresden). Compared to the development network, the substantial expansion of civil society actors (pink nodes: disability organisations, inclusion networks, self-advocacy groups) is the most striking change. Motor Mickten (centre, blue) now connects the sports sector, the city administration, disability-focused civil society, and public institutions including schools through its own central position — a structural expression of its changed role as an inclusion actor rather than a conventional sports club.

The Bewegte Apotheke (Moving Pharmacy) in Filderstadt illustrates the third constellation — replacement — with particular clarity. Here, the sports club that was originally involved in the initiative's development deliberately withdrew, leaving active participation to individual practitioners. The city's administration stepped in to coordinate the programme, while exercise instructors participate as individuals rather than as club representatives. The traditional sports club model — contribution-financed, membership-oriented, competition-focused — was simply incompatible with what the Moving Pharmacy required, and the club's exit was not a failure but a rational recognition of that incompatibility.

> *"Der organisierte Sport als Partner ist bis auf wenigen Ausnahmen fast untauglich für solche Projekte. Wir haben uns mittlerweile komplett daraus verabschiedet."*
>
> Translation: "The organised sports sector as a partner is, with few exceptions, almost unsuitable for such projects. We have by now completely stepped back from it."
>
> NGO representative, Coerde in Bewegung, Germany — on the limits of traditional clubs as inclusion partners

This candid assessment, from a practitioner who had spent years attempting to work with traditional sports clubs on social inclusion projects, captures a frustration that appears across multiple German interviews. It is not a verdict on organised sport as a whole but a diagnosis of the traditional club model's structural incompatibility with inclusive, low-threshold, free-of-charge provision for marginalised groups.

The Netherlands: Three Roles in Motion

The Dutch analytical report describes the role change observed in the six Dutch cases in terms of a fluid movement between three positions: organiser of sports activities, social connector, and policy partner. These are not fixed roles that organisations occupy permanently but positions that Dutch sports actors move between, sometimes occupying all three simultaneously, depending on the specific task, the partner configuration, and the moment in the project's development.

Sportstrijders provides the most explicit illustration of the first-to-second transition: from sports organiser to social connector. The korfball and badminton clubs involved had previously focused on their own membership and competition; their engagement with people with intellectual disabilities through Sportstrijders required them to develop new competencies, new relationships, and a new self-understanding as organisations that serve a purpose beyond their own competitive activities. The physical inclusion of people with disabilities in the same halls and on the same pitches as mainstream club members is simultaneously a sporting arrangement and a social one — and it is the social dimension that requires the most significant adjustment in the clubs' identity and practice.

Citytrainers in 's-Hertogenbosch illustrates the third-position transition: sports organisations and cultural institutions becoming policy partners by training young people to organise activities, take on leadership roles, and engage with neighbourhood governance. Clubs here are not just delivering services; they are contributing to a broader civic infrastructure in which young people's agency and ownership are the primary goal. This requires clubs to relinquish a degree of control over what happens in their facilities and under their banner — a genuinely significant organisational adjustment.

Beweegcoach Zorg represents the most radical role change in the Dutch cases: sports professionals are not merely delivering sport or connecting communities but functioning as advisors and knowledge-sharers within healthcare institutions. The role change here is at the level of professional identity: being a 'sports professional' in the context of Beweegcoach Zorg means something fundamentally different from being a coach, a trainer, or a club administrator. It means being a hybrid figure who operates at the intersection of sport and care in ways that neither sector has traditionally accommodated.

The Urban Sports Agenda Rotterdam presents a unique variant: the main actors are not sports clubs at all but informal urban sports communities — skateboarders, freerunners, street dancers — that have no formal institutional structure and no prior relationship with the organised sports sector. The municipality's recognition of these communities as legitimate social actors, and its support for their organisational development through neighbourhood sports coaches, represents a role change not in the sports sector but in the municipal administration: from sports provider to community enabler. This is, in a sense, the inverse of the German model: instead of a sports organisation changing its role to serve social goals, a governmental actor changes its role to serve sports communities' self-defined goals.

Norway: Addition or Transformation?

The Norwegian cases raise a question that the German and Dutch frameworks do not always address explicitly: when a sports organisation adds a socially inclusive programme to its existing activities, is this a role change or merely an expansion? The Norwegian analytical report engages this question directly and reaches a nuanced answer.

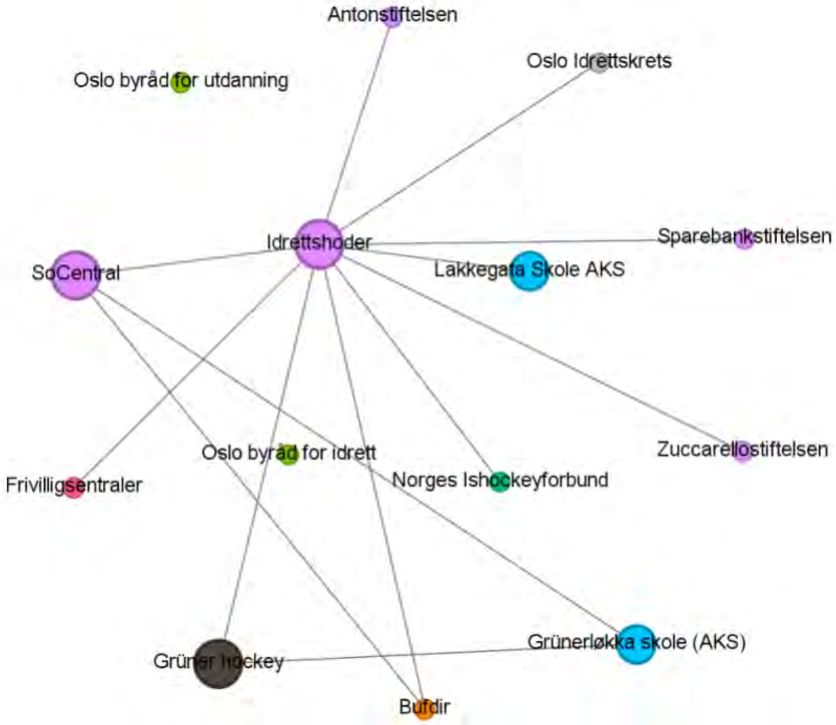
Antonstiftelsen
Oslo byråd for utdanning
Oslo Idrettskrets
Idrettshoder
SoCentral
Sparebankstiftelsen
Lakkegata Skole AKS
Oslo byråd for idrett
Zuccarellostiftelsen
Frivilligsentraler
Norges Ishockeyforbund
Grünerløkka skole (AKS)
Grüner hockey
Bufdir

Figure 4.5: Network map for Idrettshoder (Oslo, Norway). SoCentral — a social enterprise rather than a sports organisation — occupies the central coordinating position, with Grüner Ishockey (the sports club) as one of several connected nodes. This structural arrangement is itself a form of role illustration: the non-sports actor leads the network, the sports club contributes its facilities and sports expertise from a supporting position. The network also shows the multiple foundations (Anton Foundation, Zuccarello Foundation, Gjensidig Foundation, Sparebankstiftelsen) that funded the initiative, alongside public agencies (Bufdir, Oslo City Council) and schools.

In Oslo (Idrettshoder) and Kristiansund (Ett Slag av Gangen), the Norwegian report observes that 'the sports team plays more or less the same role as before, and the activity is in addition to the existing activity offerings.' The hockey club's facilities are used during school hours and outside regular training times; the golf club's volunteers run sessions for people with substance abuse challenges; but neither club's core identity or primary purpose has been significantly altered. This is not role change in the full sense — it is role extension, the addition of a new activity without transformation of the actor's institutional logic.

Yet even this more limited form of engagement is not without significance. Both Oslo and Kristiansund illustrate that sports clubs can choose to take on social responsibility without undergoing institutional transformation — and that this choice itself represents a meaningful shift in how clubs understand their relationship to the communities they serve. Whether this shift is driven by genuine social commitment or by the desire for public funding and institutional legitimacy is a question the Norwegian report wisely acknowledges as empirically difficult to resolve.

The Oslo network (Figure 4.5) illustrates a structural arrangement that is characteristic of the Norwegian cases — and distinct from the German model. SoCentral, a social enterprise, occupies the central coordinating position. Grüner Ishockey, the sports club, is one node among several, connected to the network but not leading it. This arrangement reflects the Norwegian report's observation that in Bergen and Drammen, where Sports Councils play the coordinating role, 'the sports clubs are given new roles with their own employees who work specifically towards the offers' — while in Oslo, where a social entrepreneur has taken the lead, the club's role is more contained.

The contrast between the Bergen/Drammen model and the Oslo/Kristiansund model maps onto the distinction between transformation and extension. In Bergen and Drammen, the large multi-sports clubs have genuinely expanded their mandate: they employ Activity and Community Developers with sports education backgrounds who coordinate between schools, nurseries, and the wider community. This is organisational development, a change in what the clubs are and do. In Oslo and Kristiansund, the clubs have added a programme; SoCentral and the national Ett Slag av Gangen organisation provide the transformative impetus, while the clubs contribute their resources without significantly altering their institutional character.

Poland: Expansion of Mandate

The Polish analytical report introduces a concept that captures the dominant form of role change across the Polish cases with particular precision: the 'expansion of mandate.' Across all six Polish cases, sport institutions are observed to be entering new areas of activity that were not previously considered part of their traditional role. Football clubs become actors contributing to public health; sport-oriented NGOs take on integration functions for migrant communities; schools and municipal units use sport as an educational and pedagogical tool. This expansion is not driven primarily from within the sports sector itself but by broader social processes, public expectations, and the logic of urban policies that increasingly treat sport as an instrument of social action.

The Głogów case — Trener Osiedlowy — is particularly instructive about the conditions under which role change can be externally induced. Chrobry Głogów is a professional football club operating as a municipal joint-stock company. Its transition toward a community education and safeguarding role is not primarily the result of the club's own strategic vision but of the municipality's decision to commission a public service — neighbourhood sport for children — that required a competent local operator. The club's mandate expanded because the city's social priorities created a demand for services that the club could credibly provide. This externally driven expansion is in some ways more fragile than internally motivated transformation — it depends on the continuation of municipal priorities and funding — but it is also more likely to achieve genuine institutional embedding, because the municipal relationship creates accountability and legitimacy that purely voluntary social missions do not.

Etnoliga in Warsaw represents the most complete form of role change in the Polish cases. What began as a football league for migrants — an initiative of the migrant community itself — has evolved over nearly two decades into an NGO with a socio-educational profile in which sport is one component of a broader programme of intercultural integration, social mediation, and representation of marginalised communities in public institutions. The role change here is not of a sports organisation that has added social activities but of a community initiative that has professionalised and institutionalised itself into a recognised civil society actor whose social mission is primary and whose use of sport is instrumental.

V4Sport and Let's Play Together illustrate a third Polish form: the transformation of a sport and education NGO into a methodological and training institution. V4Sport has developed, through successive projects, a distinctive competence in designing movement-based integration activities for diverse groups — including Ukrainian refugee children — and has become, in effect, a knowledge organisation that trains other practitioners rather than merely implementing its own programmes. This is expansion of mandate in its most ambitious form: not adding social activities to a sports identity but reconceiving the organisation's core function as the development and dissemination of inclusive pedagogical approaches.

Spain: Foundation Before Transformation

The Spanish cases present an analytically distinctive situation with respect to role change. As noted in Chapter 1, all eight Spanish cases began with a social vision already integrated into their organisational identity. The Spanish analytical report observes that 'the need for a change or transition process is not identified in these projects, but rather the validation of a model in which the social dimension is the starting point and the non-negotiable axis of its functioning.' For organisations like Dragones de Lavapiés, Samarucs, and Cricket Jove, there has been no role change because the social role was always the primary one. Sport was never the end; it was always the means.

This foundational quality has significant implications for how the Spanish cases relate to the role change typology developed from the German cases. The German model assumes an organisation that begins with a sporting identity and transforms, to varying degrees, toward a social one. The Spanish community cases invert this: they began with social identities and adopted sport as their primary tool. This is not merely a different sequence but a different organisational logic — and it has consequences for sustainability, legitimacy, and the depth of social commitment.

The Spanish analytical report makes an important normative claim that follows from this: a club that positions its social work as a secondary addition to its sporting core will never achieve the depth of inclusion that organisations whose social mission is primary can achieve. The social objective must be structurally primary — shaping resource allocation, decision-making, and the definition of success — not merely rhetorically primary. This distinction between genuine social mission and what the report calls 'social washing' — the use of social language to project a friendly image without genuine organisational transformation — is one of the sharpest analytical contributions of the Spanish cases to the wider comparative analysis.

> *"Hay que diferenciar las entidades que usan la narrativa 'de lo social' para proyectar una imagen más amigable, pero que en la práctica siguen siendo clubes tradicionales donde los resultados deportivos prevalecen."*

> Translation: "One must distinguish between entities that use the language of 'the social' to project a friendlier image, but which in practice remain traditional clubs where sporting results take precedence."
>
> Spanish analytical report, summarising the distinction between authentic social mission and symbolic commitment

For the top-down Spanish cases — KOZ, LEKE, Hegalak — the situation is different: these are not sports organisations that have taken on social roles but public policy instruments designed from the outset as cross-sectoral social services that use sport as their primary tool. The 'main actor' in these cases is not a sports organisation but a specialised practitioner or institutional framework. The role change question does not apply in the same way; what matters is whether the public policy architecture is genuinely committed to the social goals it espouses, and whether it provides the resources and institutional support required to realise them.

What Role Change Requires and What It Costs

Across all five national contexts, role change — whether characterised as transformation of identity, change of network position, expansion of mandate, or foundational social commitment — involves specific organisational costs that are rarely fully acknowledged or resourced.

The first cost is internal. Sports clubs and organisations that reorient toward social goals face resistance from members and stakeholders who joined the organisation for sporting reasons and who may perceive the social mission as a distraction from, or a misuse of, the organisation's resources. The German analytical report notes that 'low-threshold, free activities that promise little sporting prestige' can create 'internal political implementation problems due to the necessary cross-financing' — the implicit tension between what paying members expect and what social inclusion requires. Managing this internal tension requires sustained leadership commitment and, often, the development of separate organisational structures (departments, foundations, subsidiaries) that can protect the social mission from the pressures of the sporting core.

The second cost is competence. Organisations that take on social roles need skills they have not historically possessed: psychosocial competencies for working with vulnerable populations, grant-writing and fundraising skills for accessing non-sport funding streams, networking and brokering capabilities for managing cross-sectoral relationships, and monitoring and evaluation frameworks for demonstrating social outcomes. Developing these competencies takes time, money, and often the recruitment of staff from outside the traditional sports sector. ALBA Berlin's decade-long process of building Sport Vernetzt — from the first school projects in 2005 to the full sixteen-district programme of 2024 — illustrates both the scale of this competence-building challenge and the timescales involved.

The third cost is identity. Organisations that change their role risk losing the clarity of institutional purpose that makes them legible to their existing partners, funders, and constituents. A sports club that describes itself as a social welfare organisation may find that its sports federation no longer recognises it as a club; its traditional funders may question whether it is still a legitimate recipient of sports grants; its members may feel that the organisation they joined has become something else. Managing this identity complexity — maintaining credibility in the sports sector while building legitimacy in the social sector — is one of the most demanding aspects of genuine role change.

Conclusion: Role Change as a Political Achievement

The analysis in this chapter suggests that role change is best understood not as an organisational decision but as a political achievement — the result of a negotiation between a sports organisation and its institutional environment over what the organisation is for, who it serves, and how its activities should be funded and evaluated.

Where that negotiation has been successful — as in ALBA Berlin's relationship with the Senate of Berlin, Motor Mickten's relationship with Dresden's municipal structures, the Bergen Sports Clubs' relationship with the Bergen Sports Council, or Etnoliga's relationship with Warsaw's civil society ecosystem — role change has been real, deep, and durable. The organisations involved have genuinely become different from what they were, not merely in their programme offerings but in their institutional identities, their professional cultures, and their networks of relationships.

Where the negotiation has been partial or unsuccessful — where clubs have added social programmes without transforming their institutional logic, where role change has been driven by the language of social commitment without the structural substance — the results are more fragile. Social programmes remain dependent on the goodwill of individual practitioners; they are vulnerable to changes in funding priorities, leadership turnover, or shifts in municipal policy; and they are susceptible to the 'social washing' dynamic that the Spanish report identifies so sharply.

The cross-national comparison reveals that the conditions for genuine role change are more likely to be present in contexts where institutional frameworks explicitly support and reward it — through policy frameworks that fund cross-sectoral activities, professional development structures that build social competencies within sports organisations, and accountability frameworks that measure social outcomes alongside sporting ones. In their absence, role change depends on exceptional individual commitment and favourable political moments: necessary conditions, but not sufficient ones for durable transformation.

6 Professionalisation

The Volunteer Paradox

European sport was built on voluntarism. The sports club as an institutional form — self-governing, member-financed, reliant on the unpaid labour of coaches, administrators, referees, and committee members — is one of the great achievements of civil society in Europe. Its voluntary character is not merely an economic convenience; it is an expression of intrinsic motivation, community solidarity, and the civic values that animate associational life. Across all five national contexts in the ALLSTARS study, the voluntary foundations of organised sport are acknowledged as a genuine strength: they create proximity to communities, they express authentic commitment, and they sustain activities at a scale that paid provision alone could never match.

Yet these same voluntary foundations create a structural problem for sport-based social inclusion. Reaching marginalised populations and maintaining their engagement is skilled, sustained, relentless work. It requires practitioners who can build trust with people who have been failed by other institutions; who possess psychosocial competencies alongside sports expertise; who can navigate cross-sectoral relationships, write funding applications, manage partnerships, and advocate within policy processes. It requires, in short, professional work — work that is too demanding, too specialised, and too consequential to rest permanently on the goodwill of unpaid individuals who have other lives, other commitments, and finite reserves of time and energy.

This is the volunteer paradox: the institutional tradition that makes community sport possible is also the tradition that makes it structurally fragile when it is asked to serve social purposes that exceed its original design. Professionalisation — the creation of paid roles, the development of specific competencies, the establishment of organisational structures and procedures that can survive personnel changes — is the response to this paradox. This chapter examines how that response has been constructed, and only partially resolved, across the thirty-two ALLSTARS cases.

What Professionalisation Means in This Context

The term 'professionalisation' covers a range of phenomena that are worth distinguishing. At its most basic, it refers to the creation of paid employment: the transformation of voluntary or poorly remunerated roles into stable, adequately compensated positions that allow individuals to commit their full professional attention to a project. This form of professionalisation addresses the time and continuity problem most directly — paid staff can devote consistent hours, accumulate institutional knowledge, and sustain relationships over timescales that voluntary engagement rarely achieves.

A second dimension is skills development: the expansion of individual and organisational competencies to match the demands of working with marginalised groups and navigating cross-sectoral environments. This includes psychosocial skills for engaging with target groups who carry complex life histories; grant-writing and fundraising capabilities for accessing funding from multiple sectors; network management skills for maintaining and developing cross-sectoral partnerships; and monitoring and evaluation frameworks for demonstrating social outcomes to funders and policymakers.

A third dimension is methodological professionalisation: the development, documentation, and dissemination of evidence-based approaches that can be transferred from individual practitioners to organisations, from single projects to networks, and from one city or country to another. This form of professionalisation transforms tacit knowledge — the accumulated expertise of experienced practitioners — into explicit, transferable methodologies that do not disappear when a key individual leaves.

A fourth dimension, which the Dutch cases illustrate most distinctly, is the professionalisation of informal networks: the development of organisational capacity in communities and movements that have historically operated outside formal institutional structures. When the Urban Sports Agenda in Rotterdam supported the development of neighbourhood sports coaches embedded in urban sports organisations, it was professionalising not individual practitioners but a sector — strengthening the collective organisational infrastructure of a community that had previously lacked the institutional voice and capacity to engage with municipal policy.

These four dimensions are not hierarchical — more is not always better — and they can come into tension with each other. Methodological standardisation can undermine the local responsiveness that makes community sport effective; formal employment structures can reduce the flexibility and passion that drive innovative practice; institutional capacity-building in informal communities can compromise the authenticity and cultural ownership that give those communities their social meaning. Professionalisation, this chapter argues, is necessary but not sufficient — and the form it takes matters as much as the fact of it.

Germany: The Networking Position as Professional Role

The German cases make a specific, practically important contribution to understanding professionalisation: they identify the networking coordinator — the person who manages the relationships between a project's multiple partners, facilitates communication, resolves conflicts, and ensures the coherence of cross-sectoral cooperation — as the professional role most critical to the sustainability of socially inclusive sport practice.

Sport Vernetzt in Berlin has been most explicit about this. The Sportmanagerin — the sports manager who coordinates the network within each of the project's sixteen districts — is not a sports coach. She or he is not primarily responsible for delivering training sessions or designing exercise programmes. The Sportmanagerin's function is relational: building and maintaining the connections between schools, nurseries, sports clubs, neighbourhood management, and municipal administration that make it possible for Sport Vernetzt to reach the children it serves. This is skilled, demanding work, and Sport Vernetzt's analytical report is unambiguous: it must be a paid, permanent role, not a voluntary or project-based one.

> *"In unserem Konzept nennen wir sie die Sportmanagerin — die dieses Netzwerk und quasi die handelnden Akteure koordiniert und immer wieder zusammenbringt. Und diese Rolle braucht es auf jeden Fall."*
>
> Translation: "In our concept we call her the sports manager — who coordinates this network and the active players and brings them together again and again. And this role is absolutely essential."
>
> Practitioner, Sport Vernetzt / ALBA Berlin, Germany

The emphasis on 'this role is absolutely essential' is not rhetorical. It reflects a hard-won understanding of what happens when this role is absent or underfunded. At Sportpark Styrum in Mülheim, the neighbourhood coordination function exists at the level of the park's administration but not as a dedicated networking role in the community. The consequence, the German analytical report notes, is that neighbourhood coordination is currently dependent on individual commitment — fragile, unevenly resourced, and at risk of collapsing when those individuals move on. At Coerde in Bewegung in Münster, the project has been able to achieve high-quality implementation partly because it could build on VSE's existing neighbourhood networks rather than needing to construct a coordination role from scratch.

A second form of professionalisation prominent in the German cases is skills development at the level of individual coaches and trainers — specifically, the psychosocial competencies required for working with groups who are unfamiliar with sport, who carry complex life circumstances, and whose engagement cannot be taken for granted. The Sport im Park inklusiv programme developed a specific training programme for coaches to enable them to adapt their programmes for participants with diverse physical and cognitive abilities. The ReWiS project at the University of Oldenburg demonstrates a particularly innovative approach: by embedding the project in a service-learning seminar, it ensures that the student coaches and coordinators bring social work competencies from their academic training into the project, rather than requiring the project to develop those competencies independently.

The ReWiS network illustrates both the strengths and the vulnerabilities of this approach to professionalisation through educational integration.

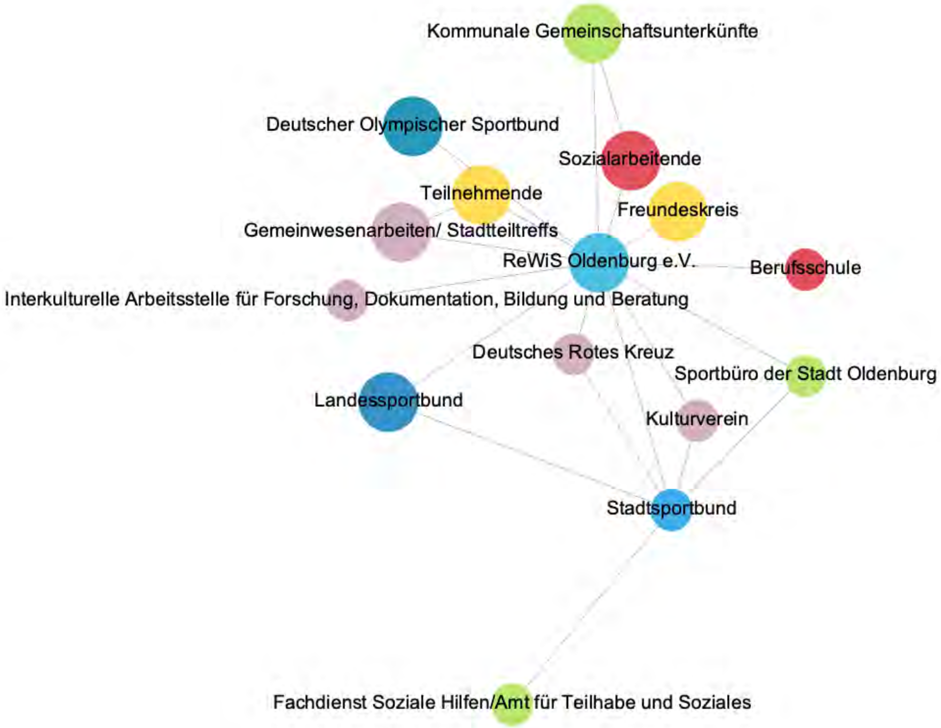
Kommunale Gemeinschaftsunterkünfte
Deutscher Olympischer Sportbund
Sozialarbeitende
Teilnehmende
Freundeskreis
Gemeinwesenarbeiten/ Stadtteiltreffs
ReWiS Oldenburg e.V.
Berufsschule
Interkulturelle Arbeitsstelle für Forschung, Dokumentation, Bildung und Beratung
Deutsches Rotes Kreuz
Sportbüro der Stadt Oldenburg
Landessportbund
Kulturverein
Stadtsportbund
Fachdienst Soziale Hilfen/Amt für Teilhabe und Soziales

Figure 6.1: Network of ReWiS (Refugees Welcome in Sport, Oldenburg, Germany). The network combines the sports sector (blue: DOSB, Landessportbund, Stadtsportbund, city sports office), civil society (pink: community work, intercultural research institution, cultural association, Red Cross), public institutions (orange: communal accommodation facilities, vocational school), and individuals including participants and a personal support network (Freundeskreis). The university origin of the project is not visible in the network itself — reflecting that the student practitioners are the link between academic training and community practice, rather than the university as an institution.

The ReWiS network (Figure 6.1) shows a project that has built genuine cross-sectoral reach — connecting the sports sector, civil society, public accommodation systems, and education — largely through the commitment of individual students and volunteers rather than through paid professional roles. The project has functioned successfully for over ten years in this mode. But the German analytical report identifies it as being 'at a crucial point in transitioning to structural funding after ten years of voluntaRewis

ry or low-paid work' — a transition that is both necessary for long-term sustainability and structurally difficult to achieve within the current funding landscape. ReWiS illustrates what might be called the professionalisation ceiling: the point at which a project's continued development requires a shift from voluntary to professional structures that the available resources do not yet support.

The Netherlands: The BRC as Institutional Solution

The Dutch cases offer the most institutionally developed solution to the professionalisation problem in the entire ALLSTARS study: the Brede Regeling Combinatiefuncties (BRC), the national scheme that funds neighbourhood sports coaches as cross-sectoral practitioners embedded in local organisations. The BRC is not a project-level innovation but a national policy instrument, and its existence explains much of what distinguishes the Dutch cases from those in countries without an equivalent mechanism.

Neighbourhood sports coaches under the BRC are paid professionals with clearly defined roles: they connect sport with education, welfare, health, and community development; they support local sports organisations in professionalising their community outreach; they build relationships between policy and practice; and they ensure that municipal sports policy responds to actual community needs rather than being designed in isolation. The YETS programme in Schiedam, Sportstrijders in Zwolle, Citytrainers in 's-Hertogenbosch, and the Urban Sports Agenda in Rotterdam all benefit from BRC-funded practitioners who provide a layer of professionalised coordination that would otherwise need to be constructed from scratch within each project.

The CityTrainers programme illustrates particularly well how BRC-enabled professionalisation can support the growth of a voluntary and semi-voluntary initiative into a structured, transferable model.

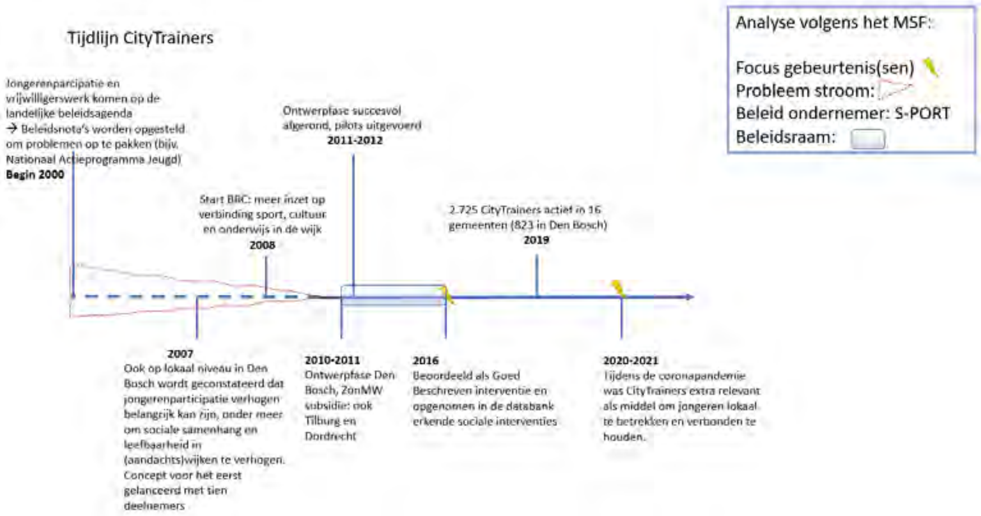
Tijdlijn CityTrainers
Jongerenparcipatie en vrijwilligerswerk komen op de landelijke beleidsagenda
→ Beleidsnota's worden opgesteld om problemen op te pakken (bijv. Nationaal Actieprogramma Jeugd)
Begin 2000
Start BRC: meer inzet op verbinding sport, cultuur en onderwijs in de wijk
2008
Ontwerpfase succesvol afgerond, pilots uitgevoerd
2011-2012
2.725 CityTrainers actief in 16 gemeenten (823 in Den Bosch)
2019
2007
Ook op lokaal niveau in Den Bosch wordt geconstateerd dat jongerenparticipatie verhogen belangrijk kan zijn, onder meer om sociale samenhang en leefbaarheid in (aandachts)wijken te verhogen. Concept voor het eerst gelanceerd met tien deelnemers
2010-2011
Ontwerpfase Den Bosch, ZonMW subsidie: ook Tilburg en Dordrecht
2016
Beoordeeld als Goed Beschreven interventie en opgenomen in de databank erkende sociale interventies
2020-2021
Tijdens de coronapandemie was CityTrainers extra relevant als middel om jongeren lokaal te betrekken en verbonden te houden.
Analyse volgens het MSF:
Focus gebeurtenis(sen)
Probleem stroom:
Beleid ondernemer: S-PORT
Beleidsraam:

Figure 6.2: MSF timeline for CityTrainers ('s-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands). The timeline shows the programme's professionalisation trajectory: from a local pilot in 2007, through the launch of the BRC scheme in 2008 which provided structural funding for combination function officers, through the design phase supported by ZonMW subsidy (2010–2011), formal recognition as an evidence-based social intervention by the Netherlands Youth Institute (2016), and expansion to 2,725 active CityTrainers in 16 municipalities by 2019. The COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2021) is marked as a focusing event — a moment when the programme's social value was particularly visible and its reach expanded.

The CityTrainers timeline (Figure 6.2) shows a programme that grew from a local initiative to a nationally recognised model with 2,725 active practitioners across 16 municipalities. The key enabling moments are structural: the launch of the BRC in 2008, which provided the funding mechanism for the combination function officers who anchor the programme's delivery; the ZonMW-funded design phase that systematised the methodology; and the formal recognition as an evidence-based intervention by the Netherlands Youth Institute in 2016, which provided the institutional legitimacy needed for replication elsewhere. Professionalisation here is not simply about creating jobs; it is about building the methodological, evaluative, and institutional infrastructure that makes a locally successful practice transferable to other contexts.

The Dutch analytical report makes a point that is easily overlooked: in the Netherlands, 'professionalisation does not come at the expense of commitment or passion.' The BRC-funded neighbourhood sports coaches are not bureaucrats delivering a standardised service; they are, in the Dutch phrase, 'people on fire' whose professional roles allow them to act on genuine commitment in ways that are sustainable over time. The institutionalisation of passionate commitment — rather than its replacement — is the distinctive achievement of the Dutch model, and it depends on a funding mechanism that most other European countries lack.

Norway: Professionalisation and the Limits of Voluntarism

Norway presents the sharpest internal contrast in the ALLSTARS study with respect to professionalisation, a contrast that maps closely onto the differences in socio-spatial orientation and cross-sectorality already observed. In Bergen and Drammen, deliberate investment in professional roles — Activity and Community Developers in the large multi-sports clubs, a dedicated LIM coordinator in the Bergen Sports Council — has produced the most robust and durable cases in the Norwegian portfolio. In Kristiansund, the Ett Slag av Gangen programme operates entirely on voluntary labour, with no professional roles and no structural funding beyond annual grants from the national foundation.

The Norwegian analytical report names the implications directly. In the Bergen and Drammen cases, professionalisation has ensured quality, continuity, and the capacity to scale: 'sports clubs are given new roles with their own employees who work specifically towards the offers,' and this employment relationship is what makes the clubs' expanded social mandate viable over time. In Kristiansund, by contrast, the project 'is dependent on enthusiasts who are involved as volunteers' and 'if these volunteer enthusiasts were to give up, it is therefore uncertain whether Ett Slag av Gangen in Kristiansund will be able to continue.'

The DNT Tiltrettelagt programme in Molde demonstrates an innovative alternative pathway to professionalisation that does not depend on employment creation alone. By integrating the programme into Molde University College's social care curriculum, DNT has embedded a form of skills-based professionalisation within the academic training of future practitioners. Students from the social care programme bring relevant professional competencies to the project, receive practical experience that strengthens their academic training, and contribute to a knowledge-sharing dynamic that extends beyond any single project iteration. This model — professionalisation through educational integration — is resource-efficient and knowledge-generative, and it has allowed DNT Tiltrettelagt to maintain quality without creating the paid positions that the project's funding base cannot currently sustain.

The Norwegian cases also illuminate a systemic dimension of the professionalisation challenge that is often overlooked: the precariousness of the jobs that are created when professionalisation does occur. The Norwegian analytical report includes a striking observation from the Drammen Sports Council about the vulnerability of young professionals employed on project-based contracts: 'These are young people who are maybe 31 or 32 years old, sitting in a clubhouse somewhere, unsure whether they will have a job on the third of January.' The creation of professional roles addresses the continuity problem, but only if those roles are themselves stable — and the project-based, annually renewed funding that characterises most social sport initiatives makes genuine employment stability structurally difficult to achieve.

> *"Det er unge mennesker som nå kanskje 31-32 år, sitter på et klubbhus et eller annet sted, og er usikre på om de har jobb tredje januar."*
>
> Translation: "These are young people who are maybe 31 or 32 years old, sitting in a clubhouse somewhere, unsure whether they will have a job on the third of January."
>
> Sports council representative, Aktive Lokalsamfunn, Drammen, Norway — on the precariousness of project-funded professional roles

Poland: The In-Between Phase

The Polish analytical report introduces a concept that captures the professionalisation situation of most Polish cases with precision: the 'in-between phase.' Many Polish initiatives have moved beyond pure voluntarism — they employ staff, have developed some procedures, and have achieved partial institutionalisation — but they have not yet reached the full professional stability that would allow them to plan, recruit, and develop over multi-year horizons. They are in-between: too developed to be purely grassroots, too fragile to be genuinely sustainable.

The Polish cases cluster at different points along this professionalisation spectrum. At the high end, Ekstra FAN in Gdańsk represents a fully professionalised model: scientifically validated methodology, interdisciplinary teams including coaches, dietitians, and psychologists, standardised assessment procedures, and a dedicated CSR function within the stadium operator. This level of professionalisation was possible because the project was anchored in large, well-resourced institutions — a public health centre, a major sports stadium — from the outset. Radomiak Futbol Plus and Let's Play Together also demonstrate high professionalisation, through the PZU network's quality standards and the V4Sport Foundation's Erasmus+-tested methodology respectively.

In the middle of the spectrum, Trener Osiedlowy in Głogów and Etnoliga in Warsaw show partial professionalisation. In Głogów, coaches are employed and trained in safeguarding standards, and the project has a formal structure as a municipal public service. But the absence of systematic evaluation and the dependence on annual budget cycles limit the depth of professionalisation achievable. In Etnoliga, sophisticated communication, project management, and international partnerships (UEFA, FARE, UNHCR) coexist with an operational core that still relies heavily on volunteer labour and flexible structures that can be rapidly reconfigured but are correspondingly fragile.

At the lowest end of the professionalisation spectrum, Kavkaz Club in Warsaw illustrates what the in-between phase looks like in its most precarious form. The club has formal legal status, employs licensed coaches, and organises nationally recognised sporting events. But administration and project management remain strongly dependent on a single leader who is also the primary private sponsor. The structural risk is acute: if this individual withdraws, the organisational infrastructure is insufficient to sustain the initiative independently.

The Polish report identifies the systemic cause of this widespread in-between status with clarity: the cyclical nature of grant funding, which makes permanent employment structurally difficult, forces continuous reapplication for short-term funding, and prevents the development of procedures and knowledge management systems that require sustained investment over multiple years. This is not a failure of individual organisations but a system-level problem: the Polish sports and social policy environment does not yet provide the multiannual funding frameworks that would allow the transition from in-between to genuine institutional stability.

Spain: Top-Down and Bottom-Up Professionalisation Trajectories

The Spanish analytical report distinguishes two fundamentally different professionalisation trajectories that map onto the country's governance structure: top-down initiatives that begin with public policy frameworks and enjoy structural funding from the outset, and bottom-up community initiatives that grow from grassroots engagement and must construct their professionalisation piecemeal, against the financial pressures of their operating environment.

KOZ, LEKE, and Hegalak represent the top-down trajectory. These initiatives are designed as public services, funded through public budgets, and staffed by professionals from the outset. Their professionalisation challenge is not whether to professionalise — that is settled by their origins — but how to ensure the quality, consistency, and conditions of the professional roles they create. The Spanish report documents a specific and troubling finding about this challenge: the practice of subrogation, in which public institutions contract out frontline service delivery to private companies, has produced a situation where the same service is delivered by practitioners under radically different employment conditions in different municipalities.

In the KOZ programme in Oarsoaldea, three neighbouring municipalities had sport orientation staff employed by three different companies. Their working conditions varied substantially: one described good conditions; another described long hours and heavy workload; the third described conditions so poor that they were planning to leave. The Spanish report observes that this variability in practitioner conditions is not a marginal concern — it directly undermines the coherence and sustainability of the programme. KOZ's social impact depends on practitioners building long-term community knowledge and trust relationships that take years to develop; high staff turnover, driven by poor working conditions, destroys exactly the relational capital that makes the programme valuable.

The bottom-up Spanish initiatives — Dragones de Lavapiés, Street Soccer, Campus Sansofé, Cricket Jove, Samarucs — face the opposite challenge. Their social mission is clear, their community rootedness is deep, and their practitioners are motivated by genuine commitment. But stable public funding is difficult to secure, requiring constant navigation of competitive grant processes that favour established organisations and penalise those whose primary assets are relational and cultural rather than financial and institutional. The result is a structural reliance on voluntary labour for activities that are, in practice, highly skilled and professionally demanding.

Campus Sansofé illustrates the extreme end of this pattern. Working with recently arrived migrants and unaccompanied minors — one of the most demanding target populations in the ALLSTARS study — the project operates almost entirely on voluntary commitment. As its coordinator observed in interview: 'It works because of volunteering, not because of institutional support. If anything works here, it is because there are people who are deeply committed to this issue.' This is admirable. It is also fragile: the entire social impact of the project rests on the continued availability of people who are willing to work without adequate compensation, and that availability cannot be assumed indefinitely.

The Professionalisation Paradox Revisited

The preceding country analysis reveals a paradox that runs through all five national contexts: the cases with the most demanding social missions — those working with the most marginalised populations, the most complex social challenges, and the most ambitious social goals — are often the cases with the weakest professionalisation, while the cases with more modest social ambitions often have more stable professional structures.

This inversion is not accidental. The most marginalised populations are precisely those for whom existing institutional frameworks — sports clubs, public sports services, funded community organisations — provide the least support. Working with them requires creativity, flexibility, and community embeddedness that formal institutional structures often undermine. The organisations that do this work most effectively are often those that have grown organically from community energy, without the institutional backing that would enable sustained professionalisation. Meanwhile, organisations with stable professional structures tend to serve populations and pursue goals that are easier to measure, easier to legitimate to funders, and more compatible with the reporting demands of formal grant systems.

This paradox is not resolvable at the level of individual organisations. It is a systemic challenge that requires systemic responses: funding frameworks that recognise the value of relational and community-embedded work; professional development pathways that allow practitioners from community backgrounds to develop skills without requiring them to conform to institutional models that may not fit their context; and accountability frameworks that can capture social outcomes that are genuinely hard to measure, rather than forcing social sport initiatives to demonstrate impact in the simplified metrics that funding bodies find convenient.

Conclusion: From Volunteer to Professional — and Back Again

The ALLSTARS cases suggest that the relationship between voluntarism and professionalisation is not a linear progression from inferior to superior but a dynamic tension that productive organisations must manage actively. The goal is not to eliminate voluntary commitment — which would destroy the social capital and community embeddedness that make these initiatives valuable — but to embed it within structures that can protect it from the vulnerability to which purely voluntary projects are exposed.

The Dutch BRC model, for all its limitations, represents the most successful institutional response to this challenge in the ALLSTARS study. By creating professional roles that are structurally funded, culturally embedded, and explicitly designed to bridge voluntarism and formal institutional practice, the BRC has institutionalised the capacity for socially innovative sport practice in a way that no other national mechanism in the study has achieved.

The lesson for other national contexts is not that the BRC should be replicated — policy transfer is rarely simple — but that the challenge it addresses is universal, and that addressing it requires deliberate institutional design at the system level rather than leaving it to the initiative of individual organisations. Where that system-level design is absent, as the Polish in-between cases and the Spanish bottom-up cases most clearly illustrate, professionalisation remains partial, precarious, and dependent on individual heroism rather than institutional capacity. Heroism, as subsequent chapters will confirm, is not a reliable basis for durable social change.

7 The Role of Engaged Individuals

The Person Behind the Project

Every case in the ALLSTARS study has one. Sometimes they are easy to identify: a founder whose name the project carries, a practitioner whose personal history is inseparable from the initiative's origins, an official whose sustained advocacy created the political conditions without which nothing would have been possible. Sometimes they are less visible: a school principal who said yes at a crucial moment, a municipal employee who found a creative interpretation of budget rules, a community member who volunteered their home as the first meeting place. But in every case, behind the network diagram, behind the theory of change, behind the funding structure and the cross-sectoral partnerships, there is a person — or a small group of people — whose personal commitment, creative energy, and willingness to act made the initiative real.

The Norwegian research tradition has given this figure a name that has been adopted across the entire ALLSTARS consortium: the Ildsjel, literally 'fire soul' or 'person in flames.' The term captures something that more clinical language — 'key stakeholder,' 'project champion,' 'social entrepreneur' — does not: the quality of personal investment that goes beyond professional obligation, the sense of a mission that is felt rather than merely assigned. The Ildsjel is the person who stays after the meeting to sort out the details that nobody else wants to handle, who keeps the network alive through phone calls and emails during the long periods between official events, who absorbs setbacks that would cause a more conventionally motivated actor to walk away.

This chapter examines the Ildsjel phenomenon across all five national contexts. It asks who these individuals are, where they come from, what drives them, what they achieve, and — crucially — what happens when they leave. The central analytical argument is that the Ildsjel is both indispensable and insufficient: indispensable because without individual passion and commitment, the institutional inertia of the sports system and the social policy landscape would prevent the emergence of socially innovative practice; insufficient because any project that depends entirely on a single person's energy is structurally fragile in ways that no amount of individual dedication can resolve.

Who the Ildsjel Is — and Where They Come From

The most important finding about engaged individuals in the ALLSTARS study is one that might seem counterintuitive: they do not come primarily from the sports sector. Across all five countries, the key individuals who initiated or sustained the most significant cases came from the health sector, from education, from social work, from community development, from municipal administration, and from civil society — as well as from organised sport. The German analytical report observes directly that 'it is not possible to identify any one sector as the driving force behind innovation.'

This finding matters because it challenges a common assumption about sport-based social inclusion: that the primary agency for change lies within the sports sector, and that the task of reform is to persuade sports organisations to adopt a more social orientation. The ALLSTARS evidence suggests something different. It is often the health professional who decides that sport could serve their public health goals, the social worker who recognises sport as a vehicle for community integration, the municipal official who sees the opportunity created by a funding programme, or the community activist who has always used physical activity as a way of bringing people together — these are as often as not the people who initiate the most innovative practices. The sports sector's role is frequently to provide the resources, infrastructure, and legitimacy for initiatives whose animating energy comes from elsewhere.

The German cases illustrate this particularly clearly. The Bewegte Apotheke (Moving Pharmacy) in Filderstadt was not initiated by a sports club but by a pharmacist who believed in the health benefits of exercise and found a willing partner in the local sports community. Coerde in Bewegung in Münster was driven by the sustained commitment of an employee at the city's health department who had the social care organisation VSE's networks at her disposal. Sport im Park inklusiv was originally launched by the Senate Department for Health before being transferred to the Interior and Sport department. In each case, the key individual came from outside the conventional sports sector and brought a different motivation and a different competence into the network.

> *"Es sind immer Einzelpersonen, die irgendwo brennen — egal aus welcher Institution sie kommen."*
>
> Translation: "It is always individuals who are passionate somewhere — regardless of which institution they come from."
>
> Practitioner, Sport Vernetzt / ALBA Berlin, Germany

The Spanish analytical report introduces a nuance that complicates the simple picture of the lone Ildsjel. In the public-policy-driven Spanish cases — KOZ, LEKE, Hegalak — the committed individuals who embody social innovation work within institutional frameworks, and their commitment tends to be more collective and more diffuse than in community-driven cases. The report observes that 'commitment in the public sector tends to manifest more collectively,' making it 'more difficult to identify a single person with the strict definition of Ildsjel.' This institutional embedding of passion is not a weakening of it; it is, arguably, its most durable form. When the work of the Ildsjel is distributed across a team of committed officials, procedures, and policy frameworks, it becomes more resilient — though also, perhaps, less transformative in the moments of genuine institutional breakthrough that the solitary fire soul can sometimes produce.

Germany: The Nerve and the Knowledge

The German analytical report characterises the key individuals in the German cases through a phrase that one interviewee used to describe a colleague: they have a certain tenacity, a 'Nerv, aber in einem guten Sinne' — a nerve, but in a good way. This captures something specific about what the German Ildsjel does: they push against institutional resistance with a combination of persistence and strategic intelligence, finding the openings, building the alliances, and sustaining the effort over the long periods — often years, sometimes decades — that genuine institutional change requires.

In Sport Vernetzt, this figure is most visible in the relationship between ALBA Berlin and the political structures of the Berlin Senate. ALBA's ability to access political decision-makers — first at the district level in Gropiusstadt, then at the city level through the Senate Department — and to translate that access into funding, legitimacy, and eventually a formal programme mandate, required not just sports expertise but a political intelligence that was developed over twenty years of deliberate relationship-building. The individuals who built and maintained this relationship — identified in the interviews as Henning Harnisch and Philipp Hickethier — are described as 'very important key persons who could carry this idea very well into the world.'

> *"Es braucht halt schon immer auch die richtigen Menschen dazu — so simpel sich das anhört, aber es ist so — und einen langen Atem."*
>
> Translation: "You always need the right people for it — as simple as that sounds, it is true — and you need staying power."
>
> Municipal official, Berlin, Germany

'Staying power' — langen Atem, literally 'long breath' — is a recurring motif in the German interviews. Several of the projects have been in development for a decade or more before achieving the funding stability and institutional recognition that make them visible as 'good practices.' The individuals who sustained them through that long incubation period did so largely without the professional support structures — secure employment, adequate pay, institutional backing — that would make the commitment sustainable for most people. ReWiS in Oldenburg is the starkest example: the project operated for ten years on voluntary or low-paid effort before reaching the point at which structural funding was a realistic prospect. The individuals who sustained that commitment deserve recognition not merely as talented practitioners but as exceptional human beings whose dedication went far beyond what any institutional logic could have produced.

The German cases also surface the darker side of this phenomenon: the knowledge lock-in and the burnout risk that accompany sustained individual commitment. Key individuals 'often acquire enormous knowledge and establish working structures that are difficult to transfer to other people,' the German analytical report notes. The Coerde in Bewegung project illustrates this with uncomfortable precision: one of the project's greatest strengths is the deep neighbourhood knowledge and the extensive personal network of a single employee at the VSE's Early Intervention Department. If that person were to leave, the networking infrastructure they have built — rooted in years of relationship cultivation and local presence — would be extremely difficult to reconstruct. Their continued commitment is simultaneously the project's greatest asset and its most significant structural vulnerability.

> *"Sie macht es auf jeden Fall aus Interesse und Herzblut mit — bringt die Menschen zusammen."*
>
> Translation: "She does it entirely out of interest and passion — she brings people together."

> Practitioner, describing a key individual at the health department in the Coerde in Bewegung project, Germany

The Netherlands: From Fire Soul to Organisation

The Dutch cases offer the most developed account in the ALLSTARS study of how individual passion can be translated into organisational capacity — and of the conditions that make that translation possible. The Dutch analytical report identifies the Ildsjel as critical in the early stages of every initiative, but observes that 'in the Netherlands, ways of securing these social sports initiatives through professionalisation are quickly sought' after the initial phase. The BRC-funded neighbourhood sports coaches are the institutional mechanism through which this translation is routinely achieved: they are, in a structural sense, the institutionalisation of the Ildsjel role.

YETS in Schiedam represents the most fully documented example of this translation. Peter Ottens, YETS's founder, came back from study abroad in the United States with the vision of a basketball-based youth development programme for young people from his home community in Schiedam. He started it with a group of friends, working voluntarily, building the programme through personal relationship and commitment rather than institutional resources. The individual passion was real and decisive. But the subsequent development of YETS — its recognition by the Netherlands Youth Institute as an evidence-based intervention, its expansion to multiple municipalities, its training programme for coaches — represents a deliberate effort to embed that passion in structures that can outlast any individual's direct involvement.

> *"Personal commitment remains necessary for change. Policy and structure can facilitate, but it is people who bring about change, literally and figuratively. In the initial phase of a project, this is often one person, but in order to guarantee successful safeguarding, in many cases professionalisation is used to reduce dependence on an individual."*
>
> Dutch analytical report, summarising the relationship between individual commitment and organisational structure

The Urban Sports Agenda Rotterdam offers a different but equally instructive version of this dynamic. Here, the Ildsjel figures are not individual founders but the informal community leaders of the urban sports scene — the 'community leaders' or 'Original Gangsters' who command the respect of their communities and around whom the scene organises itself. The Rotterdam approach was to support these individuals without coopting them: to strengthen the organisations they lead, to fund neighbourhood sports coaches who work alongside them rather than replacing them, and to ensure that the policy process genuinely responded to their knowledge and priorities. This is, in a sense, an institutional strategy for multiplying and sustaining the Ildsjel role rather than depending on any single fire soul.

Norway: The Drammen Boat and the Bergen Meeting

Two founding stories from the Norwegian cases illustrate, with particular vividness, how the convergence of individual passion and institutional opportunity creates the conditions for lasting innovation. Both stories have become part of the institutional memory of the projects they concern.

The first is the 'I Same Båt' (In the Same Boat) seminar in Drammen in 2014. Following the city council's decision to mandate physical activity in schools, two individuals — a sports council officer with decades of experience in community sport, and a school administrator who had spent years in social work with the Salvation Army — found each other and recognised that they were working toward the same goals from different institutional vantage points. They arranged a seminar that brought together sports club leaders, school leaders, and municipal officials on a boat to Copenhagen. The combination of physical isolation, shared time, and deliberate facilitation produced what one interviewee describes as a transformative experience: 'There sat we, and there was a bit of speed dating, and we connected the sports club with the school, and so on, and so on. And then something happened over those two days that produced a great deal more.'

> *"Vi var totalt uvitende på hvor vi skulle faglig sett. Og så ble det det det har blitt."*
>
> Translation: "We were completely unknowing about where we were headed professionally. And then it became what it has become."
>
> Sports council representative, Aktive Lokalsamfunn, Drammen, Norway — on the origins of the model

The simplicity of this origin story conceals the depth of the personal investment that preceded it. The sports council officer had been working toward this moment for over a decade, building the institutional relationships and the political case for a model that Norwegian sport had not previously accommodated. The school administrator brought a value framework shaped by years in social welfare work that made her see children's physical activity as a matter of social justice rather than just fitness. Their meeting was not accidental: it was the product of sustained individual effort that had gradually created the conditions for a productive encounter.

The second story is from Bergen, where the LIM project was initiated through a chance meeting between a sports enthusiast and a school principal. The sports enthusiast — Arild Hovland, identified by name in the case documentation — had a specific idea about what sport could offer to children in a school district characterised by socio-economic challenges. He brought it to the principal of the local school, who recognised immediately how it complemented the school's existing homework support programme. According to the case documentation, 'during a short meeting they had outlined the project so that funding could be applied for.' LIM has been running for years, involves between fifty and seventy percent of children in the relevant school districts, and has been adopted as a municipal programme by Bergen's Sports Council. It began with two people who had the right idea at the right moment and the mutual trust to act on it quickly.

These founding stories are important not just as narratives but as evidence about the conditions under which innovation occurs. In both cases, the decisive moment was an encounter between individuals from different sectors who shared a common commitment to children's wellbeing and recognised in each other a compatible approach. The encounter was possible because both individuals were already embedded in networks — through the sports council, through the school, through years of community engagement — that brought them into proximity. The spark required the right people, the right moment, and the right social conditions. None of these alone was sufficient.

Poland: The Leadership Spectrum

The Polish analytical report offers the most systematic comparative analysis of the Ildsjel phenomenon in the entire ALLSTARS study, describing in detail how the role of engaged individuals varies not just in intensity but in character across different cases — and how that variation shapes the resilience and scalability of each initiative.

At one end of the spectrum, the Trener Osiedlowy programme in Głogów demonstrates an unusual and instructive form of distributed leadership. The idea originated at the political level with the Deputy Mayor, Bożena Kowalczykowska, who recognised a window of opportunity and embedded the programme in the city's social priorities. But the implementation was built by Alicja Męczyńska and the Chrobry Głogów team, who translated the political mandate into an operational programme, developed the Neighbourhood League, implemented safeguarding standards, and sustained the daily dynamics of the initiative. As the Polish analytical report observes, this 'represents a case in which leadership is distributed between political decision-making and the construction of the project's practical infrastructure.' The separation of political entrepreneurship from operational leadership is, in many ways, a more durable model than the fusion of both in a single individual.

The Ekstra FAN case in Gdańsk sits at the opposite end of the spectrum — and illustrates its risks most starkly. Wojtek Dąbrowski was, by all accounts, an exceptional individual: he successfully integrated partners from health, sport, and public administration; secured funding; built trust across institutional boundaries; and gave the project a distinctive profile that attracted national and international attention. The programme was genuinely innovative and demonstrably effective. And then he left. What followed was not a smooth transition to a succession plan, because no succession plan had been built. The project's institutional infrastructure — the cross-sectoral relationships, the funding pathways, the knowledge of how to navigate the system — was embedded in him rather than in the organisation. His departure weakened the initiative significantly, and it eventually closed.

> *"Gdyby nie było takiej dobrej współpracy z Wojtkiem Dąbrowskim, który otwierał nam drzwi — to może by było trudniej."*
>
> Translation: "Without such good cooperation with Wojtek Dąbrowski, who opened doors for us — it might have been more difficult."
>
> Health institution representative, Ekstra FAN, Gdańsk, Poland — on the indispensable role of the key individual, and implicitly, on what was lost when he left

Between these poles, Etnoliga in Warsaw and V4Sport in Wrocław demonstrate what successful leadership transition looks like when it is deliberately pursued. In Etnoliga, the founder Krzysztof Jarymowicz gradually shifted from being the initiative's central node to building a team capable of assuming responsibility for different organisational functions. The Polish report describes this as one of the few cases in which 'the intensity of the leader's role decreases as the project matures, while agency is gradually diffused across a broader structure through participatory mechanisms and task delegation.' In V4Sport, Jakub Kalinowski moved from strongly personalised engagement to a model in which established methodologies, partner networks, and training systems constitute the operational infrastructure — allowing the leader to play a strategic role while the day-to-day work is distributed across a team.

The Polish cases as a whole produce a key insight: the Ildsjel who ignites the fire is not the same kind of person as the one who sustains the warmth over time. The initiating phase requires a particular kind of energy — creative, risk-tolerant, relationship-building, willing to act without certainty. The sustaining phase requires a different kind of commitment — patient, procedural, team-building, willing to share power. Very few individuals excel at both. The organisations that have navigated the Ildsjel transition most successfully — Etnoliga, V4Sport — are those whose founders recognised this distinction and took active steps to build the structures that would reduce their own indispensability.

Spain: Ildsjel in Both Directions

The Spanish analytical report makes a distinction that complicates any simple account of the Ildsjel as a community-sector phenomenon: engaged individuals are as important in the context of public institutions as they are in community initiatives, but their commitment manifests differently and is harder to identify from the outside.

All the community-based Spanish initiatives — Cricket Jove, Street Soccer, Dragones de Lavapiés, Campus Sansofé, Samarucs — were born from the vision and commitment of small groups of people who invested enormous personal energy in the early stages. In Cricket Jove, the initiator of the project worked as a coordinator while simultaneously navigating the complex institutional landscape of Barcelona's intercultural policy, seeking and maintaining partnerships with sports clubs, social organisations, and municipal bodies. In Campus Sansofé, the project coordinator came from a background in European institutional work and found herself, as she describes it, 'always searching, searching, searching' for funding in a context where everything depended on continuous fundraising rather than stable institutional support. In Dragones de Lavapiés, the founders were members of the very community the project serves — their commitment was personal in the deepest sense, rooted in their own experience of marginalisation and their conviction that football could be a vehicle for recognition and belonging.

> *"Hay gente que de manera voluntaria cede su tiempo para que esto salga adelante. Si hay algo que funciona es por eso."*
>
> Translation: "There are people who voluntarily give their time so that this can move forward. If anything works here, it is because of that."
>
> Project coordinator, Campus Sansofé, Spain

For the public-policy-driven Spanish cases, the Ildsjel takes a different form. The Hegalak centre in San Sebastián was made possible by the initiative and commitment of practitioners within the Gipuzkoa Adapted Sport Federation — specifically Alicia, identified in the interviews as an impulsora, the person who drove the idea forward — combined with the political will of officials in the regional sports portfolio. The report describes Hegalak as 'an intermediate case' where individual initiative within a public institution is combined with institutional backing. The Ildsjel here is not a lone community activist but a committed professional who knows how to work the institutional system from within.

The Spanish analytical report is candid about the implications: for community initiatives, the dependence on individual commitment creates structural vulnerability that will not be resolved without more stable public funding. For public policy initiatives, the dependence on the goodwill of committed officials creates a different kind of fragility — one that is more hidden but no less real. When political priorities shift, when officials move on, when the budget cycle turns, the institutional support that enabled the Ildsjel to act can disappear as quickly as it arrived.

The Succession Problem

The central organisational challenge that the Ildsjel phenomenon poses is not how to find passionate individuals — they appear, in the ALLSTARS study, in every context and in every sector — but how to ensure that their departure does not destroy the institutions they have built. This is what might be called the succession problem: the challenge of transferring the knowledge, the relationships, the institutional memory, and the motivation of a key individual into an organisational infrastructure that can survive their exit.

The succession problem has three components. The first is knowledge transfer: key individuals typically hold, in their heads and in their personal networks, an enormous amount of tacit knowledge about how the project works, who to call, what language to use with which partner, and what history underpins the current arrangements. This knowledge is rarely documented, rarely shared systematically, and extremely difficult to reconstruct once it is lost. The German analytical report identifies this as 'working structures that are difficult to transfer to other people' — structures that look from the outside like organisational capacity but are, in reality, the personal assets of a specific individual.

The second component is relationship capital: the trust, goodwill, and mutual understanding that a key individual has accumulated with partners across sectors over years or decades of regular contact. Trust is not transferable in the way that knowledge can be documented; it must be rebuilt with each new person, and it is built slowly. When a key individual leaves a project, the relationships they had developed do not automatically transfer to their successor. Partners may be willing to extend provisional trust, but the quality of the relationship will typically decline until the successor has had enough time and shared experience to establish their own credibility.

The third component is motivation: the emotional energy and the sense of personal mission that a key individual brings to the project, and that they communicate — often without intending to — to partners, participants, and colleagues. This motivation is contagious: it creates an atmosphere of possibility that makes the project feel larger than its formal specifications. When a key individual leaves, they take this atmosphere with them. The project continues, the meetings happen, the activities are delivered, but something has changed — a quality of engagement and possibility that is difficult to name but instantly felt.

The most successful cases in the ALLSTARS study have addressed the succession problem through three strategies, which are not mutually exclusive. The first is paid employment: creating secure, adequately resourced professional roles that reduce the project's dependence on the extraordinary commitment of exceptional individuals, and that allow a succession of competent practitioners to carry the work forward without each needing to be a fire soul. The second is methodological documentation: investing in the explicit articulation of the project's approach — through training programmes, written methodologies, evaluation frameworks — so that the tacit knowledge of experienced practitioners becomes accessible to their successors. The third is governance diversification: ensuring that decision-making power, institutional relationships, and strategic direction are shared across multiple individuals and organisations rather than concentrated in a single person or role.

The Institutional Conditions for the Ildsjel

A final, often underemphasised dimension of the Ildsjel phenomenon is that passionate individuals do not appear randomly. They appear in contexts that make their passion actionable. The same person, in a different institutional environment — less receptive, less resourced, less politically open — might not initiate a project at all, or might initiate one that fails to achieve the institutional embedding that turns an individual effort into a durable practice.

The Norwegian case of Aktive Lokalsamfunn in Drammen illustrates this with particular clarity. The Sports Council officer who drove the model forward was not uniquely exceptional among Norwegian sports administrators. What was exceptional was the combination of his personal commitment and the specific conditions in Drammen at that moment: a city council decision that created a mandate and a political window; a school administration that was ready to cooperate; a foundation sector that was willing to invest; and a Sports Council that had the institutional capacity to coordinate across these elements. The Ildsjel was necessary but not sufficient. Without the institutional conditions, his passion would have remained an aspiration rather than a programme that now reaches more than ten thousand children every week.

> *"Vi hadde ikke vært der vi er i dag uten idrettskretsen. Men vi hadde heller ikke vært der vi er uten det vedtaket. Og vi hadde ikke klart det hvis vi ikke hadde kommunen med oss på laget."*
>
> Translation: "We would not be where we are today without the sports association. But we would not be where we are without the decision either. And we could not have done it without the municipality on our side."
>
> Sports council representative, Aktive Lokalsamfunn, Drammen, Norway — on the interdependence of individual commitment and institutional conditions

The implication for policy is significant: if the goal is to produce more Ildsjel-driven innovation in sport-based social inclusion, the most effective strategy is not to search for more exceptional individuals but to create institutional conditions that make ordinary passionate people's efforts productive. This means policy frameworks that recognise and fund cross-sectoral cooperation; political cultures that welcome experimentation and tolerate the failure that genuine innovation requires; and professional development pathways that help practitioners translate personal commitment into institutional capacity. The fire souls will appear. The question is whether the system is designed to make use of what they bring.

Conclusion: Between Heroism and Institution

The Ildsjel is not a problem to be solved. Personal passion and commitment are genuine goods — they create energy, drive innovation, build the trust relationships on which inclusive communities depend, and sustain effort through the periods of uncertainty and resistance that all genuinely innovative practice must navigate. The goal is not to eliminate the Ildsjel but to prevent the structural fragility that arises when institutions depend entirely on individual heroism.

The thirty-two cases in the ALLSTARS study suggest that the healthiest organisational forms are those in which the Ildsjel's energy is channelled into building the structures that will eventually make them less indispensable: where the founder's passion becomes a team's shared methodology; where the key individual's network becomes an organisation's institutional relationships; where the committed volunteer's knowledge becomes a professional's documented competence. This transition — from heroism to institution, from personal commitment to structural capacity — is the central challenge of sustainable social innovation through sport, and it is more fully achieved in some contexts than in others.

The chapters that follow — on path dependency, representation, and funding — will return to the role of engaged individuals in specific analytical contexts. But the fundamental insight of this chapter is simple: structures do not change themselves. They change because particular people, at particular moments, with particular combinations of competence, commitment, and courage, decide to push against the institutional grain. Understanding who those people are, where they come from, what sustains them, and what threatens them is not peripheral to understanding social innovation in sport. It is central to it.

8 Path Dependency and Change

Why Innovation is Hard: The Weight of Prior Decisions

Social innovation through sport does not happen in an institutional vacuum. Every initiative in the ALLSTARS study emerged within a pre-existing landscape of organisations, policies, funding streams, professional cultures, and political commitments that had been built up over decades and that exerted powerful pressure toward continuity. The sports club model, the sectoral boundaries between sport and health and education, the competitive grant cycles that define most social project funding, the volunteer traditions of European sport — these are not neutral facts of nature. They are the accumulated outcomes of prior decisions, and they create what scholars of institutional analysis call path dependency: the tendency of existing arrangements to persist, because the actors who benefit from them have interests in their continuation, and because the coordination costs of changing to a different arrangement are high even when the new arrangement would be demonstrably better.

Path dependency is not merely inertia. It is an active force. Established actors — sports federations, municipal sports departments, health institutions — have real interests in the arrangements that sustain their position, and they deploy those interests through the political processes that allocate resources and set the rules of the game. New actors who propose different arrangements must not only demonstrate the merits of their proposals; they must also navigate the resistance of those whose position the new arrangements threaten. This is why even excellent ideas, well-implemented and strongly evidenced, so frequently fail to achieve institutional embedding. The problem is rarely the quality of the idea. The problem is the institutional landscape in which the idea must find its footing.

Yet path dependency does not mean stasis. The cases in the ALLSTARS study all achieved institutional change of some kind — and in many cases, change of genuinely significant scale. Understanding how they did so requires an analytical framework that can account for both the persistence of existing arrangements and the moments at which change becomes possible. The most productive framework for this purpose, applied explicitly by the Norwegian and German research teams and implicitly by all five national teams, is John Kingdon's Multiple Streams Framework (MSF).

The Multiple Streams Framework

Kingdon's MSF, originally developed to explain agenda-setting in the US federal government, proposes that the policy process is not a rational, linear sequence from problem identification through analysis to solution, but a more chaotic system in which three independent streams flow simultaneously, loosely coupled, each following its own logic and timetable.

The problem stream consists of the social conditions, statistical evidence, and symbolic events that define what counts as a problem requiring political attention. Problems do not speak for themselves: they are constructed through political argument, media framing, and the strategic activity of advocates who seek to make particular conditions visible as issues worth addressing. In the ALLSTARS context, the problem stream typically encompasses narratives about social exclusion, poor health among marginalised populations, inadequate physical activity among children from low-income households, and the integration challenges facing migrant and refugee communities.

The policy stream consists of the solutions, proposals, and evidence-based approaches that are available for adoption. These circulate in what Kingdon calls the 'policy primeval soup' — a world of think-tank reports, pilot projects, professional networks, and policy entrepreneurs who champion specific solutions. Not every solution gets adopted when a problem is recognised; the solution must be technically feasible, consistent with prevailing values, and positioned within a community of practitioners who can advocate for it. In the ALLSTARS context, the policy stream includes the specific sport-based programmes, methodologies, and organisational models that the cases represent.

The politics stream consists of the political environment — electoral cycles, coalition dynamics, public mood, and the positions of organised interests — that determines which problems receive attention and which solutions find support. This stream operates according to its own logic, independent of the evidence base in the problem or policy streams. A well-evidenced solution to a well-recognised problem can still fail to achieve political support if the political stream is unfavourable — if key decision-makers are focused on other priorities, if powerful interests oppose the solution, or if the political moment simply has not arrived.

The critical insight of the MSF is that change happens not when the problem stream and the policy stream align — which happens frequently — but when all three streams converge simultaneously, opening what Kingdon calls a 'window of opportunity': a moment at which political attention, available solutions, and political will all come together to make change possible. These windows are typically brief, unpredictable, and require a 'policy entrepreneur' — an individual or organisation willing and able to act rapidly and decisively to push their preferred solution through the opening. The ALLSTARS timelines are, in essence, visual records of how windows have opened, who the entrepreneurs were, and what they made possible.

Reading the Timelines: The MSF Visual Grammar

The ALLSTARS research teams developed a distinctive visual format for representing the MSF analysis of each case: a horizontal timeline marked with key events, overlaid with a graphic representation of the three streams. The problem stream appears as a red dashed boundary — the zone within which the social need is recognised and the pressure for action builds. The policy stream is the solid blue horizontal arrow — the line of continuous development and implementation. The policy window is marked by a grey rectangle where the streams converge. Focusing events — the specific moments that crystallised the case for change — are marked with lightning bolt symbols.

This visual grammar, once understood, makes it possible to read the institutional history of each case at a glance: to see when the problem was building, when the solution was ready, when the political moment arrived, and what event or confluence of events opened the window that allowed change to occur. The timelines in this chapter are drawn from the five Norwegian cases and the key German case, all of which have been formally analysed using the MSF. Cases from the Netherlands, Poland, and Spain are analysed through the MSF lens in the text, without the formal timeline visualisation, which was not produced for all cases in the study.

Germany: Recourse to Prior Experience

The German analytical report frames path dependency in a way that foregrounds the constructive dimension: rather than emphasising how existing arrangements constrain innovation, it shows how practitioners have made creative use of prior experience, established networks, and existing cooperation relationships as resources for building something new. 'New beginnings,' the German report observes, 'are less risky' when they can draw on prior practices — when they build on existing target group relationships, transform tested pilot projects into larger formats, or transfer approaches proven in one social space to another. Path dependency, in the German framing, is not only a constraint but a resource.

Sport Vernetzt in Berlin provides the most fully documented example of this constructive use of prior experience. The initiative's origins lie in a series of antecedent practices — ALBA Berlin's school projects in Gropiusstadt from 2005, the establishment of the Quartiersmanagement and the education network in the same district, the city of Berlin's designation of a cross-departmental Community Initiative targeting disadvantaged neighbourhoods. None of these was specifically designed to produce Sport Vernetzt; each was responding to its own institutional logic. But they created a landscape in which the idea of a scaled-up sport-based community programme was not only conceivable but practically achievable, because the institutional relationships, the local knowledge, and the initial trust had already been developed.

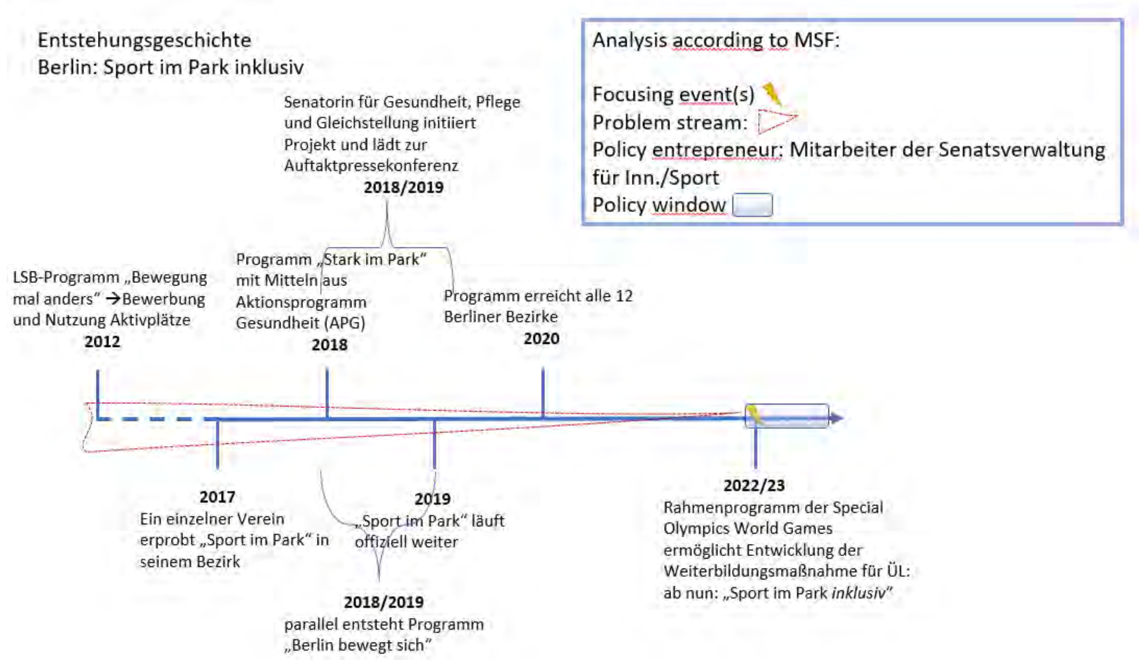
Entstehungsgeschichte
Berlin: Sport im Park inklusiv
Analysis according to MSF:
Focusing event(s)
Problem stream:
Policy entrepreneur: Mitarbeiter der Senatsverwaltung für Inn./Sport
Policy window
Senatorin für Gesundheit, Pflege und Gleichstellung initiiert Projekt und lädt zur Auftaktpressekonferenz
2018/2019
LSB-Programm „Bewegung mal anders" →Bewerbung und Nutzung Aktivplätze
2012
Programm „Stark im Park" mit Mitteln aus Aktionsprogramm Gesundheit (APG)
2018
Programm erreicht alle 12 Berliner Bezirke
2020
2017
Ein einzelner Verein erprobt „Sport im Park" in seinem Bezirk
2019
„Sport im Park" läuft offiziell weiter
2018/2019
parallel entsteht Programm „Berlin bewegt sich"
2022/23
Rahmenprogramm der Special Olympics World Games ermöglicht Entwicklung der Weiterbildungsmaßnahme für ÜL: ab nun: „Sport im Park *inklusiv*"

Figure 8.1: MSF timeline for Sport Vernetzt (ALBA Berlin, Berlin, Germany). The timeline shows the programme's path from the establishment of Quartiersmanagement Gropiusstadt and neighbourhood networks in 2005, through ALBA's accreditation as a youth welfare organisation in 2020, to the two focusing events of 2021/22 — post-pandemic motor deficit data alarming policymakers — and above all New Year's Eve 2022/23, when the escalation of street violence led to a "violence summit" that opened a window for the political and financial expansion of Sport Vernetzt to all sixteen Community Initiative districts. ALBA is identified as the policy entrepreneur; the policy window is the period 2021–2023.

The Sport Vernetzt timeline (Figure 8.1) makes the convergence of streams visually legible. The problem stream had been building for years: post-pandemic data on children's deteriorating motor skills and school performance, compounding pre-existing evidence about physical inactivity and social exclusion in disadvantaged Berlin neighbourhoods. The policy stream was ready: ALBA Berlin's Sport Vernetzt model had been tested and validated in Gropiusstadt and four additional districts. What was needed was a political stream strong enough to unlock the resources for full-scale implementation across all sixteen districts.

That political stream arrived with a focusing event of unusual severity: the riots on New Year's Eve 2022/23, in which emergency services were attacked across Berlin's disadvantaged neighbourhoods, prompting an emergency 'violence summit' in the Senate. The event reframed the problem stream — from a diffuse concern about children's fitness to an acute political crisis about social cohesion, public safety, and the failure of existing institutions to reach young people in the most challenging districts. ALBA, as the policy entrepreneur, moved rapidly to position Sport Vernetzt as part of the political response, securing the funding and mandate for the programme's expansion to all sixteen Community Initiative districts. The window was opened by a violent event; the entrepreneur was ready; the expansion occurred.

The SV Motor Mickten case illustrates a parallel dynamic with a different focusing event. Motor Mickten had years of experience in disability sport and had been developing its inclusive sports capacity in response to health sector demand. The Special Olympics World Games in Berlin in 2023, with Dresden as a host city, created a focusing event that concentrated political attention on disability inclusion in sport, opened access to municipal decision-makers, and unlocked funding for the development of the Inclusion Advisory Board and the inklusionssport-dresden.de platform. The prior experience was the foundation; the Special Olympics was the window.

> *"Das Timing war entscheidend. Wir waren bereit — und dann kam das Ereignis, das die Tür aufgemacht hat."*
>
> Translation: "The timing was decisive. We were ready — and then came the event that opened the door."
>
> Practitioner, SV Motor Mickten / MOVE Project, Dresden, Germany

The Netherlands: Evolution Through Reinterpretation

The Dutch analytical report frames path dependency differently from the German: not as a resource for construction but as the medium through which evolution occurs. Each Dutch initiative, the report argues, builds on existing policy structures and prior practices, but does not merely replicate them. Instead, it reinterprets them in a new social context, giving familiar institutional forms a new social purpose. Path dependency in the Netherlands, the report concludes, 'does not mean stagnation, but evolution through reinterpretation.'

The CityTrainers programme in 's-Hertogenbosch illustrates this reinterpretive logic. The initiative built on the existing infrastructure of S-PORT (the national sports foundation), the Brede Regeling Combinatiefuncties, and the educational networks of 's-Hertogenbosch. But it reinterpreted these structures through the lens of a specific social problem — the decline of youth participation and voluntary commitment — and a specific solution: young people as active organisers of their own community activities rather than passive recipients of programme delivery. The focusing event was not a crisis but a policy opening: the growing national pressure to promote youth participation and ownership, which made CityTrainers a perfect match for available funding streams and political priorities.

The Urban Sports Agenda Rotterdam represents a more radical reinterpretation. Here, the existing path — municipal sports policy focused on organised sports clubs and formal infrastructure — was not built upon but challenged. The focusing event was not a single moment but an accumulation: the municipality's growing recognition, from 2016 onwards, that unorganised participation in urban sports was rising while participation in club sports was declining, and that municipal policy had no framework for addressing the needs of the urban sports community. The policy entrepreneur — S-PORT, working with neighbourhood sports coaches — used this recognition to push for a co-creation process in which urban athletes were involved in redesigning the policy framework itself. The result was not a sport programme but a new policy paradigm.

The YETS programme in Schiedam shows yet another form of path-dependent evolution: a grassroots initiative that grew into institutional recognition by progressively aligning itself with existing policy frameworks — the youth development agenda, the evidence-based intervention register of the Netherlands Youth Institute — while maintaining the relational and community character that made it distinctive. Each stage of alignment opened a new funding window; each window enabled the next stage of professionalisation and expansion. The path was not a departure from the existing institutional landscape but a series of strategic alignments with it.

Norway: MSF in Five Cases

The Norwegian research team applied the MSF most explicitly and systematically of any national team in the ALLSTARS study, producing formal timelines for all five cases. Their analysis reveals both the common features of path-dependent change in the Norwegian sports system and the significant variation between cases in how windows opened, who acted as entrepreneurs, and how durable the resulting changes proved to be.

The Drammen case — Aktive Lokalsamfunn — provides the clearest example of a window opened by a political decision. The 2014 city council resolution mandating one hour of physical activity per day in schools was itself the focusing event: it created the problem stream (how to implement this at scale), opened a political window (funding and political attention were available), and activated the policy entrepreneurs (the Sports Council and the Sports Circle, who convened the first 'In the Same Boat' seminar within weeks of the decision).

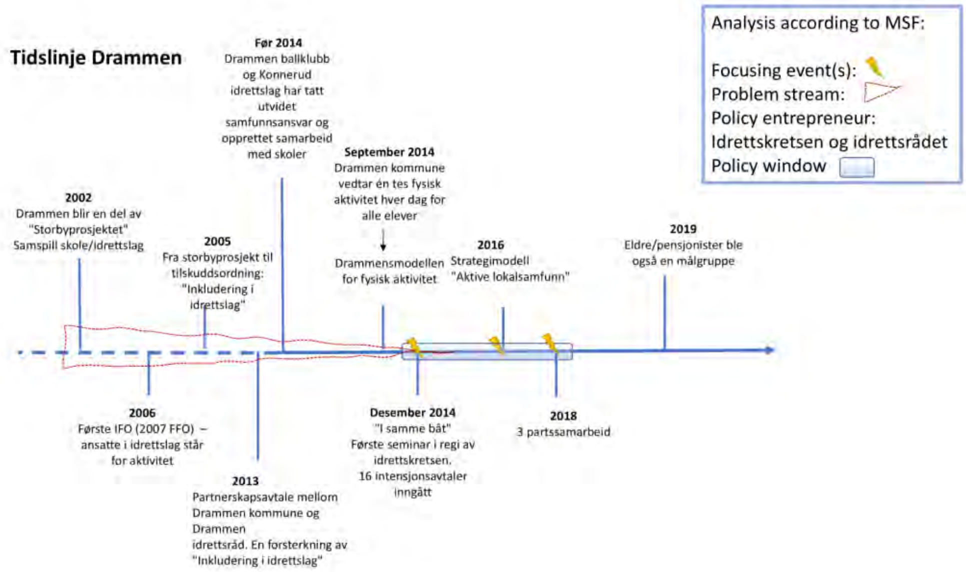
Tidslinje Drammen
Før 2014
Drammen ballklubb og Konnerud idrettslag har tatt utvidet samfunnsansvar og opprettet samarbeid med skoler
September 2014
Drammen kommune vedtar én tes fysisk aktivitet hver dag for alle elever
Drammensmodellen for fysisk aktivitet
2002
Drammen blir en del av "Storbyprosjektet" Samspill skole/idrettslag
2005
Fra storbyprosjekt til tilskuddsordning: "Inkludering i idrettslag"
2016
Strategimodell "Aktive lokalsamfunn"
2019
Eldre/pensjonister ble også en målgruppe
2006
Første IFO (2007 FFO) – ansatte i idrettslag står for aktivitet
2013
Partnerskapsavtale mellom Drammen kommune og Drammen idrettsråd. En forsterkning av "Inkludering i idrettslag"
Desember 2014
"I samme båt"
Første seminar i regi av idrettskretsen.
16 intensjonsavtaler inngått
2018
3 partssamarbeid
Analysis according to MSF:
Focusing event(s):
Problem stream:
Policy entrepreneur:
Idrettskretsen og idrettsrådet
Policy window

Figure 8.2: MSF timeline for Aktive Lokalsamfunn (Active Local Communities, Drammen, Norway). The timeline shows the 2002 origins in the national inclusion-in-sport project, the critical 2014 city council decision on physical activity in schools as the primary focusing event opening the policy window, the three-party collaboration model formalised in 2018, and the progressive expansion to include senior activities from 2019. The Sports Council (Idrettsrådet) and the Sports Circle (Idrettskrets) are identified as co-policy-entrepreneurs. Multiple lightning bolt symbols indicate the layered nature of the case's development — a series of reinforcing windows rather than a single decisive moment.

The Drammen timeline (Figure 8.2) shows something distinctive among the ALLSTARS cases: a window that did not close after the initial policy decision but was progressively reinforced through a series of subsequent decisions and events. The 2014 city council resolution was the first window; the development of the shared strategy model in 2016 consolidated it; the three-party collaboration agreement in 2018 institutionalised it; the expansion to senior citizens in 2019 widened it further. This layered, cumulative pattern of window-opening — each decision building on and reinforcing the previous ones — produces a qualitatively more durable form of institutional change than the single, dramatic opening that characterises other cases. It is also, as the Norwegian report notes, a pattern that is only possible in contexts where the political and institutional environment remains consistently supportive across a decade or more.

The Oslo Idrettshoder case shows a more compressed version of the same logic, with the 2019 city council declaration on cooperation between schools and voluntary organisations creating the political background, and a specific individual — an employee of SoCentral who was also a hockey parent at Grüner Ishockey — acting as the decisive policy entrepreneur by connecting the city council's intent with the specific resources and relationships of the Grünerløkka community.

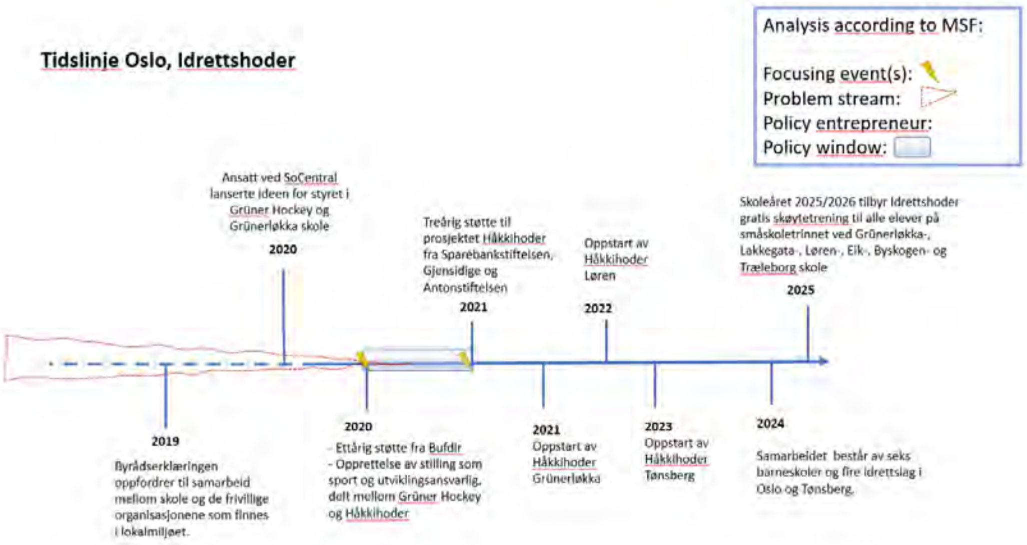
Tidslinje Oslo, Idrettshoder
Analysis according to MSF:
Focusing event(s):
Problem stream:
Policy entrepreneur:
Policy window:
Ansatt ved SoCentral lanserte ideen for styret i Grüner Hockey og Grünerløkka skole
2020
Treårig støtte til prosjektet Håkkihoder fra Sparebankstiftelsen, Gjensidige og Antonstiftelsen
2021
Oppstart av Håkkihoder Løren
2022
Skoleåret 2025/2026 tilbyr Idrettshoder gratis skøytetrening til alle elever på småskoletrinnet ved Grünerløkka-, Lakkegata-, Løren-, Eik-, Byskogen- og Træleborg skole
2025
2019
Byrådserklæringen oppfordrer til samarbeid mellom skole og de frivillige organisasjonene som finnes i lokalmiljøet.
2020
- Ettårig støtte fra Bufdir
- Opprettelse av stilling som sport og utviklingsansvarlig, delt mellom Grüner Hockey og Håkkihoder
2021
Oppstart av Håkkihoder Grünerløkka
2023
Oppstart av Håkkihoder Tønsberg
2024
Samarbeidet består av seks barneskoler og fire idrettslag i Oslo og Tønsberg.

Figure 8.3: MSF timeline for Idrettshoder (Oslo, Norway). The 2019 city council declaration on cooperation between schools and voluntary sports organisations provides the political background. The key focusing event is 2020, when a SoCentral employee who was also a hockey parent at Grüner Ishockey launched the idea for Håkkihoder, securing Bufdir funding the same year and creating a shared professional position between SoCentral and the club. The programme expanded to Løren in 2022, Tønsberg in 2023, and by 2025 offers free ice hockey to all primary school pupils at six Oslo schools — an expansion trajectory that continued to draw on successive funding windows.

The Bergen LIM case illustrates a particularly instructive variant: a window opened not by a political decision or a dramatic focusing event but by the prior existence of a trust relationship between two individuals from different sectors who recognised each other as natural allies.

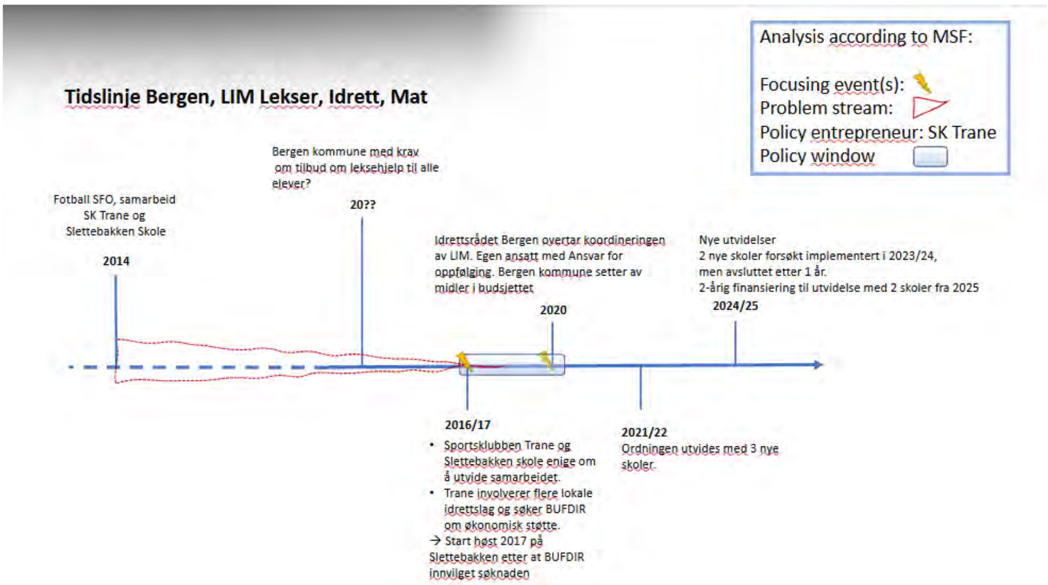
Tidslinje Bergen, LIM Lekser, Idrett, Mat
Analysis according to MSF:
Focusing event(s):
Problem stream:
Policy entrepreneur: SK Trane
Policy window
Fotball SFO, samarbeid SK Trane og Slettebakken Skole
2014
Bergen kommune med krav om tilbud om leksehjelp til alle elever?
20??
Idrettsrådet Bergen overtar koordineringen av LIM. Egen ansatt med Ansvar for oppfølging. Bergen kommune setter av midler i budsjettet
2020
Nye utvidelser
2 nye skoler forsøkt implementert i 2023/24, men avsluttet etter 1 år.
2-årig finansiering til utvidelse med 2 skoler fra 2025
2024/25
2016/17
• Sportsklubben Trane og Slettebakken skole enige om å utvide samarbeidet.
• Trane involverer flere lokale idrettslag og søker BUFDIR om økonomisk støtte.
→ Start høst 2017 på Slettebakken etter at BUFDIR innvilget søknaden
2021/22
Ordningen utvides med 3 nye skoler.

Figure 8.4: MSF timeline for LIM Lekser–Idrett–Mat (Bergen, Norway). The timeline shows the prior collaboration between Sportsklubben Trane and Slettebakken School through football SFO (free time scheme) from 2014 as the critical path-dependent precondition. The focusing event is a question from Bergen municipality about homework support for all pupils, which converged with Trane's desire to expand the collaboration. The policy window opened in 2016/17, when Trane and the school agreed to expand and successfully applied to Bufdir for funding. Bergen Sports Council took over coordination in 2020, municipalising the programme and marking its transition from a grassroots initiative to a structural part of city sports policy.

The LIM timeline (Figure 8.4) shows how path dependency operates at its most subtle: the decisive precondition for the programme's success was not a policy decision or a funding opening but the mutual trust accumulated through four years of prior football cooperation between Sportsklubben Trane and Slettebakken School. When the municipality's question about homework support created a policy opening, Trane was positioned to respond quickly because the relationship already existed. The window was real, but only a specific actor — one with the right prior relationship — could use it. This is the logic of path dependence as a resource: you can only take advantage of an opportunity if you have already built what the opportunity requires.

The Kristiansund case (ESAG / Ett Slag av Gangen) shows the opposite face of this dynamic: what happens when a national model arrives in a local context without a prior collaborative relationship to build on.

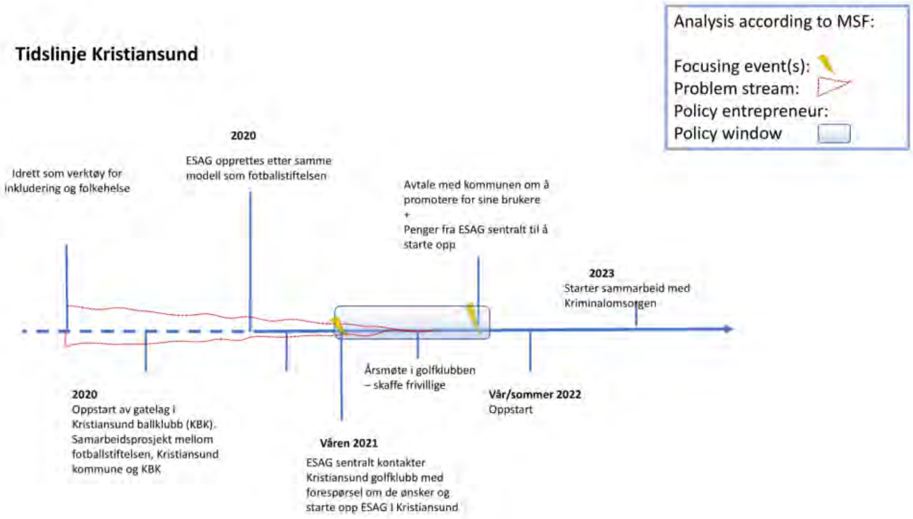
Tidslinje Kristiansund
Analysis according to MSF:
Focusing event(s):
Problem stream:
Policy entrepreneur:
Policy window
Idrett som verktøy for inkludering og folkehelse
2020
ESAG opprettes etter samme modell som fotballstiftelsen
Avtale med kommunen om å promotere for sine brukere
+
Penger fra ESAG sentralt til å starte opp
2023
Starter sammarbeid med Kriminalomsorgen
2020
Oppstart av gatelag i Kristiansund ballklubb (KBK). Samarbeidsprosjekt mellom fotballstiftelsen, Kristiansund kommune og KBK
Årsmøte i golfklubben – skaffe frivillige
Vår/sommer 2022
Oppstart
Våren 2021
ESAG sentralt kontakter Kristiansund golfklubb med forespørsel om de ønsker og starte opp ESAG i Kristiansund

Figure 8.5: MSF timeline for ESAG Kristiansund (Ett Slag av Gangen, Kristiansund, Norway). The political background is the national reframing of sport as a tool for inclusion and public health. The key focusing event is 2020, when the national ESAG organisation was established, followed by their 2021 outreach to Kristiansund Golf Club. The policy window opened when the golf club successfully negotiated a cooperation agreement with the municipality's substance abuse and psychiatry department in spring/summer 2022. The 2023 expansion to include the Norwegian Correctional Service represents a second, more modest window. The absence of prior collaboration between the golf club and the municipality — visible in the timeline's relatively compressed timeframe — reflects the specific character of this case: a nationally modelled initiative grafted onto local structures that had no prior relationship.

The Kristiansund timeline (Figure 8.5) is notable for its relative simplicity compared to the Drammen and Bergen cases: a short timeline, a single founding window, limited subsequent development. This simplicity is analytically significant. It reflects the absence of the prior collaborative relationships and accumulated local trust that enabled the more ambitious transformations in Drammen, Bergen, and Oslo. The national ESAG model provided a ready-made policy solution; the golf club provided a venue and voluntary labour; the municipality provided referrals. But without deeper institutional embedding — without the accumulated layers of prior cooperation that created path dependency as a resource — the programme has remained modest in scale and vulnerable in structure.

Poland: Windows Opened and Closed

The Polish cases provide the ALLSTARS study's most diverse set of illustrations of how windows of opportunity open, are used, and sometimes close again. The Polish analytical team applied the MSF explicitly to all six cases, and their analysis reveals a distinctive pattern: while the problem stream in Poland is relatively coherent — low physical activity, health disparities, marginalisation of migrants and people with disabilities, the isolation of sport as a sectoral silo — the politics stream is more volatile and less predictable than in the Norwegian, Dutch, or German contexts, making the management of windows a more acute challenge.

Trener Osiedlowy in Głogów illustrates a clean window: a municipal open call for free sport activities created the conditions under which an existing grassroots initiative could be formalised and expanded. The club drew on its prior experience working with children, the municipality provided the mandate and the budget, and the window opened smoothly. The challenge, as the Polish report notes, is that this window is reopened — or not — with each annual budget cycle: 'path dependency operated through the availability of public infrastructure and the city's role as the club's owner, meaning that the project develops in line with municipal budgets and political priorities.' Financial fluctuations require continuous programme adaptation, and the window could close at any point if political priorities shifted.

Ekstra FAN in Gdańsk illustrates the fragility of windows with exceptional clarity. The programme's genesis came from a precise convergence: a CSR search by the Energa Gdańsk stadium operator, an imported evidence-based methodology (the Scottish FFIT model brought through the Healthy Stadia network), and a municipal public health strategy that created an institutional home for the resulting intervention. The three streams converged perfectly, the window opened, and the programme operated with high quality and demonstrable impact. Then the window closed — not through any failure of the programme itself but through a reorganisation of the health unit that was its institutional anchor, combined with the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic. The problem stream had not changed; the policy stream was stronger than ever; but the politics stream shifted, and the programme did not survive.

Etnoliga in Warsaw demonstrates a different dynamic: a window that operated asymmetrically. The Foundation for Freedom had been building Etnoliga slowly for almost two decades when the 2022 Ukrainian refugee crisis created a sudden, dramatic intensification of all three streams simultaneously. The problem stream became urgent and politically visible; international organisations (UNHCR, UEFA Foundation) provided resources and legitimacy that strengthened the policy stream; the political will to address refugee integration created a moment of unusual political openness. Etnoliga expanded rapidly in 2022 and 2023, reaching new communities and accessing new funding streams. But the window's rapid opening was followed by a gradual closing: as emergency attention to the refugee crisis receded, some partners reduced their engagement, and the programme faced the challenge of consolidating the expansion without the exceptional resources the crisis had made available.

Let's Play Together in Wrocław shows how prior investment in organisational capacity — methodology, partner relationships, training systems — creates the ability to capitalise on a window before it closes. V4Sport was able to respond within weeks to the expanded demand created by the Ukrainian refugee crisis because it had already built the infrastructure — the trained coaches, the established school relationships, the cross-border networks — that the response required. Path dependency here was entirely constructive: the prior investment in organisational capacity was the resource that made the window usable.

Kavkaz Club in Warsaw represents the most difficult case in the Polish portfolio: a window that has, in the Polish report's assessment, 'largely remained closed.' The Caucasian diaspora community for whom the club exists is not recognised as a priority population in Polish municipal or national sport policy; there are no specific policy streams targeting this group; the politics stream offers no particular opening. The club persists through private sponsorship and the personal commitment of its leader. It demonstrates what the MSF implies: that windows are not distributed equally across communities, and that those whose needs are least visible in the political system are precisely those for whom windows are least likely to open.

Spain: Three Conditions Must Converge

The Spanish analytical report frames path dependency through a slightly different lens: rather than emphasising the contingency of windows, it emphasises the structural conditions that determine whether particular social problems can find political recognition at all. The report identifies three conditions that must converge for an inclusive sport initiative to achieve institutional support: the problem must be recognised as such by relevant actors; the proposed solution must be perceived as appropriate; and the local political and social configuration must be adequate to provide support. The absence of any one condition is sufficient to prevent progress, regardless of how well the initiative is designed or how strong the evidence for it is.

The Samarucs case in Valencia — specifically its programme for trans children — illustrates the impact of the first condition's absence with particular force. Trans children's exclusion from sport is not currently recognised as a priority problem at the national or local level in Spain, and it is not part of the agenda of political programmes or social projects supported by the private sector. Samarucs was able to develop the programme within its own institutional structure because it already existed and had the internal resources to support it. But the Spanish report is explicit: it is very difficult to imagine that this programme could have been developed and implemented by a social entrepreneur starting from scratch, without Samarucs's existing presence and resources. The window does not exist at the policy level; it only exists within the protected space of an already-established, mission-driven organisation.

KOZ in the Basque Country illustrates the opposite: a case in which all three conditions converged so fully that the programme achieved a scale — thirty-three services across twenty-three municipalities — that few other cases in the ALLSTARS study approach. The Basque Government's health plan provided a problem stream (physical inactivity as a social determinant of health); the KOZ methodology, developed with the Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa and the Sports Directorate, provided a policy stream; and the political will of Basque regional government to invest in integrated sport-health services provided the politics stream. The policy entrepreneur was CAPPA, the Sport Orientation Service, which translated the convergence into institutional reality. The window has remained open, though the report notes the fragility created by the subrogation model for frontline practitioners.

The LEKE initiative in the Basque Country presents a further complexity: a case where the second condition — perception of the solution as appropriate — has come under legal challenge. LEKE is a direct consequence of Basque educational sports policy that limits early specialisation and mandates multi-sport practice. Although the general principles of the policy are broadly shared, specific implementation decisions have been taken to court by families who disagree with the obligation of multi-sport practice. This legal challenge does not invalidate the initiative, but it illustrates that even when windows are open and solutions are implemented, the perception of those solutions as appropriate can be actively contested — and that contestation is itself part of the ongoing politics stream that shapes what remains possible.

Comparative Analysis: What the Timelines Reveal

Reading the ALLSTARS timelines comparatively across all five national contexts, several patterns emerge that are not visible from any single case.

First, the most durable institutional changes are associated not with a single, dramatic window but with a series of reinforcing windows, each building on the changes secured by the previous one. Drammen's layered model — 2014 decision, 2016 strategy, 2018 tripartite agreement, 2019 senior expansion — is more institutionally robust than any single-window case because each decision created a new set of stakeholders with interests in the continuation of the arrangement. The Dutch cases show a similar pattern: each policy realignment created new institutional linkages that made the next realignment easier.

Second, the role of prior collaboration as a precondition for using windows effectively is visible across all five national contexts. In Bergen, Drammen, Sport Vernetzt, and LIM, the decisive resources were relationships built before the window opened. Organisations that had invested in cross-sectoral trust, community presence, and methodological development were systematically better positioned to exploit openings than those that had not. This is the constructive face of path dependency: not the constraint of existing arrangements but the asset of accumulated social capital.

Third, the politics stream is the most volatile and least predictable of the three, and its volatility is a primary source of the fragility observed in many cases. Changes in political leadership, budget cycles, shifting policy priorities, and unexpected events — the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ukrainian refugee crisis, violent incidents in urban neighbourhoods — can open windows that practitioners had no reason to anticipate, or close windows that seemed secure. The implication for policy design is that initiatives should not depend on any single political commitment but should seek to build their institutional base across multiple streams and multiple levels of governance, so that volatility in one stream does not destroy what has been achieved across the others.

Fourth — and most sobering — windows are not neutral. They open more readily for some populations and some issues than for others. The Kavkaz case in Poland and the Samarucs trans programme in Spain illustrate that communities whose challenges are politically invisible, culturally unfamiliar to policymakers, or associated with contested political identities face structural disadvantage in the competition for institutional recognition. Inclusive sport policy that relies entirely on windows of opportunity will systematically underserve the communities that most need it, because those communities are least likely to have their problems recognised, their solutions adopted, and their interests served by the political stream.

Conclusion: Preparing for Contingency

Path dependency and change are not opposites. They are the two faces of the same institutional reality: existing arrangements both constrain and enable; prior investments both limit and resource; established relationships both reproduce the past and provide the foundation for building something new. The ALLSTARS cases demonstrate, across thirty-two instances in five countries, that transformative practice in sport-based social inclusion is always path-dependent — always shaped by what came before — and that the most effective practitioners are those who understand and use that shaping rather than ignoring or resenting it.

The Multiple Streams Framework provides a powerful lens for understanding how change happens: not as a rational response to evidence but as a contingent convergence of streams that practitioners can influence but cannot control. The practical implication is clear. Organisations that seek to achieve institutional change through sport cannot simply develop excellent programmes and wait for recognition. They must simultaneously cultivate the problem stream — building and communicating the evidence base for their work; develop the policy stream — creating methodologically sound, transferable, and evidenced approaches;

and engage the politics stream — building relationships with political actors, finding allies across institutional boundaries, and positioning themselves to act rapidly when windows open. Above all, they must invest in the prior conditions that allow windows to be used when they appear: the cross-sectoral relationships, the accumulated local trust, the organisational capacity, and the methodological readiness that transform a political opening from an abstract opportunity into a concrete institutional change. As the evidence from all five national contexts consistently shows, it is those who were already building when the window opened who achieve the most durable results.

9 Representation and Co-Ownership

The Participatory Deficit in Sport-Based Social Inclusion

There is a tension at the heart of sport-based social inclusion that the preceding chapters have largely bracketed but that this chapter confronts directly. The initiatives studied in the ALLSTARS project are designed, in one way or another, to serve marginalised populations — children from low-income households, people with disabilities, migrants and refugees, people with mental health or substance abuse challenges, members of LGBTQI+ communities, and others who have been systematically excluded from the mainstream sports system. Yet in the vast majority of cases, these populations do not design the initiatives that serve them. They do not lead the organisations through which those initiatives are delivered. They are not, in the conventional governance sense, in charge of the programmes that affect their lives.

This is not a peculiarity of the ALLSTARS cases. It reflects a pervasive pattern in social policy generally: the people most affected by a policy challenge are typically the least present in the processes that define, fund, and govern the response to it. Power asymmetries, resource differentials, cultural barriers, and the structural disadvantages that make a population marginalised in the first place also make it difficult for that population to participate meaningfully in the institutional processes that claim to address its needs. Social sport initiatives are no exception. They are typically designed by professionals from the health, sport, education, and welfare sectors — well-intentioned, often knowledgeable, sometimes from the communities they serve, but operating within institutional frameworks that were not built for or by marginalised groups.

The question this chapter addresses is whether the ALLSTARS cases move beyond this baseline — and if so, how far, through what mechanisms, and with what consequences for the quality, legitimacy, and sustainability of their practice. The analytical framework distinguishes between two forms of participatory involvement. Representation refers to the presence of the target group's interests in decision-making processes, whether through direct participation or through advocacy by organisations that speak on the group's behalf. Co-ownership refers to the deeper form: the active design, governance, and leadership of the initiative by the people it serves. Both matter, but they are not equivalent, and the distance between them is where most of the interesting analytical work lies.

A Spectrum from Consultation to Co-Creation

The German analytical report develops a useful taxonomy of participatory forms that, at its most basic level, can be thought of as a spectrum from consultation to co-creation. At the low end of this spectrum is the baseline form of participation that the German report identifies in all seven German cases: various forms of questioning and surveying interests and motives, so that the results can be fed into a decision-making process that remains otherwise paternalistic.

This is representation in its most minimal sense: the target group's expressed preferences are noted and may influence programme design, but decision-making authority stays with the professionals and institutions that run the programme.

Moving up the spectrum, the next form is representation in the network: the target group's interests are not merely surveyed but actively represented within the governance structure by organisations with close community ties. In the Dresden Motor Mickten case, Lebenshilfe acts as a network actor that channels and amplifies the interests of people with disabilities — a form of advocacy-based representation that is more substantial than consultation but still mediated through a professional organisation rather than exercised by the target group itself. The Inclusion Advisory Board (Inklusionsbeirat) represents a more direct form of target group presence: a formal body in which people with disabilities and their advocates have a seat at the governance table. The German analytical report identifies this as a relatively advanced form of representation in the German context, where direct target group governance remains rare.

Higher still on the spectrum is what the Spanish cases call the exemplary model — the case of Dragones de Lavapiés and Samarucs, where the target group did not join the initiative's governance after the fact but formed an essential part of it from the origin. In both organisations, decisions are made horizontally and communally. The governance structure is not designed to accommodate the community's interests; it is constituted by the community itself. Co-ownership here is not a policy aspiration but an organisational reality. This is the form that the Spanish analytical report identifies as the strongest expression of the dimension — and the rarest, even within the Spanish cases, and certainly in the wider ALLSTARS study.

Germany: Advocacy and the Advisory Board

The German cases demonstrate the full range of participatory forms but concentrate at the lower and middle end of the spectrum. Pure consultation — surveying interests and feeding them into a professionally dominated design process — is universal. More structured representation is present in some cases but not all, and it is typically mediated through professional or civil society organisations rather than exercised by target groups directly.

The most advanced example of representation in the German portfolio is the Inklusionsbeirat established within the Motor Mickten inclusive sports network in Dresden. This advisory board brings together representatives of disability organisations, people with disabilities themselves, sports administrators, and municipal officials in a regular forum that has genuine — if advisory — influence on the development of the city's inclusive sports provision. It represents an institutionalised form of representation that is unusual in the German sports context, where target group governance of this kind is not the norm.

The deaf sports club's active participation in Sport im Park inklusiv represents a different form: not advocacy by a professional organisation on behalf of a target group, but direct participation by the target group itself in the network that governs the programme. The deaf sports club both advocates for deaf participants' interests and delivers its own programme within the Sport im Park framework — a combination of representation and co-ownership that is among the most developed examples in the German cases.

ReWiS in Oldenburg offers an intriguing case at the participation frontier. The programme has, in some instances, supported participants to a point where they can lead sports activities themselves and take on roles within the hosting sports club. A separate club supported by the target group has been established, providing a form of institutional co-ownership that goes beyond anything else in the German portfolio. This capacity-building approach — using the sports programme as a vehicle for developing the organisational capacities of participants — is one of the most genuine expressions of co-ownership in the entire ALLSTARS study, precisely because it does not merely include the target group in an existing institutional structure but helps create a new institutional structure that the target group controls.

> *"Wir haben Teilnehmende, die inzwischen selber Sportangebote leiten. Das war nie geplant — das ist einfach passiert, weil wir gemerkt haben, dass da Potenzial da ist."*
>
> Translation: "We have participants who now lead sport activities themselves. That was never planned — it just happened, because we noticed the potential was there."
>
> Researcher/practitioner, ReWiS, Oldenburg, Germany

The Netherlands: From Policy for to Policy with

The Dutch cases occupy a distinctive position in the ALLSTARS study's representation spectrum. The most striking example — the Urban Sports Agenda Rotterdam — represents what the Dutch analytical report calls a shift 'from representation, where the target group is mainly listened to, to co-ownership, where policy and practice work together in the policy process.' Rotterdam did not merely consult the urban sports community before writing its Urban Sports Agenda; it co-created the Agenda with them, through a structured eighteen-month process involving co-creation sessions, advisory groups, and design pilots.

This distinction — between policy for and policy with — is fundamental. Policy for a community is designed by professionals who believe they know what the community needs; it may be well-evidenced, carefully designed, and genuinely beneficial, but it reflects the knowledge, values, and priorities of those who made it. Policy with a community involves the community as an active partner in defining the problem, designing the solution, and monitoring the results. It is slower, messier, and more demanding than policy for — it requires genuine openness to having one's assumptions challenged, genuine willingness to share power, and genuine capacity to work across cultural and institutional divides. But its outcomes are more legitimate, more responsive, and more likely to be sustained, because the community owns them.

> *"Niet alleen van meedenken, maar ook meebeslissen — en wat er dan in die agenda komt, heel belangrijk is dat we die samenwerking ook blijven behouden."*
>
> Not only thinking together, but also deciding together — and what goes into the agenda. What is very important is that we continue to maintain that collaboration.

The CityTrainers and YETS programmes demonstrate co-ownership at the programme level rather than the policy level. Young people in Den Bosch develop their own projects within their neighbourhood through Citytrainers, learning to take responsibility for planning, safety, and communication. In Schiedam, YETS participants are structurally involved in setting team goals, house rules, and social activities. Coaches encourage reflection: young people themselves discuss how they want to contribute to their neighbourhood or school. These are not token consultations; they are genuine exercises in the practical skills of democratic participation, embedded in the everyday experience of the programme.

Sporttuin Duindorp in The Hague exemplifies community co-ownership of physical infrastructure: a former school playground transformed into a multifunctional sports venue that literally belongs to the neighbourhood. It was created out of local needs and designed by local people. Parents, volunteers, and local residents contribute not only to the governance but to the daily implementation and organisation. The Sporttuin's co-ownership is material — it is about who controls a piece of physical and social infrastructure in the neighbourhood — as well as formal.

Norway: Pathways from Participation to Responsibility

The Norwegian cases present an interesting paradox: the analytical report is frank about the relative weakness of formal co-ownership structures — 'we cannot see that the participant groups have been involved in the development and implementation of the five selected cases' — while simultaneously documenting some of the most instructive examples of informal, practice-based pathways from participation to responsibility.

In Aktive Lokalsamfunn in Drammen, secondary school students can take an elective course in which they are trained to lead physical activities for younger children. This is a deliberate pathway: participants become coaches, users become producers, recipients become contributors. Pensioners — part of the target group of the senior components of the programme — act as supervisors for the 'Open Hall' concept, taking on responsibility for the physical space and the community it hosts. These roles are not incidental; they are built into the programme's design as expressions of the conviction that inclusion is not merely about access to activities but about the opportunity to contribute, to take responsibility, and to occupy positions of value within the community.

The Oslo Idrettshoder network illustrates a particular model of representation that is characteristic of the Norwegian approach: rather than attempting to include target group members directly in the governance of the programme, the model positions a social enterprise with explicit community development goals — SoCentral — at the coordinating centre. SoCentral's role is precisely to ensure that the community voice of the children and families the programme serves is not drowned out by the institutional voices of the sports club, the schools, and the public funders. This is indirect representation, but it is more than mere advocacy: SoCentral's position at the network's centre gives it genuine structural power to shape the programme's direction.

The Bergen LIM and Drammen Aktive Lokalsamfunn cases demonstrate that the Norwegian approach to representation is strongest when it is embedded in the programme's operational structure rather than in its formal governance. The annual evaluations that LIM conducts with participating children give them a genuine, if bounded, voice in the programme's development. The development of activities 'at the grassroots level between local actors' in Drammen's districts creates a form of distributed co-ownership in which local communities shape the specific character of the programme in their neighbourhood, even if they are not formally represented at the level of the Sports Council.

Poland: A Spectrum of Co-Ownership Models

The Polish cases present the widest range of co-ownership models in the ALLSTARS study, from the highly developed participatory mechanisms of Etnoliga to the limited, service-reception model of Trener Osiedlowy. This range reflects both the diversity of target groups and the diversity of organisational forms among the cases, and it illuminates the conditions under which different models of co-ownership become possible.

Etnoliga in Warsaw represents the most fully developed co-ownership model in the entire ALLSTARS study. From its inception, the initiative was co-created by the migrant and refugee communities it serves. Team captains act as mediators between participants and the organisation — managing teams, supporting new players, and engaging in mentoring and volunteering activities. A 'league parliament' provides a formal mechanism through which participant representatives can shape the rules, schedule, and priorities of the league. These captains organise matches, resolve disputes, and represent their communities within the governance structure. Participants do not merely receive a programme; over time, they become the programme's co-authors.

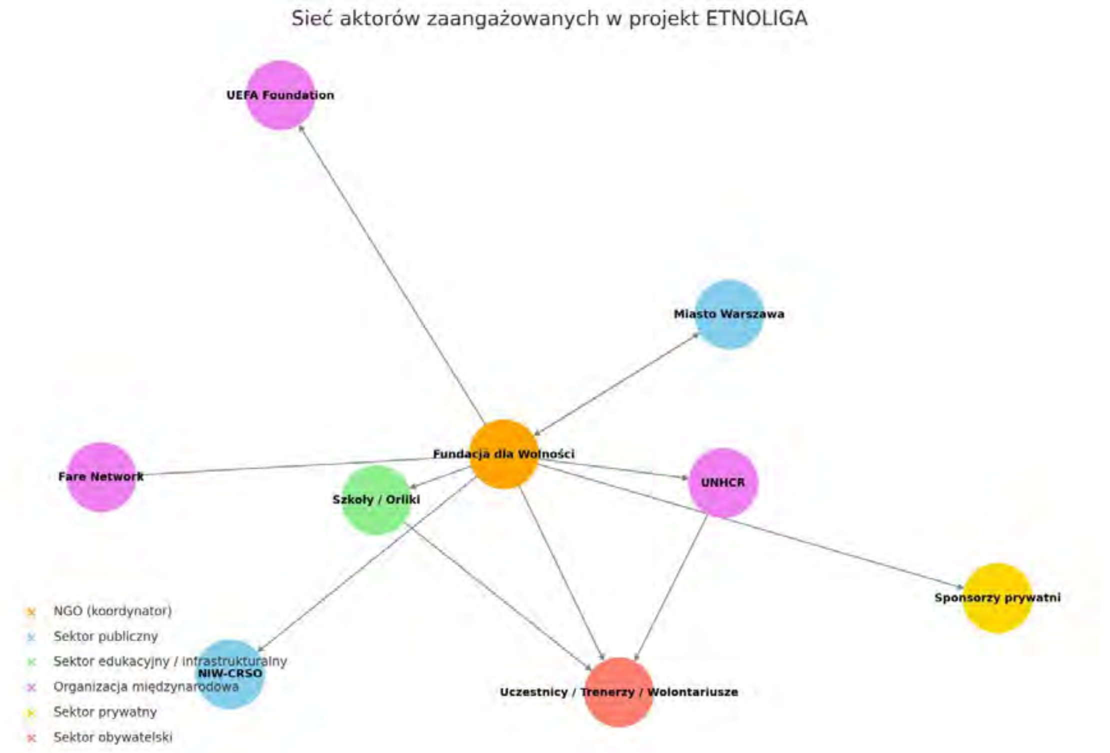
Sieć aktorów zaangażowanych w projekt ETNOLIGA
UEFA Foundation
Miasto Warszawa
Fundacja dla Wolności
Fare Network
Szkoły / Orliki
UNHCR
Sponsorzy prywatni
NIW-CRSO
Uczestnicy / Trenerzy / Wolontariusze
NGO (koordynator)
Sektor publiczny
Sektor edukacyjny / infrastrukturalny
Organizacja międzynarodowa
Sektor prywatny
Sektor obywatelski

Figure 9.1: Network of actors in the Etnoliga project (Warsaw, Poland). The central orange node is the Fundacja dla Wolności (Foundation for Freedom), the coordinating NGO. Crucially, one of the main nodes — bottom centre — is "Uczestnicy / Trenerzy / Wolontariusze" (Participants / Coaches / Volunteers): a single node that encompasses the target group, the practitioners who deliver the programme, and the voluntary contributors. This structural choice reflects Etnoliga's co-ownership philosophy: participants, coaches, and volunteers are not separated into different institutional categories but treated as a single, interconnected community of actors. International partners (UEFA Foundation, FARE Network, UNHCR) sit alongside local infrastructure (schools/Orlik pitches, private sponsors) and public bodies (City of Warsaw, NIW-CRSO).

The Etnoliga network (Figure 9.1) reveals co-ownership in structural form. The node labelled 'Participants / Coaches / Volunteers' is a single unit in the network — a deliberate choice that reflects the programme's philosophy: those who participate and those who deliver are not neatly separated categories but a single community with overlapping roles and shared ownership. Many of Etnoliga's most committed coaches and volunteers began as participants; the pathways between receiving and contributing are cultivated rather than blocked. The international dimension of the network — UEFA Foundation, FARE Network, UNHCR — shows how this community co-ownership connects to, and is legitimated by, global frameworks for inclusive sport.

The contrast with Trener Osiedlowy in Głogów is instructive. Here, participants' influence on decision-making is indirect, exercised primarily through schools and the municipality that define the scope and structure of activities. The programme is a public service delivered within a defined municipal governance system: children and their families are beneficiaries rather than co-creators. This is not a failure of good intentions; it is the logical expression of a model in which sport is a tool of public service delivery, and the accountability runs upward to the funding body rather than outward to the community being served.

Let's Play Together in Wrocław occupies a middle position that is revealing precisely because of its developmental character. Co-ownership here exists primarily at the implementation level: teachers and facilitators working in Polish-Ukrainian tandems adapt activity scenarios to local conditions, modifying them according to the needs of their schools and pupils. These practitioners are, in a meaningful sense, co-creators of what the programme is in each specific context, even if the methodological framework is provided centrally. In Radomiak Futbol Plus, parental involvement — parents co-designing training logistics, supporting coaches during sessions, participating in organising events — creates what the Polish analytical report calls 'family-based co-ownership': a form of shared responsibility that is not formalised in governance structures but is real in practice.

Spain: Constitutional Co-Ownership

The Spanish cases offer the sharpest illustrations of what the Spanish analytical report calls constitutional co-ownership: the integration of target group ownership not as a subsequent addition to an existing institutional structure but as the founding principle of the organisation itself. Dragones de Lavapiés and Samarucs are the clearest examples — organisations whose governance is horizontally structured, whose decisions are made communally, and for whose communities the club is not merely a place to go but an extension of collective identity.

Dragones de Lavapiés was founded by a parent in the Lavapiés neighbourhood of Madrid who was dissatisfied with the competitive and exclusionary culture of mainstream youth football. What began as an attempt to create a football team for his son and the son's neighbourhood friends — rooted in the multicultural, socially mixed character of Lavapiés — has become, over more than a decade, an organisation that is genuinely constituted by and for its community. The governance structure reflects this: a board of directors that makes strategic decisions, a sports coordinator who manages the day-to-day activities, and a pervasive culture of shared responsibility in which all coaches and active members understand themselves as co-owners of the project and its mission.

> *"Este es un proyecto de barrio, de comunidad. Nadie manda aquí más que la comunidad."*
>
> Translation: "This is a neighbourhood project, a community project. Nobody holds authority here except the community."
>
> Founder, Dragones de Lavapiés, Madrid, Spain

Samarucs, the inclusive club in Valencia for the LGBTQI+ community, represents co-ownership in a different but equally profound sense. The organisation was founded by and for a community that is systematically excluded from and made unsafe by the mainstream sports environment. Its members do not merely participate in activities; they use the club's governance, competitive participation, and social visibility to advance a broader political project: the normalisation of LGBTQI+ identity in sport and society. Co-ownership here is not just organisational but political — it is about a community taking control of a space that has historically excluded them and using it to assert their right to belong.

The Spanish analytical report draws an important distinction between these examples of constitutional co-ownership and cases in the Spanish portfolio where the social mission is genuine but the governance remains professional-led. Hegalak in San Sebastián — a public-policy-driven initiative — achieved meaningful community representation through the Gipuzkoa Adapted Sport Federation's mediation of disabled people's interests in the centre's design and orientation. KOZ and LEKE are designed to serve communities but governed primarily by public authorities and professional bodies. These are not failures; they are expressions of a different institutional logic, one in which the accountability of public investment runs through democratic political structures rather than through direct community governance. Both forms have their place; what matters is that the form chosen is appropriate to the community being served and honest about the nature of the representation it claims to offer.

What Prevents Deeper Co-Ownership?

If co-ownership strengthens legitimacy, improves programme responsiveness, and increases sustainability — as the evidence consistently suggests — why is it not more prevalent across the ALLSTARS cases? The analytical reports identify several structural reasons that are worth taking seriously.

The first is the power asymmetry problem. Marginalised groups — by definition — have less access to the resources, institutional connections, and cultural capital that effective participation in governance requires. Joining a board, attending a planning meeting, taking on a coordinator role: these activities all assume a level of time, language proficiency, cultural familiarity with institutional processes, and freedom from competing demands that many target group members simply do not have. Well-intentioned invitations to participate can become exclusions in practice when the structures of participation are designed around the assumed capacities of dominant groups.

The second is the continuity problem. Many of the target groups served by the ALLSTARS cases are precisely those whose lives are characterised by mobility, instability, and discontinuity: recently arrived migrants, people moving between accommodation, individuals in mental health recovery. Building the sustained relationships and accumulated institutional knowledge that meaningful co-ownership requires is difficult when the target group is in flux. Campus Sansofé's recognition that it cannot anchor its co-ownership in stable territorial terms is an honest acknowledgment of this constraint.

The third is the capacity problem: building the organisational skills of target group members to participate in governance requires sustained investment — in training, in confidence-building, in the creation of intermediate roles and pathways. This investment is resource-intensive and rarely funded within project budgets. The ReWiS model — which has supported participants to develop the skills and confidence to run their own sports activities and found their own club — represents one of the most fully realised responses to this problem in the ALLSTARS study, precisely because it treats capacity-building as a programme goal rather than as a prerequisite to participation.

The fourth — perhaps the deepest — is what might be called the legitimacy trap. Organisations that hold public funding and operate within public policy frameworks are accountable to their funders and to the democratic processes through which those funders operate. They cannot simply transfer decision-making authority to a community that has no formal accountability relationship with the public institutions involved. This does not mean genuine co-ownership is impossible within public frameworks — Rotterdam's Urban Sports Agenda demonstrates that it is not — but it means that achieving it requires deliberate institutional design, sustained political will, and ongoing negotiation of the boundaries between public accountability and community autonomy.

Conclusion: Representation as a Quality Criterion

The preceding analysis suggests that representation and co-ownership should be understood not merely as ethical aspirations but as quality criteria for inclusive sport practice — criteria that directly affect the relevance, legitimacy, and sustainability of the work being done.

A programme that consults its target group but maintains professional governance will typically be more responsive than one that consults nobody, but it will remain fundamentally paternalistic: its design reflects the professionals' understanding of what the community needs, filtered through a survey instrument or a focus group. A programme in which the target group exercises genuine co-ownership will typically be more relevant — because its design reflects the community's own understanding of its needs — more legitimate — because the community recognises the programme as its own — and more sustainable — because the community has a real stake in its continuation that goes beyond the immediate services it provides.

The cross-national evidence suggests that the level of co-ownership achievable in a given case is strongly shaped by the nature of the organisation leading the initiative, the policy environment in which it operates, the specific characteristics of the target group, and the resources available for the capacity-building that co-ownership requires. Community-led organisations with constitutional social missions — Dragones, Samarucs, Etnoliga — achieve the deepest co-ownership because their organisational identity depends on it. Public-policy-driven initiatives can achieve meaningful representation — as Rotterdam and ReWiS demonstrate — when they make the investment in participatory design and community capacity-building that genuine co-ownership demands.

What none of the cases can afford is the rhetorical form without the substance: the claim to co-ownership that is not backed by real governance power, real community capacity, and real institutional willingness to share control. The communities that inclusive sport initiatives serve are not naive. They know the difference between being listened to and being heard; between being invited and being welcomed; between being a target group and being a community of co-owners. The depth of their engagement with any given initiative will reflect, accurately and without illusion, the depth of the organisation's actual commitment to their agency.

10 Funding

The Financial Paradox of Social Innovation Through Sport

Of all the structural challenges examined in this report, funding is simultaneously the most practically pressing and the most analytically underappreciated. It is practically pressing because, in the bluntest possible terms, nothing in this report happens without money: not the networking coordinator in Sport Vernetzt, not the neighbourhood sports coaches in Rotterdam, not the activity and community developers in Drammen, not the interdisciplinary team in Ekstra FAN. The passionate individuals who ignite these initiatives, the cross-sectoral partnerships that give them reach, the professional roles that make them durable, the community ownership that makes them legitimate — all of it costs money, and in most cases that money is insecure, temporary, and insufficient.

It is analytically underappreciated because discussions of funding in social policy tend to reduce it to a question of adequacy — is there enough money? — when the more fundamental questions are structural: what kind of money, from what sources, on what terms, accountable to whom, and renewed how? These structural questions determine not just whether an initiative can survive but what kind of initiative it becomes. A project funded by a sports federation on one-year competitive grants will develop in a fundamentally different direction from a programme anchored in a multi-year municipal budget line, even if the nominal amounts are identical. The funding structure shapes the institutional culture, the professional capacity, the relationship to the target group, and the timescales within which meaningful social impact is possible.

The ALLSTARS cases collectively reveal a financial paradox that runs through sport-based social inclusion in all five national contexts. The initiatives that most fully embody the values of the project — low-threshold, free of charge, cross-sectoral, community-embedded, professionally delivered — are precisely the initiatives that are hardest to fund within existing financial frameworks. They do not fit neatly into sports budgets, because their primary goals are social rather than sporting. They do not fit neatly into health budgets, because their primary vehicle is sport rather than clinical care. They do not fit neatly into social affairs budgets, because their organisational home is often a sports club or a sports foundation. They exist in the institutional interstitials between sectors, and they are funded, when they are funded, through a patchwork of grants, contributions, and subsidies from those sectors — each with its own eligibility criteria, reporting requirements, and political priorities.

This chapter maps the funding landscape across the five national contexts, identifies the structural features that most strongly determine sustainability, and draws the comparative lessons that the diversity of the ALLSTARS cases makes available.

The First Finding: Sport's Money Is the Wrong Money

The most consistent finding across all five national analytical reports on funding is one that might surprise policymakers and practitioners working within conventional sports systems: in the vast majority of the ALLSTARS cases, the primary sources of funding do not come from the sports sector. The German analytical report notes it explicitly: 'the sports sector — whether municipal in the form of sports offices or organised in the form of clubs or associations — is only the main source of funding in a few projects.' The Dutch report characterises this as a 'shift in Dutch policy from sports subsidies to social investment.' The Spanish report observes that the funding of these initiatives comes not from 'large sports sponsorships or broadcasting rights, but from sectoral budgets focused on health, social cohesion, integration, or community development.'

This finding is not incidental. It is the direct financial expression of the wide notion of sport explored in Chapter 1. Organisations that define their work as being about social participation, public health, migrant integration, or community development rather than about athletic development or sporting competition are making an implicit claim — and sometimes an explicit one — about which sector's resources their work belongs to. And that claim, when it is accepted by health departments, social affairs offices, housing associations, neighbourhood management bodies, and private foundations, opens funding streams that are substantially larger, more socially oriented, and often more durable than anything the sports sector itself can provide.

The German cases document this with particular richness. Sport Vernetzt in Berlin draws on the Senate's Community Initiative funding for neighbourhood development — money that comes from urban development and social affairs rather than the sports budget, and that enables the Kiez-Koordinatorinnen whose work is indispensable to the programme's operation. Coerde in Bewegung in Münster received its initial funding from statutory health insurance funds — money from the health sector that could not, as the German report notes, be used explicitly for sports club development, creating a productive tension between what the health funders wanted and what the sports infrastructure needed. The Bewegte Apotheke draws on health promotion budgets rather than sports grants, precisely because it positions exercise as a medical intervention.

This cross-sectoral funding strategy is not without complications. Each sector's money comes with its own logic. Health funding expects clinical outcomes or at least health-relevant metrics. Social affairs funding expects demonstrated impact on social inclusion or integration. Urban development funding expects place-based outcomes. When a sports organisation accesses these funds, it commits to demonstrating impact in terms defined by other sectors' accountability frameworks — frameworks that may not naturally capture the sporting, social, and community outcomes that make the initiative valuable. The administrative burden of navigating multiple funding streams, each with different reporting requirements, eligibility criteria, and renewal timescales, is substantial and rarely funded within the grants themselves.

> *"Es ist immer ein eigenes betriebswirtschaftliches Konzept, eine eigene finanzielle Strategie — die sich aus verschiedenen Einnahmequellen zusammensetzt."*
>
> Translation: "It is always its own business concept, its own financial strategy — which is put together from various income sources."
>
> Practitioner, Sport Vernetzt / ALBA Berlin, Germany — on the perpetual financial engineering required

Germany: The Case for Regelfinanzierung

The German analytical cases illuminate with unusual clarity the distinction between project funding and what German practitioners call Regelfinanzierung — structural, rule-based, institutionalised funding that is not annually renegotiated but embedded in regular budget processes. This distinction is, in the German analysis, the single most important variable determining whether an initiative can achieve genuine sustainability.

Project funding — competitive grants, time-limited subsidies, foundation support — is the dominant mode for most of the German ALLSTARS cases, and the German practitioners are candid about its limitations. A grant from the federal government's 'Social Cohesion' programme, however generous, runs for a defined period and then expires. A foundation's support, however reliable it has been, is ultimately contingent on the foundation's priorities, which can change. Municipal co-financing, which several German cases have achieved, is more stable but is subject to annual budget negotiations in which social sport initiatives compete with many other claims on scarce resources. The Berlin Senate's current budget pressures — referenced in interviews — create real uncertainty even for Sport Vernetzt, a programme that has been running for decades and has achieved significant political profile.

The German cases that have achieved the greatest financial stability — Sport Vernetzt, SV Motor Mickten, Sportpark Styrum — are those that have made the transition, at least partially, from project funding to structural funding: municipal budget lines, institutionalised co-financing arrangements, or in the case of Motor Mickten, a sufficiently large and committed membership base that some of the posts created through grants are now partially covered by membership income. These transitions have not eliminated financial insecurity — even the most established cases continue to navigate complex multi-funder environments — but they have created a degree of continuity that allows for longer-term planning, staff retention, and genuine community embedding.

> *"Der Soziale Zusammenhalt ist endlich. Das heißt, der Fördertopf steht nicht unendlich zur Verfügung. Wir haben viele Gespräche geführt mit der Bezirkspolitik, auch mit dem Senat: Wo kann es eine Regelfinanzierung geben?"*
>
> Translation: "Social Cohesion funding is finite. That is, the grant pot is not available indefinitely. We have had many conversations with district politics, also with the Senate: Where can there be rule-based structural funding?"
>
> Municipal official, Sport Vernetzt, Berlin, Germany — on the fundamental question facing all project-funded initiatives

The German analytical report draws a pointed conclusion: 'Local, administrative funding creates stability, which is highly relevant for enabling knowledge transfer, retaining committed individuals, and facilitating long-term planning and development.' This is not merely a financial claim but an organisational one. The things that matter most for sustained social impact —

accumulating institutional knowledge, developing staff, building community trust — all require time. Time requires continuity. Continuity requires stable funding. The chain is direct, and its practical implication is equally direct: initiatives that depend on annually negotiated project grants cannot fully realise the social potential they embody, however excellent their design and however committed their practitioners.

The Netherlands: Network Financing as Structural Logic

The Dutch analytical report introduces a concept that captures the distinctive character of Dutch social sport funding with precision: network financing. Rather than characterising the funding landscape as a patchwork of separate grants — which is how it might appear to an outsider — the report argues that the ability to build financial bridges between domains is itself the organisational competence on which sustainability depends. 'Sustainability is not achieved through a single fixed source of funding, but through the ability to build bridges between domains.'

This framing reflects a genuinely different institutional environment from Germany. In the Netherlands, the BRC scheme provides a structural mechanism for cross-sectoral funding: neighbourhood sports coaches are co-funded by municipalities, sports associations, and often educational and welfare institutions under a formula that the national government has made sustainable by embedding it in regular policy programmes. The Healthy and Active Living Agreement (GALA) provides a national funding stream specifically for sports projects that link to health, social cohesion, and community development. These are not project grants but structural programmes that create predictable, multi-year funding opportunities — the nearest Dutch equivalent to German Regelfinanzierung.

The Dutch cases demonstrate how this structural environment can be leveraged. Sporttuin Duindorp combines municipal funding, welfare budget contributions, and occasional project subsidies in a configuration that has proven stable over years, despite the pressure to continually re-legitimise within changing policy priorities. Citytrainers expanded from a single municipality to sixteen precisely because each expansion created new structural funding relationships — new municipalities investing in the programme, creating a self-reinforcing logic in which success breeds stability. Beweegcoach Zorg achieves financial uniqueness by drawing simultaneously on sports budgets and care institution funds, with each sector recognising the programme as belonging to its domain.

But the Dutch report is candid about the vulnerabilities that persist even within this comparatively supportive environment. YETS relies heavily on private and philanthropic funds — Oranje Fonds, Stichting Kinderpostzegels, corporate partners — which require continuous accountability and measurable results. The Urban Sports Agenda Rotterdam's neighbourhood sports coaches are structurally funded through the BRC, but the infrastructure projects and community capacity-building initiatives that give the Agenda its transformative potential draw on urban investment funds, sports budgets, and local grant schemes that are less predictably available. The Dutch financial logic is network-like, which creates resilience through diversity but creates vulnerability through complexity: maintaining the relationships and meeting the reporting requirements of multiple funders is an organisational cost that falls invisibly on the same practitioners who are supposed to be delivering the programme.

> *"Temporary project funding requires constant renewal. Successful projects distinguish themselves by having built structural partnerships with municipalities or funds, making them less dependent on annual refinancing."*
>
> Dutch analytical report, summarising the critical distinction between precarious and sustainable funding arrangements

Norway: From Foundation Grants to Municipal Anchoring

The Norwegian cases present the clearest trajectory in the entire ALLSTARS study of how successful initiatives move from project funding toward structural financial security — and the clearest evidence of what enables that transition. In Bergen and Drammen, the two most institutionally developed cases, the trajectory is directly visible: both began with time-limited external grants from foundations and state bodies, and both have progressively increased the share of their funding that comes from stable municipal budget lines and from dedicated allocations within the Sports Council's own budget.

The Bergen LIM project received its initial funding from Bufdir — the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs — for a three-year project period. When that period ended, the question of continuation was real and urgent. The Bergen Sports Council stepped in, taking over coordination and securing municipal funding from Bergen municipality's own budget. The programme now draws on multiple stable sources — municipal funds, Sports Council resources, and occasional foundation contributions — and Bergen municipality's explicit budgetary commitment to LIM creates a degree of financial security that project funding could never provide. The Drammen tripartite model — Sports Council, municipal government, and a private foundation (currently Sparebankstiftelsen DNB) — similarly creates a structure in which no single funding withdrawal can destroy the programme, because the remaining partners have structural stakes in its continuation.

The Norwegian analytical report identifies a systemic insight that emerges from comparing cases: 'In most of our cases, it is pointed out in one context or another that the work carried out in these projects is something that one would like to see as the responsibility of the public sector.' This desire — repeatedly expressed across Norwegian, German, Dutch, Polish, and Spanish interviews alike — is not merely a funding preference but a normative claim about where social sport provision belongs in the public goods framework. It is also a politically realistic aspiration: in the Norwegian context, Bergen municipality's decision to anchor LIM in its own budget and Drammen municipality's multi-year financial commitment to Aktive Lokalsamfunn both demonstrate that this claim can be realised, under the right conditions, in the right political moment.

The contrasting case of Ett Slag av Gangen in Kristiansund illustrates what happens when this transition does not occur. The programme operates entirely on annual grant applications to the national ESAG foundation, supplemented by some municipal referral cooperation but no financial contribution. The golf club's facilities and volunteers are the primary resource; the programme has no paid professional roles, no institutional anchoring in the municipal budget, and no accumulated financial reserve. It is sustainable in the short term because its cost structure is minimal — all it requires is the ongoing voluntary commitment of a small group of golf enthusiasts — but it is structurally incapable of scaling, professionalising, or weathering any reduction in volunteer availability.

Poland: The Tyranny of Short Cycles

If the Norwegian cases represent the aspirational end of the funding spectrum — initiatives progressively anchoring themselves in stable public finances — the Polish cases represent its most challenging contemporary reality. The dominant feature of Polish social sport funding, the Polish analytical report observes, is its project-based character: regardless of whether resources come from municipal grants, ministerial programmes, European funds, or corporate

CSR budgets, they arrive in short cycles, through competitive processes, with annual renewal requirements that create perpetual uncertainty and consume enormous organisational energy. The consequences of this structural feature are visible across all six Polish cases, even those that have achieved a degree of organisational maturity. Trener Osiedlowy in Głogów depends entirely on the municipality's annual budget decision to run the public task procurement through which the programme is commissioned. In years when municipal priorities shift or budgets tighten, the programme must either be redesigned to fit new parameters or suspended. Etnoliga in Warsaw navigates a complex portfolio of annual grants from the City of Warsaw, NIW-CRSO, and international bodies — each requiring separate applications, reporting in different formats, and justification in terms of each funder's specific priorities. The organisational capacity consumed by this financial management is substantial and directly competes with the capacity available for the programme's actual social work.

The most analytically instructive Polish case for understanding funding fragility is Ekstra FAN in Gdańsk. This programme had everything that funders and evaluators tend to value: a scientifically validated methodology, measurable health outcomes, strong cross-sectoral partnerships, and demonstrated impact. It was, in professional social policy terms, an evidence-based success. It was also funded through a combination of the city's health budget and the stadium operator's CSR contribution — a combination that proved fatally vulnerable when the health unit was reorganised and the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the stadium operator's priorities. Both funding streams were withdrawn within a short period, and the programme closed. The evidence did not save it; the institutional architecture was too thin to withstand the shocks.

The most resilient Polish case — Let's Play Together in Wrocław — achieves its relative stability precisely through the kind of multi-source funding diversification that the Dutch report characterises as network financing. European Erasmus+ Sport funding is combined with municipal support, educational institution contributions, and CSR partner resources. Each stream is separately vulnerable to interruption, but the combination creates a degree of resilience that no single stream could provide. The cost is the organisational complexity of managing relationships with multiple funders across multiple sectors — a complexity that requires the kind of professional capacity that the funding itself is supposed to enable, creating a bootstrapping problem that many Polish organisations struggle to resolve.

> *"Krótkie cykle grantowe generują poważne ryzyka — przerwy w działaniu, potrzebę rekonfiguracji zespołów, trudności w utrzymaniu pracowników."*
>
> Translation: "Short grant cycles generate serious risks — interruptions in delivery, the need to reconfigure teams, difficulties in retaining staff."
>
> Polish analytical report, summarising the systemic impact of project-based funding on organisational capacity

Spain: Two Patterns, One Challenge

The Spanish analytical report identifies two distinct funding patterns among the eight Spanish cases, which correlate strongly with the top-down versus bottom-up origin distinction developed in earlier chapters. The first pattern encompasses KOZ, LEKE, and Hegalak — initiatives that are the product of public policies designed by public institutions, and that consequently receive the largest share of their funding directly from public administration at various levels: city councils, provincial councils, regional governments. This public funding, when stable, provides genuine operational security and enables meaningful professionalisation. Its vulnerability lies not in the amount of money available but in its political contingency: when governments change, priorities shift, or austerity cycles reduce budgets, public-funded programmes can find their financial security evaporating within a single budget round.

The second pattern encompasses Street Soccer Barcelona, Cricket Jove, Campus Sansofé, Dragones de Lavapiés, and Samarucs — community-driven initiatives that must navigate competitive grant processes, voluntary contributions, membership fees, event income, and private fundraising in pursuit of financial sustainability that more structurally funded initiatives take for granted. The range of strategies employed by these organisations is remarkable: Cricket Jove relies on funding from Barcelona City Council and the Diputació de Barcelona, supplemented by grants from sport-specific foundations; Dragones de Lavapiés combines membership fees, event self-management, and occasional municipal grants; Samarucs sustains itself primarily through membership fees from a community whose economic situation allows them to contribute — an unusual condition that gives the club a form of financial self-sufficiency that most other ALLSTARS community cases cannot replicate.

Campus Sansofé illustrates the most demanding end of this second pattern with particular clarity. Working with recently arrived migrants and unaccompanied minors — a target group that is both among the most in need and among the least politically visible for mainstream funding instruments — the programme cannot rely on participant fees, has no stable recurring public grant, and must fund its operations through a combination of competitive municipal grants, foundation support, corporate partnerships, private donors, and charity football events. The coordinator describes the permanent financial precariousness with characteristic directness.

> *"Yo venía de trabajar en una agencia federal en Bruselas donde había unos presupuestos increíbles, entonces de golpe me encontré como en el otro lado. Estás siempre ahí continuamente buscando, buscando, buscando…"*
>
> Translation: "I came from working at a federal agency in Brussels where the budgets were incredible, and then suddenly I found myself on the other side. You are always there, continuously searching, searching, searching..."
>
> Project coordinator, Campus Sansofé, Spain — on the transition from institutional to community-based financing

The contrast implicit in this quote — between the resource-rich institutional world and the perpetual financial precarity of community-based social innovation — is the financial analogue of the structural tension explored throughout this report. The initiatives that achieve the deepest community embedding, the most authentic co-ownership, and the most genuine relationship to the populations they serve are often those with the weakest financial foundations. The initiatives with the strongest financial security — because they are embedded in public policy frameworks and funded through public budgets — often achieve less community co-ownership, less flexibility, and less responsiveness to the specific needs of their target populations. This inverse relationship between financial security and social authenticity is one of the most uncomfortable findings of the ALLSTARS study, and it does not have an easy resolution.

Diversification as Strategy and as Burden

Across all five national contexts, the analytical reports converge on diversification of funding sources as the primary strategy for achieving financial resilience. A project dependent on a single funding stream — whether a municipal budget line, a foundation grant, a corporate CSR contribution, or a state programme — is vulnerable to the withdrawal of that stream for reasons entirely outside the project's control. Diversification spreads this risk: when one stream reduces or disappears, the others can partially compensate.

The evidence from the ALLSTARS cases supports this conclusion. The most financially resilient cases — Sport Vernetzt, Aktive Lokalsamfunn, LIM, Citytrainers, Radomiak Futbol Plus, the KOZ model — all combine multiple funding sources that draw on different sectors, different funding logics, and different renewal timescales. They are not immune to financial shocks, but they are more resistant to any single shock than mono-funded alternatives.

But the ALLSTARS cases also consistently demonstrate the costs of diversification that the strategy literature on non-profit finance tends to underemphasise. Managing multiple funding relationships requires dedicated staff time — time for application writing, reporting, relationship maintenance, and the constant process of demonstrating impact in the specific terms each funder requires. In organisations where the same people who manage the funding are also responsible for programme delivery — which is the norm rather than the exception across the ALLSTARS cases — this administrative burden directly competes with the capacity available for the social work itself. Several German practitioners noted that the time spent on fundraising and reporting was among the most significant structural constraints on their ability to deepen the programme's community impact.

Diversification also creates a specific form of mission drift risk: each funder has its own priorities, and organisations that depend on multiple funders may find themselves progressively reshaping their programmes to fit the specific metrics and reporting requirements of their funding portfolio rather than the genuine needs of their target communities. The Dutch report's observation that temporary project funding 'requires constant renewal' and forces organisations to 'continually re-legitimise itself within changing policy priorities' describes a dynamic in which the funder's evolving priorities, rather than the community's stable needs, become the primary driver of programme design.

The Transformative Potential of Structural Anchoring

Against the general picture of financial precarity and the burdens of diversification, the ALLSTARS cases also provide strong evidence for the transformative potential of structural financial anchoring — the embedding of a programme's core costs in stable, multi-year budget commitments from public institutions. This anchoring, where it has been achieved, does not merely solve the financial problem; it transforms the nature of the organisation and the quality of the work it can do.

In Drammen, the shift from project to structural funding enabled the Sports Council to employ Activity and Community Developers on multi-year contracts — practitioners who could build genuine, sustained relationships with schools, families, and community members rather than the transactional relationships that annual project cycles tend to produce. In Bergen, municipal anchoring of LIM gave the programme the stability to expand from one school to multiple, to invest in practitioner training and methodological development, and to hold ambitious social goals without constantly worrying about whether the next year's grant would be approved. In Rotterdam, the BRC's structural funding for neighbourhood sports coaches enabled a decade-long process of community capacity-building that could not have been achieved through project grants.

These cases suggest that the appropriate aspiration for social sport policy is not the management of perpetual project precarity but the progressive anchoring of successful initiatives in structural public funding. This anchoring requires political will — decisions by municipal governments to take on recurring budget commitments for programmes that were previously funded through competitive grants — and it requires the kind of demonstrated impact and institutional trust that takes years to build. But it is achievable, as the Norwegian and Dutch cases demonstrate, and its effects on programme quality and community impact are profound.

The German concept of Regelfinanzierung — the aspiration toward rule-based, institutionalised funding — captures this aspiration precisely. It is not a demand for unlimited resources; it is a claim about the appropriate relationship between public institutions and the social innovation they want to sustain. If sport-based social inclusion initiatives are genuinely delivering public value — improving health, reducing exclusion, strengthening community, supporting integration — then the funding for that public value should come through public institutions' regular budgetary commitments, not through the vagaries of competitive grant cycles that treat proven programmes as perpetual experiments.

Conclusion: Funding is Policy

This chapter began by arguing that funding is analytically underappreciated — that discussions of financial support for social sport initiatives focus too narrowly on adequacy and too little on structure. The cross-national evidence of the ALLSTARS study confirms this argument. The structure of funding — the mix of sources, the temporal horizon of commitments, the accountability frameworks attached to different streams, and the institutional embedding of recurring costs — is not a technical detail of financial management. It is policy. It shapes what kind of organisations develop, what professional roles they can sustain, what communities they can genuinely serve, and what timescales of social change are possible.

The most important structural finding is the systematic funding gap for community-embedded, cross-sectoral, low-threshold social sport initiatives. These initiatives generate genuine public value — health outcomes, integration outcomes, community cohesion outcomes, educational outcomes — but they generate that value in a form that falls across the categorical boundaries of existing public funding systems. The sports budget does not fully recognise their social outputs; the health budget does not fully recognise their sporting vehicle; the social affairs budget does not fully recognise their sport-based methodology. Each sector's funding instruments partially accommodate them, and none fully funds them.

Closing this gap requires more than additional money. It requires new institutional instruments — cross-sectoral funding frameworks that recognise and resource the interstitial work these initiatives do; multi-year budget commitments that allow the kind of sustained relationship-building on which genuine community impact depends; accountability frameworks that can capture social outcomes that are genuinely difficult to measure without reducing them to the simplified metrics that funding bodies find convenient. The Dutch GALA and BRC provide partial models; the Bergen and Drammen anchoring models provide aspirational evidence; the German advocacy for Regelfinanzierung names the aspiration precisely.

The fundamental lesson, stated plainly: sport-based social inclusion is not a project. It is a long-term investment in the social conditions that allow marginalised populations to participate in community life. Project funding is the wrong instrument for this investment. Structural, recurring, publicly accountable funding is the right one — and the ALLSTARS cases demonstrate, across thirty-two instances in five countries, that it is achievable when the political will to recognise the public value of this work is present. Building that political will is not the responsibility of the practitioners whose daily heroism sustains these initiatives through their current precarity. It is the responsibility of the institutions whose policies created the conditions for exclusion that these initiatives exist to address.

11 Conclusion: What ALLSTARS Reveals

Sport's Promise and Its Structural Gap

This report began with an observation that its evidence has fully confirmed: there is a structural gap between sport's social potential and its institutional reality. The potential is real. Sport — understood broadly, as low-threshold physical activity, movement, and community participation rather than competitive performance alone — can reach populations that other social institutions have failed to serve. It can build the trust and belonging that reduce isolation, the physical capacity that supports health, the intercultural familiarity that enables integration, and the sense of agency that comes from mastering a skill, contributing to a community, or simply moving through the world with ease. The thirty-two cases at the heart of this report demonstrate, across five national contexts and across an extraordinary diversity of populations, settings, and organisational forms, that this potential is not merely theoretical. It is being realised.

But the structural gap is equally real. The dominant institutional architecture of European sport — voluntary associations financed by membership fees, anchored in traditions of competitive performance, governed by sector-specific frameworks that actively discourage cross-sectoral cooperation — is not designed to serve the people who would benefit most from inclusive participation. It is designed to serve those who are already participating. Closing the gap between who sport currently serves and who it could serve requires more than good intentions and exceptional individuals. It requires institutional change: in how sport is defined, how it is organised, how it is governed, who leads it, who it is accountable to, and how it is funded.

The ALLSTARS research has examined that institutional change across nine dimensions, in thirty-two cases, in five countries. This conclusion draws together what the evidence reveals — first about the nine categories themselves, then about the cross-national patterns that cut across them, and finally about what would need to change for good practice to become less the exception and more the norm.

What the Nine Categories Reveal

The nine analytical categories of the ALLSTARS framework are not parallel, independent dimensions. They are interconnected elements of a single organisational logic — and the cases that have achieved the deepest and most durable social impact are precisely those in which all nine are aligned. This alignment is not accidental: it is the product of deliberate institutional design, sustained political will, and the cumulative investment of engaged individuals over time.

The wide notion of sport is the foundation. Without a genuine reorientation of purpose — from sport as an end in itself to sport as a vehicle for social participation, health, integration, and community — none of the other dimensions can function as intended. This reorientation must be structural, not merely rhetorical: embedded in the organisation's resource allocation, professional culture, and definition of success, not just its mission statement. The cases in which the social mission is genuinely primary — constitutionally in organisations like Dragones de Lavapiés and Etnoliga; institutionally in the Bergen and Drammen models; programmatically in Sport Vernetzt and YETS — consistently achieve deeper and more durable inclusion than those in which the social dimension is an addition to a pre-existing sporting identity.

Socio-spatial orientation translates the wide notion into practice. It is the discipline of going where the target group is rather than waiting for the target group to come — of meeting people in their own neighbourhoods, using the infrastructure they already inhabit, building presence through reliability rather than through marketing. The cases that have achieved this most fully — through neighbourhood management connections, school-based delivery, community infrastructure anchoring, or relational rootedness across mobile populations — demonstrate that genuine accessibility is not a logistical detail but an organisational commitment that shapes everything from where activities are held to who is hired to deliver them.

Cross- and intra-sectorality is what makes the wide notion financially viable and institutionally credible. Sport alone cannot fund, legitimise, or sustain the kind of intensive community work that reaching marginalised groups requires. Health departments, education systems, social affairs offices, housing associations, welfare organisations, and private foundations all have interests in the outcomes that socially innovative sport can deliver. Building and maintaining the relationships that allow these interests to be mobilised — not just bilaterally but as genuine institutional partnerships with shared governance and shared accountability — is one of the most demanding organisational tasks in the entire ALLSTARS study. It is also one of the most consequential: the cases with the strongest cross-sectoral infrastructure are consistently the most resilient.

Change of role for the main actor is the organisational expression of the wide notion. When sports clubs transform their character toward social inclusion rather than merely adding inclusive programmes, when Sports Councils evolve from administrative coordinators to active social brokers, when NGOs transition from community initiatives into methodological institutions, they become different kinds of actors in the institutional landscape. This transformation is not costless: it creates internal political resistance, demands new competencies, and requires navigation of an identity complexity that can make the organisation less legible to some of its traditional partners and funders. But without it, the structural gap between sport's potential and its delivery cannot be closed.

Professionalisation provides the organisational capacity for sustained social work. Voluntary commitment is indispensable and must be honoured; it is also insufficient and must be supplemented by paid professional roles that allow the knowledge, relationships, and methodological expertise of high-performing practitioners to be accumulated, transferred, and protected against the inevitable turnover of individuals. The cases that have invested in professionalisation — in networking coordinators, in activity and community developers, in cross-sectoral practitioners — consistently outperform those that depend on voluntary or precarious labour for their most critical functions. The Dutch BRC model, which embeds professional community sport roles in structural public funding, represents the most fully institutionalised expression of this insight in the ALLSTARS study.

The role of engaged individuals is both the study's most emotionally resonant finding and its most analytically complex one. The Ildsjel — the fire soul whose personal passion and commitment ignites an initiative and sustains it through the long periods of uncertainty and resistance that genuine innovation requires — is present in every case. They are irreplaceable in the founding phase. They are a structural liability if the institution never develops beyond dependence on them. The cases that have best navigated this tension are those in which founders have deliberately built the structures that reduce their own indispensability: developing teams, documenting methods, distributing responsibility, and creating succession pathways. This requires a particular form of leadership wisdom — the willingness to work toward one's own partial redundancy — that is neither common nor easy.

Path dependency and change illuminates why innovation is hard and how it happens anyway. The institutional landscape that shapes what is possible — the accumulated decisions, relationships, and arrangements that constitute the status quo — is not a neutral backdrop but an active force that tends toward its own reproduction. Change requires not just good ideas and willing actors but the convergence of problem streams, policy streams, and politics streams into windows of opportunity that are brief, unpredictable, and require policy entrepreneurs who are ready to act. The cases that have most successfully navigated this landscape are those that had invested in prior relationships, accumulated prior experience, and built prior organisational capacity before the window opened — confirming that preparedness is itself a form of strategy, not simply a precondition.

Representation and co-ownership is the dimension that most directly tests the moral seriousness of the social mission. An initiative that claims to serve a community without involving that community in defining what service means, without creating pathways for members of the community to participate in governance, and without recognising the community's own knowledge of its needs as an indispensable input to programme design, is providing a service, not creating a community. The cases that have achieved genuine co-ownership — Etnoliga, Dragones de Lavapiés, the Rotterdam Urban Sports Agenda, ReWiS at its most ambitious — demonstrate that this is possible under the right conditions. They also demonstrate that it requires specific institutional investment: in community capacity-building, in the redesign of governance structures, and in the sustained political will to share power rather than merely to consult.

Funding, finally, is both the most practical and the most politically charged dimension. The structural gap between what social sport initiatives require to sustain themselves and what existing funding frameworks provide is not a problem of insufficient generosity. It is a problem of institutional architecture: funding instruments designed for different purposes, accountability frameworks calibrated to different metrics, and political logics that systematically undervalue the cross-sectoral, long-horizon, community-embedded work that genuine inclusion demands. Closing this gap requires not just more money but different money — structured differently, accountable differently, and committed at timescales that allow the kind of relationship-building and knowledge accumulation on which durable social impact depends.

Five Cross-National Patterns

Read comparatively, the ALLSTARS evidence reveals five cross-national patterns that hold across all five countries and all thirty-two cases, despite the considerable variation in national sports systems, political cultures, and social policy frameworks.

First: the nine dimensions are interdependent. The cases that achieve the most sustained social impact are not those that excel on one or two dimensions but those that have developed all nine in alignment. A project with a genuine wide notion of sport but weak cross-sectorality will lack the institutional resources to sustain its ambition. One with excellent cross-sectoral partnerships but limited socio-spatial orientation will fail to reach the communities most in need. Strong professionalisation without genuine co-ownership produces technically competent but authentically hollow provision. The interaction effects between the nine dimensions are as important as their individual quality, and attempts to improve one dimension in isolation from the others consistently underperform.

Second: institutional conditions are more important than individual excellence. The cases in which innovation has been most durable are consistently those embedded in the most supportive institutional environments: the Dutch BRC and GALA frameworks; the Bergen and Drammen municipal anchoring structures; the Berlin Senate's Community Initiative; the Basque Government's investment in KOZ and the sport orientation infrastructure. These conditions do not guarantee innovation — there are well-funded mediocre programmes everywhere — but they make it sustainably possible rather than dependent on exceptional individual commitment operating against the institutional grain. The cross-national comparison reveals that the most important variable explaining variation in impact is not the quality of individual practitioners but the quality of the institutional environment in which those practitioners operate.

Third: the countries differ most in what is taken for granted. In Norway, the 'sport for all' ethos and the legitimacy of the Sports Council as a community institution are deep cultural assumptions that practitioners do not need to argue for. In the Netherlands, the BRC's cross-sectoral professional infrastructure is an established mechanism that community sport initiatives can use without building it from scratch. In Germany, the culture of neighbourhood management and district conferences provides a spatial governance infrastructure that social sport can anchor in. In Spain, the foundational social missions of community-based clubs require no political justification because they have always been constitutive of those clubs' identities. What differs across countries is not primarily the quality of what is possible but what needs to be constructed versus what is already available as a resource. Poland, where the sectoral isolation of sport is most pronounced and the cross-sectoral infrastructure most limited, faces the steepest construction challenge — and its cases demonstrate both the extraordinary resilience of those who navigate that challenge and the cost, in fragility and precarity, that navigating it imposes.

Fourth: good practice is not the same as replicable practice. Several of the most successful cases in this study depend on specific combinations of local conditions — a particular municipal political culture, a particular history of prior collaboration, a particular individual whose network spans the key sectors — that cannot simply be transplanted to other contexts. This does not make them uninstructive: they demonstrate what is possible under favourable conditions, and understanding those conditions is itself analytically valuable. But it does counsel against the simplistic policy aspiration of 'scaling' good practices as if the essence of what makes them good can be preserved through mechanical reproduction. The most that can be transferred is a set of design principles, a methodological framework, and a set of institutional conditions to be created — not a programme to be replicated. The cases that have scaled most successfully — CityTrainers, Aktive Lokalsamfunn, Let's Play Together, the KOZ model — have done so not by replicating a fixed programme but by establishing transferable frameworks that can be locally adapted, locally owned, and locally sustained.

Fifth: the gap between aspiration and reality is narrowing in some places and widening in others. In Bergen, Drammen, Rotterdam, and Berlin, there is genuine evidence of progressive institutional embedding: the gap is closing, slowly and unevenly, through the accumulated effect of political decisions, funding commitments, and professional investments that have been sustained across years and in some cases decades. In Kavkaz, in Campus Sansofé, in Kristiansund, and across much of the Polish portfolio, the gap remains as wide as ever, kept visible by the exceptional commitment of individuals who have no structural support for the work they are doing. The widening in some places and narrowing in others is not random: it tracks the presence or absence of the institutional conditions identified throughout this report.

What Would Need to Change

The ALLSTARS research was not designed to produce a policy blueprint. Its purpose has been to generate rigorous comparative knowledge about conditions and mechanisms, not to prescribe specific interventions. Nevertheless, the evidence assembled across nine chapters and thirty-two cases is sufficiently consistent to support a set of structural claims about what would need to change for good practice to become less exceptional.

Sports governance would need to take inclusion seriously as an institutional mandate rather than a reputational aspiration. This means not merely acknowledging the social value of sport in mission statements but aligning resource allocation, professional development, accountability frameworks, and governance structures with that acknowledgment. It means ensuring that sports federations, municipal sports offices, and national sporting bodies are evaluated — at least in part — on their contribution to social inclusion outcomes, not only on participation numbers and competitive results. It means creating explicit institutional pathways for sports organisations that want to develop inclusive programmes, rather than leaving them to navigate hostile internal politics without support.

Social policy would need to recognise sport as a legitimate vehicle for social outcomes and fund it accordingly. This means developing multi-year, cross-sectoral funding instruments that can resource the kind of work the ALLSTARS cases do: low-threshold, community-embedded, professionally delivered physical activity programmes oriented toward populations that conventional social services struggle to reach. It means creating accountability frameworks that can capture the social outcomes of sport-based provision without reducing them to the simplified metrics of either the sports world or the clinical world. And it means accepting that the administrative and relational costs of cross-sectoral work are legitimate programme costs that need to be resourced, not bureaucratic inefficiencies to be minimised.

Education and training systems would need to produce practitioners who can work across sectoral boundaries — who combine sports competencies with psychosocial awareness, community development skills, cross-cultural sensitivity, and the capacity to navigate complex institutional landscapes. The DNT Tiltrettelagt model in Molde, which integrates social care students into programme delivery, and the development of Community Activity Developers in Drammen, suggest what this kind of practitioner profile might look like at the community level. At the strategic level, it requires sports management education that takes social innovation seriously as a professional domain, not as a marginal add-on to the core curriculum of club administration and performance development.

Political culture would need to accept that sport's social contribution takes time. The timescales on which genuine community embedding, sustained trust-building, and durable social impact operate — years to decades, not months — are fundamentally incompatible with the electoral cycles, annual budget processes, and short-horizon accountability that characterise most public funding for sport. The cases that have achieved the most are precisely those that have had the political protection to develop across multiple budget cycles without needing to re-justify their existence annually. Creating that political protection requires sustained advocacy — by practitioners, by researchers, and by the communities these initiatives serve — for the simple proposition that social investment through sport is not a project. It is a commitment.

Thirty-Two Acts of Practical Optimism

The introduction to this report described the thirty-two cases at its heart as acts of practical optimism — attempts by individuals and organisations to make sport work for people it has historically failed to serve. Having examined those attempts in detail, across nine dimensions and five national contexts, that description remains apt. But it now carries more specific content.

The optimism in these cases is not naive. It does not assume that the gap between sport's promise and its delivery will close spontaneously, or that passion alone can substitute for structural support, or that the political conditions for change can be wished into existence. The practitioners who have built and sustained the most successful cases are among the most clear-eyed people in the ALLSTARS study: they know exactly what their work costs, what it depends on, and how fragile its institutional foundations remain. Their optimism is specifically practical — the kind that says, given the conditions we have, we can still make this work; and given the conditions we don't yet have, we know what we need to build.

What this report adds to that practical optimism is a comparative map of the institutional terrain. The nine categories reveal, consistently and in cross-national agreement, that the conditions for socially innovative sport practice are not mysterious. They can be named, described, and in principle created. A wide notion of sport, actively embedded in institutional identity. Genuine socio-spatial orientation, resourced and sustained. Cross-sectoral cooperation, built over time and anchored in stable institutional relationships. Organisational roles that have genuinely changed, not merely expanded. Professional capacity, funded and developed to match the complexity of the work. Engaged individuals, supported and protected by structures that recognise what they contribute and reduce what they risk. Institutional conditions that make windows of opportunity more likely and more usable. Genuine co-ownership, not merely consultation. And funding that matches the nature of the work — structural, multi-year, cross-sectoral, and accountable to the communities it is meant to serve. None of this is easy. All of it is achievable. The thirty-two cases in this report prove it. Their achievement is not a reason for complacency about the distance that remains between good practice and the norm. It is evidence for the argument that the distance can be closed — if those with the power to change the institutional conditions that currently make good practice exceptional are willing to use that power in service of the communities that good practice has consistently shown it is possible to reach.