Living Lab

Toolkit

Insights from the Sport
and Social Cohesion Lab
(SSCL) Project

**Sport and
Social Cohesion
Lab**

Living Lab Toolkit:

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Disclaimer

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Introduction

Over the last decade, sport and physical activity have become increasingly recognised and implemented as tools to foster social cohesion in neighbourhoods, cities and communities around Europe. As a result, numerous programmes have emerged that attempt to enhance social cohesion through a variety of sport-based approaches (Moustakas, Sanders, Schlenker, & Robrade, 2021; Svensson & Woods, 2017). However, despite this boom in sport and social cohesion, current definitions and understandings of social cohesion rarely take into account the needs, expectations or views of practitioners, stakeholders and, especially, participants on the ground (Raw, Sherry, & Rowe, 2021).

Yet, to truly foster broad social outcomes like social cohesion, there is increasing recognition that programmes must move beyond interventions that only focus on the individual level, and instead find ways to work with and engage a wide array of stakeholders and organisations (Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011; Moustakas, 2022). In turn, this allows programmes to respond to community needs, foster engagement, deliver more sustainable outcomes, and work at both the individual and institutional levels.

The Living Lab concept - which is distinguished by multi-stakeholder involvement, user engagement, innovation and co-creation within a real-life setting - provides an innovative approach to help achieve these goals. More formally, Living Labs have been defined as "user-centred, open innovation ecosystems based on a systematic user co-creation approach, integrating research and innovation processes in real-life communities and settings" (European Network of Living Labs, 2021). Thus, this can be a powerful approach to engage a wide array of stakeholders, and create interventions that are responsive to community needs.

As such, the Sport for Social Cohesion Lab (SSCL) project was conceived to implement a Living Lab approach within five sport for social cohesion programmes in four different European countries. This approach was chosen to help programmes directly engage programme participants, generate understanding of the elements that promote social cohesion in a sport setting and to co-create activities and tools to explore, support and understand social cohesion within these communities.

The following toolkit reflects our multi-national experiences designing and implementing Living Labs across these various contexts. Our partners represent a variety of settings, from schools to community-based organisations, and together these experiences can provide valuable insights to other sport (and non-sport) organisations wishing to implement a Living Lab approach within their contexts and programmes.

Thus, practitioners and implementers of community-based programmes should be understood as the immediate target group of this toolkit, though the insights and reflections included here can be of relevance for any individual or organisation seeking to use more participatory approaches within their work. In particular, in the coming sections, this toolkit will define the Living Lab concept more precisely, suggest some steps to launch a Living Lab, and offer insights on how to implement the different components of a Living Lab.

The Partnership and the Living Labs

The SSCL project features a consortium of ten partners from across Europe. These include five organisations who collaboratively design and implement Living Lab activities within their local contexts. In addition, the project is further strengthened by two international partners who help support the dissemination and relevance of project outcomes. The partners and their backgrounds are described in the table below, and the individual Living Labs are presented in more detail in the following sub-sections. At the end of this section, we will reflect on the distinct features of our Living Labs and how the various settings help us offer a unique perspective on the concept.

German Sport University Cologne

Cologne, Germany

The German Sport University Cologne is Germany's largest and most prestigious centre of teaching and research in physical education and sport science. In particular, the Institute of European Sport Development and Leisure Studies (IESF) works towards contributing to the European dimension of sport, especially as it relates to the linkages between sport and social development.

In Safe Hands e.v.

Hürth, Germany

In safe hands e.V. is an NGO that envisions an appreciative intercultural social coexistence free from prejudices. Supporting for this vision, In safe hands e.V. uses sport and movement as a medium to foster emotional, social and intercultural competences of school children between 6 and 14 years old.

The Hague University of Applied Sciences

The Hague, Netherlands

Focusing on combining research with applied professional knowledge, THUAS offers more than 100 degrees to a highly diverse student body. Within THUAS, the Impact of Sport Research Group focuses on promoting social cohesion by strengthening organisations, professionals and volunteers involved in sports management. The research investigates how to positively enhance the social impact of sport in urban areas facing important social issues and challenges, especially in ethnically diverse communities.

International Sports Alliance

Den Bosch, Netherlands

ISA is a Dutch based NGO in the field of youth, sports and education. Active since 1998 in over 17 countries, ISA focuses on interventions on four different levels; youth, coaches, civil society organisations and the wider community

Munster Technological University / UNESCO Chair in Inclusive Physical Education

Tralee, Ireland

The UNESCO Chair is a global lead in driving inclusion in and through physical education, physical activity and sport. It has expertise in harnessing multisector partnerships for action across all levels of the sector, including the development of inclusive education programmes and bridging the gap between policy and practice.

Sport Against Racism Ireland
Dublin, Ireland

SARI, founded in 1997, uses the power of sport to challenge discrimination, promote cultural integration and drive social inclusion throughout Ireland. Working with schools, Direct Provision Centres, refugee and local communities, SARI delivers anti-discrimination educational workshops, intercultural sporting events and a Young Leaders youth development and employability programme collectively creating opportunities for all.

Palacky University Olomouc
Olomouc, Czech Republic

Palacký University Olomouc is a university with long-standing tradition. Founded in the 16th century, it is the oldest university in Moravia and the second-oldest university in the Czech Republic. In particular, the Faculty offers study programs related to sports, physical activity, active lifestyle, and human motion, and has a well-developed expertise in the field of sport for development.

Fotbal pro Rozvoj
Prague, Czech Republic

Fotbal pro Rozvoj is active in 6 different regions of the Czech Republic and involves more than 300 youth each year through its "fair-play" league. This project plays an important role towards the social cohesion of youth at risk of social challenges due to their ethnic affiliation, social background, lack of parental role modelling or living conditions.

SportandDev.org
Copenhagen, Denmark

The International Platform on Sport and Development (www.SportandDev.org), connects the global sport and development community and provides them with the latest resources, policy guides and best practices. The platform was founded in 2003 and is the leading hub for the sport and development community to share knowledge, build good practice, coordinate with others and create partnerships.

European Network of Sport Education
Vienna, Austria

The European Network of Sport Education (ENSE, formerly known as ENSSEE) is an international non-profit organisation and has been active in the field of sport education in Europe since 1989. Today, ENSE works to create learning opportunities for individuals leading, developing, and supporting sport activities.
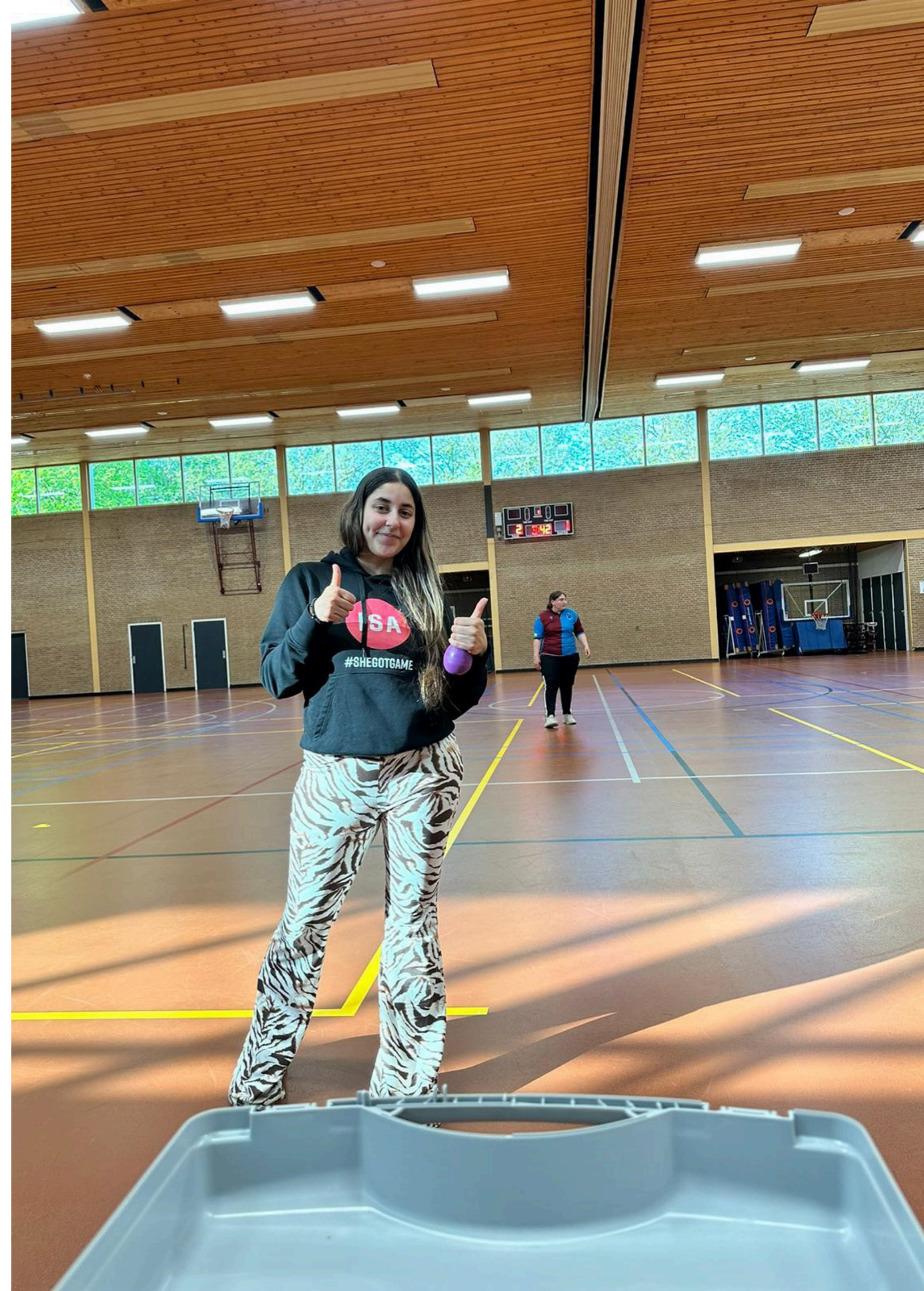
In Safe Hands

Bochum, Germany

The Bunter Ball project uses a science-based approach to emotional, social and intercultural competencies. It engages primary school children in an area where residents have a wide range of social, economic and cultural backgrounds.

The Living Lab in Germany pairs the not-for-profit organisation In Safe Hands e.V. with the German Sport University Cologne. The activities are centred around the Sport for Development project managed by In Safe Hands e.V. While building the Living Lab, meetings, interviews, interactive methods, observations and a focus group were organised with project participants and stakeholders.

The Living Lab brings together the opinions and interests of the project's target group, children from a primary school in Bochum, and other stakeholders, including experts from In Safe Hands e.V., academics, teachers and educators.

In Safe Hands e.V. is a German not-for-profit organisation located in Hürth, delivering programmes within schools in Herne and Bochum, North Rhine Westphalia. At the centre of these activities is the sport-pedagogical project Bunter Ball. The project is designed for each participating school class over four school years and accompanies them through the entire primary school level.

The weekly sports education groups are firmly anchored in the everyday life of our partner schools. Bunter Ball's competence model and curriculum are based on a scientifically derived concept and focus explicitly on children's emotional, social and intercultural competencies, both of which are essential to greater social cohesion.

In the context of the Living Lab, the main Bunter Ball activities occur at the primary school Auf dem Alten Kamp between the districts Wiemelhausen and Querenburg in Bochum. These are two significantly different districts, but as the school includes students from both areas, the two areas are relevant to understanding the local context.

Generally speaking, Wiemelhausen is an older, more affluent and less diverse district. There, about 16% of the population have a migration background, unemployment is about 7%, and seniors comprise 32% of the population. In contrast, almost half of Querenburg's inhabitants have a migration background, seniors account for only 20% of the population, and unemployment is twice as high, at about 15%.

In these neighbourhoods, there are a few other sporting or social offers, mainly concentrated in Wiemelehausen. These include the multisport club Concordia Wiemelhausen 08/10 e.V., as well as some youth work offers in Querenburg.

The stark differences between the two neighbourhoods also translate to the programme, as kids in Bunter Ball come from various backgrounds, speaking languages ranging from German to Arabic to Turkish to French. For the purposes of the Living Lab, we are focusing uniquely on one group within the school. The participants started primary school in 2021 at the beginning of the Sport and Social Cohesion Lab project and are currently in third grade.

A limited number of stakeholders are involved in the programme, which is in part due to the structured and more closed nature of the school setting. These stakeholders include In Safe Hands e.V. (permanent staff & volunteers), the school, educators and the Arbeiterwohlfahrt (AWO) Ruhr-Mitte.

The AWO, in particular, is the funder of the all-day activities at the Bunter Ball partner schools and the official cooperation partner of In Safe Hands e.V. Initially, In Safe Hands e.V. coaches were responsible for implementing the Bunter Ball sport sessions. However, based on feedback received during the Living lab process, since 2022 sessions have been co-delivered through tandems of coaches and local educators with a view to transitioning fully to educator-led sessions.

The Hague University of Applied Sciences

The Hague, Netherlands

In 2007, the Dutch Minister of Living, Neighbourhoods and Integration described Morgenstond as one of the 40 "most problematic" neighbourhoods in the Netherlands (RTL Nieuws, 2019). This meant the area received special attention from the national and municipal governments to help alleviate the often very complex problems that existed in the neighbourhood. However, the programme, which was supposed to run for at least ten years, was discontinued prematurely by a new national government. It is hard to say to what degree the efforts of the programme were successful.

The area is also ethnically diverse, with migrants making up almost 75% of Morgenstond's population (Allecijfers, 2022), while in the country as a whole 25% of residents have a non-Western migrant background. People with a Turkish, Surinam and Moroccan background are especially well-represented. The average annual income in the neighbourhood is approximately 21,000 euros, compared to the national average of 36,500 (Allecijfers, 2022). The average education level is also below average.

Many of the neighbourhood's inhabitants also don't have the opportunity to practice sports. The Living Lab aims to address this by offering regular sports activities, as well as a venue for people to expand their social networks and connect with each other.

Many stakeholders coordinate project activities, including The Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS), who are a partner on the Sport and Social Cohesion Lab project. Prior to the Sport and Social Cohesion Lab project, THUAS was already working in Morgenstond through organising several activities, mainly focussed on providing migrant women with a chance to participate in sports activities.

This Living Lab engages a wide range of stakeholders and target groups, adjusting the approach based on research and the needs of the community. It operates in a diverse neighbourhood of The Hague where sports opportunities are scarce.

The Living Lab in The Hague focuses on the neighbourhood of Morgenstond in The Hague. The coordinating organisation is The Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS), who works together with the local municipality and many other stakeholders. The project offers sports activities to groups that typically don't have many opportunities to do physical activity, adjusting the approach based on research and the needs of the community.

With approximately 20,000 inhabitants, Morgenstond is a relatively populated neighbourhood in The Hague. However, the total area of the neighbourhood is rather small, making it quite densely populated.

International Sports Alliance

Den Bosch, Netherlands

The SheGotGame programme trains teenage girls to become leaders, coaches and role models. It focuses on a neighbourhood with low education levels, low female participation in sports, high levels of obesity, and large numbers of people from migrant backgrounds.

The International Sports Alliance (ISA) is a non-profit organisation located in 's-Hertogenbosch (otherwise known as Den Bosch), the Netherlands. It has 20 years' experience in activating the social power of sports in underserved communities for young people aged 12 and older. The organisation's main strategy is to offer – together with community coaches and community organisations – active, fun and safe sports activities for everyone to join. ISA believes that by activating the potential of young people, underserved communities will change by connecting where it sparks – on the playing field, where creativity, cooperation, talent, drive, character and self-confidence are unlocked.

In the Netherlands, in particular 's-Hertogenbosch, teenage girls have far fewer opportunities to participate and engage in community sports activities; 35% of girls in the country never or hardly ever play sports. The rate is higher for teenage girls in urban settings and for girls from minority backgrounds. And of course, COVID had a huge negative influence on young people's health and well-being. Sports offer girls opportunities to be healthy, to team up positively with peers and mentors, and to develop essential life and leadership skills in a fun and safe way that they would miss out on if they could not participate.

To tackle this challenge, ISA developed the SheGotGame intervention programme. This focuses on teenage girls from a local community, who are trained as girl leaders and coaches to independently facilitate sports activities for other teenage girls. The programme helps the girl leaders and coaches to develop their coaching and leadership skills, to create local role models for the youth and to increase (sports) participation within the community.

ISA started the SheGotGame intervention programme in a community well known to them, Hambaken. It is in 's-Hertogenbosch, the same city as ISA's headquarters, and is known for its many social challenges. About 38% of the population have a migration background, 45% have a low level of education or no education, and the obesity level among the population is high at 59%. Also, in 2017 the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs decided to enact a special law to regulate the number of low-income persons in Hambaken, which is only implemented in communities with a particularly high number of social issues.

The direct stakeholders of the programme are in Hambaken, namely the local schools, residents, girl leaders, coaches and the youth organisation PowerUp073. The youth organisation provided the girl leaders and coaches who participated in the programme, and the schools offered the project promote activities and help find participants. Another important stakeholder is the S-PORT. This is an initiative of the municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch, which provided sports halls and sports venues for the programme in order to facilitate the activities.

Sport Against Racism Ireland

Dublin, Ireland

The Pobal HP Deprivation Index reports that 14 smaller districts are "disadvantaged" and ten are "very disadvantaged", with a total of 16,103 disadvantaged residents of the north east inner city, making it one of the most disadvantaged areas in Ireland (Pobal, cited in ICON, 2022). Newer residents are more likely to be affluent, while historically local populations are more likely to be disadvantaged.

There are ongoing efforts to regenerate the disadvantaged districts through community engagement and empowerment, building cross-community cohesion, and interventions targeting at-risk youth through youth leadership programmes as alternative pathways to crime. These include NEIC Dublin, a government initiative launched in 2016 to oversee the long-term social and economic regeneration of the area. Sport is a known development strategy and leveraging additional sports programmes has been identified as a key task action to help regenerate the community (Dillon, 2017).

Sport Against Racism Ireland (SARI) use sport to challenge discrimination, promote cultural integration and drive social inclusion and cohesion throughout Ireland. In 2021, SARI led the Football for Unity Festival in Dublin in partnership with key local stakeholders as part of the UEFA European Football Championship 60th anniversary celebrations.

This was SARI's first opportunity to operate within this community and the response was positive, with requests from stakeholders and parents to continue working in the area. Building on the foundation that was laid during the Football for Unity Festival, the Living Lab was initiated with input from local community, with weekly sports sessions taking place for children in the area.

This Living Lab offers sports activities for children in a neighbourhood of Ireland's capital where many face significant economic, social and environmental challenges. It prioritises relationship building over producing results for reporting, an approach that will lead to greater social cohesion.

Around 1.35 million people live in Dublin, almost 25% of the Republic of Ireland's population. The north east inner city is steeped in history and has a vibrant community; however, it also faces significant social, economic and environmental challenges and the effects of intergenerational drug use and crime, including gang activities.

The area's population has increased by 78% in 20 years, to almost 45,000. Within its 11 districts, which are further divided into 173 smaller areas, there are pockets of both high levels of disadvantage and affluence.

Fotbal pro Rozvoj
Olomouc, Czech Republic

This Living Lab works with young people from low-income families who live in socially isolated neighbourhoods on the outskirts of cities. Alongside football matches, participants learn to speak up, express opinions, reflect on emotions, give and receive feedback, and solve potential conflicts or tensions.

The Living Lab in the Czech Republic pairs the NGO INEX-SDA with Palacký University Olomouc. The activities are centred around the Football for Development project managed by INEX-SDA. While building the Living Lab, meetings, interviews and focus groups were organised with project participants and stakeholders in the Olomouc region, including the cities of Prostějov, Přerov and Olomouc.

The Living Lab brings together the opinions and interests of the project's target group, children and youth from disadvantaged backgrounds, and stakeholders including experts from INEX-SDA, academics, social workers, teachers, local and regional public administration representatives and university students.

In the Czech Republic, a lot of young people are still left out of the social dynamic that the rest of society enjoys. Those young people often live on the isolated outskirts of cities and sometimes belong to discriminated minorities. They also lack access to regular forms of positive socialisation and development outside school.

After-school programmes are often not present or affordable. The Czech school system is also often responsible for the further reproduction of isolation and social injustices: it often doesn't offer disadvantaged young people the chance to meet other people, and it does not provide them with the same quality of education.

To tackle this issue, INEX-SDA's programme Football for Development (Fotbal pro rozvoj) has developed non-formal tools for education through football, in cooperation with local youth and social centres. It provides social workers with tools on how to develop social skills among the youth who visit their centre. It also organises a fair-play football league that goes beyond the pure football match to create a space for interaction, dialogue and understanding around the game using the so-called football3 methodology.

Through long-term participation in the league, the young people travel to different neighbourhoods. They meet other young people, and talk to each other to make up rules and also make sure they are respected in a post-match reflection.

This encourages the socialisation of the young people. It also engages them in a pedagogical journey where alongside the game they learn to speak up, express opinions, reflect on emotions, give and receive feedback, and solve potential conflicts or tensions.

The direct stakeholders of the programme are mainly local institutions involved in non-formal education: social centres, youth clubs and other centres for leisure time activity. The indirect stakeholders are the municipalities (eg., Prague, which provides funding) and football clubs such as FK Teplice, AFK Olomouc and Banik Sokolov, which provide facilities and promote events.

Programme participants are mostly young people aged 10-18 living on the outskirts of large cities (Prague, Usti nad Labem, Olomouc and Pilsen) who visit local social centres. They usually come from low-income families and live in more socially isolated neighbourhoods. Their parents often face irregular employment.

Sometimes they also have problems with stable housing and are more vulnerable due to single-parenthood or the recomposition of the family. Some also come from the Roma ethnic minority and face further discrimination due to their origins and culture.

This gap between more open and more closed settings is not by accident. The SSCL project recognises that many programmes wish to move towards more participatory approaches within their work, and that these programmes operate in a variety of settings. Thus, it is important for this Toolkit to recognise and integrate perspectives from these various settings, and provide guidance on implementing the Living Lab setting across this range of contexts. Broadly speaking, we recognise that some of the Living Labs operate in more open settings, whereby the type, timing, location and facilitation of activities may be more easily and flexibly changed, whereas other organisations operate in more closed contexts and that potential changes to the elements may be more challenging. We visually represent these different contexts on the continuum below.
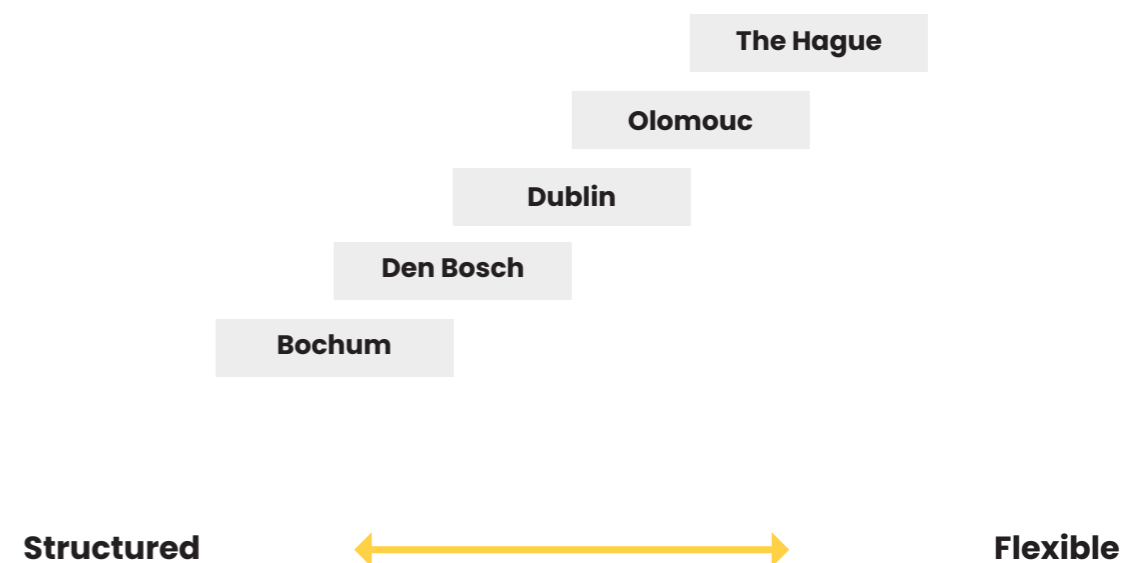
Figure 1. Structured-Flexible continuum for SSCL Living Labs.

Moving forward in this toolkit, we provide general guidance and advice based on our cumulative experience across the settings, as well as specific examples from all of our Living Labs. We also reflect on the unique potential and role of sport within our Living Labs.

Situating the Living Labs

Open innovation, co-creation, stakeholder engagement and iterative processes of trial and error are often considered as core parts of the Living Lab concept. Yet Living Labs are also inherently meant to take place in real-life settings, and those very settings can shape the possibilities for innovation and co-creation. This has certainly been the case in the context of the SSCL project. For instance, The Hague Living Lab operates flexibly within a number of community organisations and spaces, which in turn allows the nature, timing and location of activities to change. In contrast, the Bochum Living Lab is situated within a weekly school-based programme where time and location are already determined by the academic schedule.

Living Labs and the Role of Sport

Though Living Labs were originally applied in more research and design-oriented contexts, today this approach is used across a variety of health, social and cultural sectors. In our particular contexts, we have chosen sport as a vehicle to help bring different community members together and foster the interaction inherent to a Living Lab. Thus, even though guidance provided throughout this toolkit can help support social actors looking to implement Living Labs in a variety of contexts and settings, we want to reflect on some of the elements that make Living Labs in the sport context unique.

Firstly, some level of end-user engagement is pre-existent within most sporting contexts. Sport is, after all, a highly interactive, social and physical endeavour. Very little sport programming can take place without minimum involvement of end-users. This social nature of sport provides numerous opportunities to bridge gaps between user and stakeholder groups, as this inherently interactive setting can offer chances for groups to come together, exchange and interact. Indeed, the social and relational qualities of sport are often perceived as boosts for encouraging participatory approaches and developing overall social cohesion.

Secondly, and relatedly, sport is often embedded in numerous structures away from the pitch. Sport is frequently multi or inter-sectoral, and thus provides opportunities to connect with a multitude of stakeholders from the health, education, business and community sectors. For instance, in different contexts, formal responsibility for sport may be located in government departments dedicated to sport, culture, education or health. On one hand, this means that sport-based Living Labs may provide opportunities to connect and involve various relevant stakeholders from across multiple areas. On the other hand, as responsibility for sport is often spread between actors in these sectors, there may be issues around competing agendas or lack of perceived responsibility for sport. These differing perspectives and agendas must be kept in mind for any sport-based Living Lab.

Despite the opportunities offered by the sport setting, we must be mindful that sport has some issues itself. The type of sports used, the norms associated with those sports, as well as the broader social-cultural environment around sport can present unique challenges (Sanders, 2016). With all its potential, sport can also be a somewhat closed and conservative environment that can (unintentionally) exclude perceived outsiders such as ethnic minorities or members of the LGBTQ+ community (e.g., Nobis & El-Kayed, 2019). Even well-intentioned programmes aiming to support social development may end up reproducing existing structures that marginalize certain groups (Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011). Living Labs using sport must remain aware of the many sides of sport, and take care that the power of sports can flourish properly, contributing to the Living Lab's positive social aims.

Components of a Living Lab

Living Labs represent a practice-driven approach that facilitates collaboration and innovation amongst community members and relevant stakeholders in a real-life setting (Malmberg et al., 2017). The exact definition, structure and goals of a Living Lab may however slightly change depending on the context of that Lab. For instance, some Living Labs may focus on product development and prototyping as opposed to social issues (Malmberg et al., 2017). Thus, it is important to not only define a Living Lab, but to clarify the relevant components within our unique context.
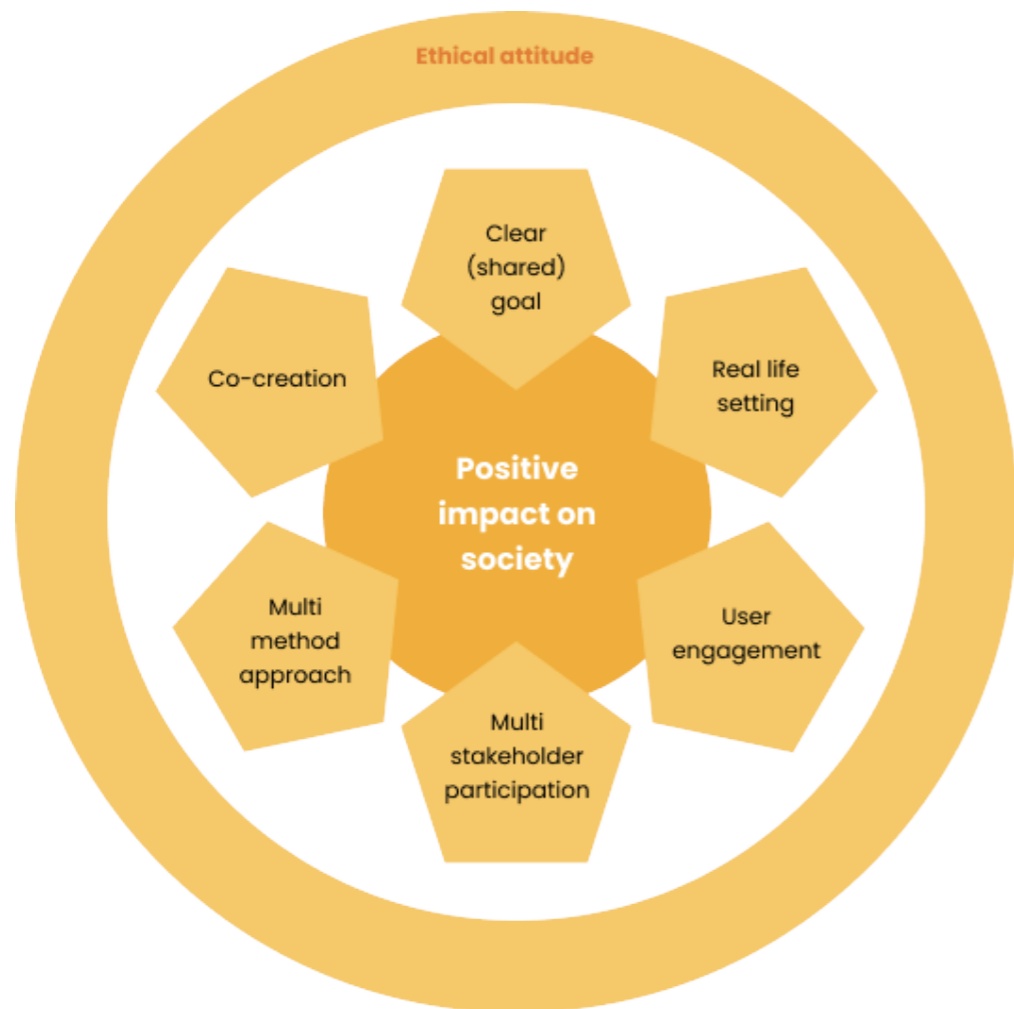
Figure 2. Main components of a Living Lab. Developed by research group Impact of Sport at The Hague University of Applied Sciences, based on ZonMW (2020) and Malmberg et al. (2017).

Building on existing work concerning Living Labs (Malmberg et al., 2017; ZonMW, 2020) as well as our own experiences delivering sport-based, socially oriented Living Labs, we distinguish eight components that are inherent and relevant for a Living Lab, as shown in the figure below.

In the following sub-sections, we provide a more comprehensive definition of these components as well as practical advice on how to implement them. Having said that, we recognise that Living Labs are inherently contextual and should be adapted to local realities. Thus, the following sections reflect our understanding and are not meant to be prescriptive. Rather, we aim to leave room to interpret the various components according to each local context. Nonetheless, we also understand the need for guidance, inspiration and advice when it comes to implementing Living Labs, and therefore we provide examples from our different partners and suggest key reflection questions for each component. We aim to be transparent and recognise that participatory approaches like Living Labs do not always run smoothly, and we share some of the challenges we faced and potential solutions.

1. Positive Impact on Society

The aim of the Living Lab is to contribute to a positive impact on society, be it through working towards the goal identified by stakeholders in the Living Lab (Duiveman, 2021) or through the broader process of engaging different members of the community. This asks for a sensitive and cooperative way of working by all stakeholders. Thus, the additional components we describe in this section are meant to provide guidance, but ultimately should not interfere with the main, positive social goals of a Living Lab.

2. An Ethical Attitude

We emphasise the need for reflection and an ethical attitude. It is not that Living Labs per se carry a particular risk of being unethical. Rather, we recognise that ethics are involved in any social process, and are of importance and relevance to Living Labs especially, as there may be significant differences in power between stakeholders (e.g. community members versus politicians).

We consider an ethical attitude a continuous factor in working in and with a Living Lab. Therefore, this component is placed as a circle around the different components. This implies constant reflection on the overall collaboration and the activities. Is what we do the 'right' thing to do in this specific context and for who?

In other words, every step of the Living Lab is underpinned by reflection and 'ethics work'. Sarah Banks (1995) describes ethics work as the effort to recognise ethical aspects and power processes and to reflect upon your own position and that of others. For instance, for many of those involved, recognising the knowledge and ways of knowing of other groups may challenge pre-existing norms and require high levels of transparency and trust. Working in and with a Living Lab, besides working with the different components, also asks for 'ethics work'. Despite our best efforts to foster shared decision-making and co-creation, issues around power relations and ethical concerns will emerge throughout a Living Lab. Therefore, in the next sub-sections, we include key reflection questions to ask ourselves continuously during the process of working in a Living Lab.

3. Clear and Shared Goal

The start of a Living Lab has its roots in a local challenge, shared problem or desire for change by multiple stakeholders in a real-life setting. In defining a clear goal, it is important to gain a mutual understanding amongst the multiple stakeholders. Different stakeholders have different meanings and goals. It is important to make

room for different opinions and solutions to develop a clear common goal among all stakeholders. Also, this goal can change during the process of the Living Lab. Living Labs are inherently dynamic and flexible, and it is perfectly normal that goals may change or evolve as time passes and situations change. Mutual interest is crucial. Most important is to search for common ground and respect the differences in meaning, goals and solutions.

Challenges and Tips

The trust and engagement of local stakeholders is necessary for good cooperation. Living Labs require collaboration between various stakeholders and local organisations can help facilitate these partnerships by providing support, contacts and other resources. In addition, these organisations have a far better understanding of the local context, including the community's needs, culture and practices. They can provide insights into the challenges and opportunities that exist in the area and can play an important role defining the goals and needs of a community. Yet there may be a lack of trust and familiarity between stakeholders that can hinder work towards a clear and shared goal.

Thus, before directly launching into activities, ensure that you spend sufficient time to build trust with local organisations. This can be achieved by having a structural presence in the community, planning partner meetings with local organisations, listening to their ideas and regularly sharing information about the activities in the Living Lab. Informally attending community events is also a way to get a feeling for the organisations and the community, and to become further embedded in local life. Frequent contact with local organisations also helps to manage expectations and judgements about the Living Lab. By following these actions local organisations will be much more likely to contribute to the Living Lab and to a clear, shared goal.

The Hague University of Applied Sciences

When we started the Living Lab to enhance social cohesion in Morgenstond in The Hague through sport and valuable encounters with the different partners, there were several meetings to establish the common goal and vision. This was based on a theory of change. The ultimate goal of the Living Lab was set together. In the sessions, the stakeholders and the experts jointly identified the critical success factors/inputs, outputs, activities and outcomes of the Living Lab using post-its. By doing this together we tried to create consensus about the common goal, vision and mission. In practice, however, it turned out that once the common goal had been established, it was not understood in the same way by all partners within the different organizations.

Research carried out by public governance researchers (THUAS) on various Living Labs, including the Morgenstond Living Lab, also found that one of the most important points was the lack of a clear common goal. There was a consensus at the level of the municipal sports director, academic partners, and the education manager, but the professionals working in the Living Lab had different ideas about its purpose. This led to a lot of discussion and ultimately to less action in the team and more delays in taking action in the neighbourhood.

Establishing a common goal therefore seems to be important for the success of the Living Lab and the kind of impact you can have in the neighbourhood. On the basis of the practical experience and the conclusion of the research carried out, the lessons learned were examined and several new sessions were held to critically review and re-establish the goal. This has resulted in everyone taking on a different role, more shared ownership and more actions and activities emerging from the Living Lab.

It is therefore important not only to set the common goal, but also to keep the governance structure under review and to keep thinking about the common goal. If bottlenecks arise, identify them and get to work on them in co-creation. However, it is not always easy (and sometimes frustrating and time consuming) to balance leadership and coordination with a fully democratic and participatory approach. That is a fine line to balance.

Do	Don't	Key Questions
• Explore what kind of local challenges all stakeholders, including end-users, face. • Get more insight into the meaning of a specific challenge. • Analyse and define a shared challenge and a shared goal together. • Inform and give ownership to the stakeholders about the goals and be transparent about it: (e.g. share transcripts or notes from interviews and meetings). • Keep reflecting on the goals and if needed adapt them. • Structure goals using visual, practical concepts (e.g. theory of change). • Always refer back to the cycle phases. • Continuously check whether stakeholders define common goal in same way. • Invest enough time in defining the goals.	• Don't expect results in a short period of time. • Don't hesitate to redefine the goals collectively. • Don't ignore the bottle necks (ex. stakeholders having different motivations to take part in the Living Labs) you are facing during the process and address them. • Don't hurry and rush the project.	• Is this challenge for everyone urgent and relevant? • Is the goal we defined still relevant to create a positive impact? And for who? • Do we need to adapt or change our goal? • Are all stakeholders on the same page regarding the goal we are working on?

4. Real-Life Setting

We define a 'real-life setting' as a setting in a specific neighbourhood or context wherein the problem definition and the actions are a joint responsibility. Thus, this contrasts with other forms of 'test' or 'field' labs where the setting is more controlled and decision-making more top-down. The real-life setting means that we try to understand and work on a specific challenge together with different institutions and community members. Implementing a Living Lab within a real-life setting encourages us to break through institutional boundaries and work collaboratively on a shared goal while also recognising the inherent spatial, temporal, cultural and logistical realities of our particular setting.

Challenges and Tips

As we document above, real-life settings may vary significantly in terms of the conditions and flexibility associated with that setting. Some settings may allow end users and stakeholders to develop activities more flexibly, while others may impose inherent restrictions as it relates to time, location and materials. Furthermore, organisations starting Living Labs may traditionally be associated with certain sports or pedagogical approaches (e.g. football), and there may not be an immediate willingness to deviate from those approaches.

As such, it is crucial to understand where flexibility exists and where restrictions may manifest themselves within these real-life settings. That way, user and stakeholder engagement can take place in honest, transparent fashion and the parties involved can co-create activities while keeping any inherent restrictions in mind. Over time, it is also important to revise and reconsider these restrictions, as real-life settings are bound to change and evolve.

Fotbal pro Rozvoj

In the Czech Republic, the Living Lab resides within the "Fotbal pro Rozvoj" (Football for Development, "FFD") programme, which has been ongoing for over 15 years. The project is operated by INEX-SDA (INEX), which enriches the Living Lab through its practical experience and expertise in "football3", a participatory football methodology. The second implementing partner, Palacký University Olomouc and its Faculty of Physical Culture and Faculty of Science, adds a theoretical overview as well as knowledge of research designs and methods to the Living Lab.

The location of activities of both partners was the main reason for choosing the Olomouc region with a population of approximately 650 000 individuals. Specifically, the lab focuses on the localities of Olomouc, Přerov, Prostějov and Šumperk. In each location, INEX collaborates with other social work organisations (e.g. youth clubs and drop-in centres) that are regularly in touch with the target groups of the FFD project - mainly children and youth aged from 10 to 18. Around these locations, small groups of mainly Roma children are organised into teams playing in the "League of fair-play football" (LFF in Czech), each with its own coordinator who facilitates the team and organises its travels to regular matches held once a month. Matches and tournaments use an adapted, fairplay-focused variation of football known as football3. On top of the regular match days, FFD organises public open days dedicated to social cohesion and fair-play. The aim is to allow stakeholders in the region to experience the football intervention (showcasing the pedagogical intervention emphasising dialogue over performance) directly with the target group and protagonists of the FFD programme.

Within the FFD programme, the foundation of a Living Lab was already in place in the Olomouc region, as the programme is structured around collaboration among INEX and a network of non-formal institutions.

The Living Lab further brought several groups of stakeholders together and instigated their mutual discussion. First, all possible stakeholders active in the region were identified. Second, some of them were brought together to discuss how sports can be utilised to address some current social problems in the region. Third, several groups of children and youth from the target population of the FFD participated in group discussions. Giving voice to the target group of mostly socially marginalised and disadvantaged young persons (clients of drop-in centres, families without fathers, beneficiaries of social support) is one of the key positive outcomes of our Living Lab. Finally, the inclusion of UPOL sports studies students in visits to the LFF matches and their volunteering potential is also a positive outcome of the Living Lab. The students not only learned new methods of using football for group work and gained insights into an unfamiliar social context but they also brought new stimuli or passion for sports to the youth participating in the programme.

The long-term aim of the collaboration is to reproduce a similar Living Lab in other contexts where FFD is active - e. g. region of Ústí nad Labem and Karlovy Vary, which are known as disadvantaged regions of the Czech Republic and where participants are greatly affected by social exclusion and the lack of engagement from external stakeholders. In this regard, the Living Lab has opened up new opportunities and put light on social cohesion through sport.

Do	Don't	Key Questions
• Consider that the settings can have different contexts and conditions. • Try to connect to already existing settings (e.g. a community center, a youth club, etc.). • Explore the already existing connections and find ways to complement each other's goals.	• Don't build something without taking into account the existing stakeholders and settings.	• How do we work together in this real-life setting? When do we meet and with who? • Do end-users know and recognise this location? • Do we still need to hang on to a specific location? Or, in the case of a defined area, do we need a location for our Living Lab?

5. User Engagement

End-users are the experiential experts of the local challenge the Living Lab is addressing. Therefore, one of the most important elements of a Living Lab is the engagement of the end-users. In short, the knowledge of community members (i.e. the experiential experts) is a key factor in the success of any Living Lab.

End-users should be engaged in the Living Lab from the initial phase on so that the shared goal can be developed to address their needs and that solutions can be jointly co-created. What do the users, or community members, want to change or work on, and how?

Creating space for local knowledge of community members is not always easy, and understanding why community members do or do not participate in activities can be challenging (Visser, Koster, & van der Waal, 2021). It takes time to involve people from the local neighbourhood and asks for adaptation from the professionals. In particular, input from users or community members may at times be seen as a threat to individuals who have invested a great deal in more traditional knowledge, such as researchers or consultants. Therefore, as Brett Smith and colleagues (2022) note, it is crucial that power is shared with end users and relationships are built on mutual respect, trust, transparency and humility. In contrast, as Schrevel et al. (2020) describe, not creating enough space and time for user participation leads to an unsatisfying end product for all stakeholders.

However, it is a must to connect with, and include the end-users who are living in this context and who are, therefore, the experiential experts. These end-users, or experiential experts, are the ones who need to be happy with the changes that are made during the process of the Living Lab. Only then can the Living Lab approach create a positive and sustainable impact in the community and on society.

Challenges and Tips

During the implementation of our Living Labs, we sometimes struggled to attract and retain users to be part of our activities, especially in terms of getting users to actively take part in feedback and co-creation processes. For instance, during ISA's first attempts at establishing a Living Lab, there was too limited contact with local partners and the community members. Or, in the German context, the nature of the school setting and data protection regulations limited attempts to engage with parents. A lack of engagement can have several causes. Community members might lack confidence in the implementing organisation, not see the value of participating in the Living Lab, or not know about the Living Lab at all. No matter the cause, without community involvement, there is no possibility of creating a successful and sustainable Living Lab.

To mitigate this challenge, strong partnership with local stakeholders are essential to reach community members of your Living Lab, as they know the local context best and can act as a link to the Living Lab. Moreover, community members should be aware of the Living Lab activities so that they can participate. Implementing organisations should thoroughly communicate their Living Lab activities and ensure that community members receive all information.

Once community members engage in the Living Lab, it is important to be flexible and open about what that engagement looks like. Though implementers may expect engagement in the form of volunteering on committees or in activities, such formalised engagement may not be for everyone. Be sure to actively recognise the value and contributions of end users, even if they do not meet initial, more narrow expectations. Likewise, be mindful of existing power relations. Implementing organisations often have paid staff to deliver Living Lab activities, whereas users are expected to engage on a volunteer basis. Consider devoting resources to tackling those imbalances, including offering compensation to active community members.

Sport Against Racism Ireland

In 2021 SARI led UEFA'S EURO 2020 Football for Unity Festival in Dublin in partnership with key local stakeholders. This was SARI's first opportunity to operate within this community and the response was positive, with requests from stakeholders and parents to continue working in the area. The Dublin Living Lab was able to build on the foundation that was laid during the Football for Unity Festival for initial outreach.

Through focus group discussions with the stakeholder and community groups, children were identified as a priority group. Many teenagers in the area become involved in gang activities and it was felt that engaging with children before they reached this point would be valuable.

The children attending the weekly sessions range from five to 12 years old. There is a mix of boys and girls although predominantly boys attend. Our experience was that as boys became the dominant group, girls became frustrated and stopped coming. We now run a second session at the same time for the girls with a mix of sporting activities.The vulnerabilities of the children in this neighbourhood include poverty, unstable home lives, potential for substance abuse, proximity to drug dealing, poor literacy, marginalisation, violence in neighbourhood, abuse, and potential for racism.

An increasing number of asylum-seekers and refugees seeking international protection (IPAs/International Protection Applicants) have been moved to the area since the Living Lab first started. The Living Lab coaches took the opportunity to discuss this situation with the children, including why the asylum-seekers had to leave their homes. The coaches asked the group if they would like to invite the refugee children to join the group, which they were happy to do. Many of the new arrivals go to school with the local children. In some cases, there were tensions from school appearing at the Living Lab sessions, but they were able to work together on a team and learn about each other. There are now around six IPAs and five Ukrainians attending regular sessions.

The Living Lab has a strong focus on modelling and recognising positive behaviour. Since January 2023, the lab has run a monthly award. The children are marked out of five for behaviour, attendance, engagement and performance each week and the participant with the highest monthly score wins a voucher and certificate of excellence. The same child cannot win twice. As the second girls' activity group was set up, there are now two awards each month, one for boys and one for girls.

To reward the participants for their effort and behaviour, a group outing was arranged in the lead up to the May Bank Holiday. The children were given the opportunity to agree amongst themselves where they would go. Jumpzone, an Inflatable Sports Adventure park approximately 8 kilometres from the neighbourhood, was selected by the children.

The Hague University of Applied Sciences

In The Hague, all community members are potential end-users, and therefore sport and social encounters are used to have a social impact in the neighbourhood. The neighbourhood has a population of around 21,000, 73% of whom have a migrant background, compared to the Dutch average of 25%. In addition, the members of the neighbourhood face multiple socio-economic problems, such as poverty, debt, polarization, increasing feelings of insecurity and health problems. It is generally more difficult to reach this target group.

Nevertheless, within the Living Lab we have managed to reach several difficult target groups and to co-create activities within the Living Lab with them.

For example, a group of women from an Islamic background took up sport. They quickly went from 1 to 2 times a week. In the Netherlands, women with an Islamic background are the group that participates least in registered sports. This group of women was approached to form a partnership with one of the primary schools next to the sports centre. Together with the coordinator of the school, flyers were distributed. This way the women knew that what we were going to tell them could be trusted. We also spent a lot of time with the women doing sports (participatory action research). This way of working meant that the women's feedback was processed quickly and the activity adapted. This made the women feel heard, which led to mutual respect and trust. It is therefore important to invest time in building a relationship with the end user. This also allowed for co-creation. The women who participate in sport often provide input, either by attending a meeting, sharing their value of sport in a podcast, focus group or storytelling. They are also sometimes part of presentations given to share the lessons and value of sport in the Living Labs.

Another important part is using key people in the neighbourhood to reach difficult audiences. Recently, a group of boys from a Moroccan immigrant background started playing futsal. This was set up by two Living Lab students who live in the neighbourhood. Without them, we would not have been able to reach them and collect research data from them. They know the neighbourhood, speak the young people's language and have found a good time to play football with the young people. What the young people need most is a sense of autonomy and a place of their own where they can come together. The pupils from the neighbourhood also point out that the use of good key people works well, especially because they see these people as authentic. Young people in particular feel engaged, when there is someone who is motivated to encourage them.

The lesson from the Living Lab in Morgenstond so far is to invest time in the relationship, to be as close as possible to the end user. This creates trust and respect, which in turn creates the possibility of co-creation. Using key people from the neighbourhood is also crucial.

Do	Don't	Key Questions
• Make sure to include different end-users in your Living Lab process. • Adjust to the way end users are able or want to be involved. • Ensure end users have a serious voice in the process and the goal/results. • Consider how to engage people, listen to what people tell you they need to engage. • Recognise, address and value the input of users. • Offer a range of incentives and support to give users space to take leadership. • Have a regular, relatable contact person who communicates with empathy and can find common ground with end-users and stakeholders.	• Presume that a lack of perceived engagement means lack of interest. • Dismiss the material and logistical conditions end-users may need to fully engage.	• Are the end-users included so that they can decide and reflect on the process and goals? • Do we take their voices seriously enough? Do we know what the end-users want? • What are we doing to accommodate the needs and wants of target groups?

6. Multi-Stakeholder Involvement

A vital element of a Living Lab approach is multi-stakeholder involvement. By working and especially learning together, we can learn to understand other perspectives on a specific topic. Moreover, by working with different stakeholders, we get more insight into the different ways people think, act and learn – and can co-create innovative solutions and activities.

It is important to explore and learn which organisations, professionals and informal networks are familiar with or willing to work on the challenge you defined. By getting to know the different possible partners and the way they work on this challenge, you can start to partner with different stakeholders. The context mapping outline presented in the appendix can assist in this task, and the logbook provided can help you track interactions with those stakeholders.

It is crucial to create an equal relation between all stakeholders involved. Though we emphasise the need to properly identify stakeholders early on, stakeholder involvement is a constant and continuous process within Living Labs. Likewise, it is important to clearly define the roles and expectations for stakeholders, and to revisit those expectations regularly.

It is sometimes difficult to determine who is involved and how people or organisations can or cannot influence the process. Therefore, a Living Lab is a learning context. Finding out which stakeholder is involved and who is not is part of the learning process. This involvement can also be flexible. If the goal changes or someone else is needed, other stakeholders can join.

Challenges and Tips

It is crucial that organisations implementing Living Labs have sufficient knowledge of the local context and local partners. Without this knowledge, implementing organisations cannot understand the specific needs of the local community and may not have sufficient initial trust amongst stakeholders, which may result in the Living Lab not connecting with participants and stakeholders. In addition, implementing organisations need to understand what local resources are available and how they can be used to support the Living Lab. Concretely, this means connecting with potential resources such as local organisations with a large network in the community, infrastructure to carry out Living Lab activities and local projects that can provide synergies with the Living Lab.

Before you start with the implementation of your Living Lab, map the local context, potential partner organisations, and local resources. This mapping is a collection of all the local resources and potential partners which may be of additional value

for the implementation of the Living Lab. Once these have been identified, implementing organisations can proceed in a far more efficient and targeted way with the involvement of local partners and resources in their Living Lab.

Sport Against Racism Ireland

In setting up and running the Living Lab, two groups were established: the stakeholder group and the community group. The stakeholder group consists of representatives from various organisations vested in community development in the area including: local police (known as Gardaí in Ireland), Dublin City Council, Dublin NEIC, the City Connects school programme and the Football Association of Ireland.

The community group consists of community members, who either live and/or work in the neighbourhood, in particular those who have taken community leadership roles. For example, a local resident and a former Irish international women's football player who also works at the local community centre. Given their local perspective into the community, this group has been key in shaping the most appropriate set-up of the Living Lab in a way that will be attractive to participants, while providing insight into the specific contextual challenges.

It was decided to keep the stakeholder and community groups separate as the groups were more likely to be open about needs and concerns without the other present. There can sometimes be tensions between the actual community and the stakeholders in authority positions who can be viewed as outside "oversee-ers". Both groups have been engaged in focus groups during the project. The first were held before weekly activities commenced, and these have continued throughout.

A challenge concerning the multi-stakeholder groups has been bringing parents on board. It was hoped in the initial phases of establishing the Living Lab that parents of the children taking part would join the community group. While there is one parent who is very involved and some do occasionally join, there has not been a significant uptake. It was found that direct requests to individuals to engage in specific activities was more effective than general invitations to the parents.

Fotbal pro Rozvoj

To identify the involvement of multi-stakeholders in the Living Lab, INEX cooperated with UPOL. In accordance with the general conception of the Czech Living Lab, we focused on the Olomouc region and used the network of INEX's contacts as a starting point.

Identified stakeholders active on the local and regional level participated in a series of focus groups involving social workers, municipality and regional authority officials or Roma community coordinators (in December 2021 and March 2022). Together with the project partners, the focus groups involved education professionals, social workers and Roma advisors, regional Roma coordinators, municipal officials and NGO staff. These stakeholders agreed that there is no specific "community" they work with. The perceived "community" is, more or less, composed of various target groups, individuals (kids, families) and stakeholders in multiple professional positions and with different competencies.

The youth participants of the FFD programme were identified through the cooperating partners of FFD. There were several discussions with the youth organised, mainly in the Prostějov region. They were asked to describe their experience with FFD, their favourite places for leisure activities, what could be done to improve local options for movement and other activities or how they are satisfied with the surroundings and relationships between local people. These discussions were led by a social worker known by the youth. This choice was made as, contrary to academic or external project managers, the social workers have an established, trusting relationship with the young people. In line with the stakeholders-professionals' point of view, they do not perceive themselves as a compact community. Most of the time, when they address themselves using "we", they mean groups of friends spending a lot of time together and family networks.

Another part of the stakeholders is the students who got involved in the FFD in the Olomouc region and helped within the Living Lab. These were contacted through university networks of the different professors involved in the SSCL project. They motivated their students to be part of the project through several visits to LFF matches. They got involved as observers, participants or even mediators. Through their participation, they do not only bring new perspectives to the Living Lab, but they also contribute to fostering regular engagement and feedback from participants through organising activities and having informal discussions with the youth.

Do	Don't	Key Questions
• Explore which stakeholders are present in the area and possible partners to involve by using a context mapping. • Try and include different stakeholders from different organisations and backgrounds. • Include the end users, as it is their local challenge you want to address. • Develop clear role definitions and communicate regularly on operations. • Have an open process for bringing on new stakeholders. • Define clear roles and expectations for all stakeholders.	• Impose top down decisions. • Ignore power relations between different stakeholders.	• What are the goals and interests of the different stakeholders? What is in it for them? • What are the goals of the possible partners of the Living Lab? • Are the end-users involved, and are we working on their local challenge? • Is there anyone else we need to involve? • What are the power relations and imbalances between stakeholders, and how can imbalances be recognised and addressed?

7. Multi-Method Approach

The Living Lab approach relies on continuous input from users and stakeholders and thus requires a wide range of formal and informal feedback or data collection methods. These methods can be anchored in more traditional academic approaches or more informal, creative or artistic approaches. Either way, in line with the overall ethos of the Living Lab, these methods should be adapted to the local context and be highly participatory. The researcher participates in the field, and multiple methods are possible. The exact goal and context will inform what method is suitable. We outline some possible methods below, and provide examples from our own work. Which method you use depends on the goal, context and persons involved. Traditional quantitative or qualitative methods, as well as more creative methods, can all be suitable.

Participative observation is a method often used in qualitative research. The researcher is part of a specific context and observes interactions and informal talks while participating. It can teach us a lot about a specific context and the persons involved.

Informal talks are used in different settings. You can have an informal talk on the street or during sports. It is often combined with participative observation.

Interviews are a bit more formal way of doing research. The questions are often already set in a structured or unstructured way. The interview is often recorded and transcribed in order to analyse the data.

(Informal) focus groups can also be translated as group discussions. It is a way to explore a subject or to gain more in-depth insights from a specific group of stakeholders. The focus group can be organised with a homogenous or a heterogeneous group. This depends on the topic and the goal of the group discussion. In the appendix, we provide an example of our focus group guidelines focusing on the topic of social cohesion and the needs of the local community.

Surveys offer the advantage of providing standardised, comparable questions for feedback and analysis. Though often anchored in top-down academic approaches, surveys can be designed in collaboration with community members in order to ensure validity and relevance within the Living Lab and local context (e.g. Chilisa, 2020).

Creative based methods such as drawings can be especially helpful to get insight into perspectives of children for which the other methods might be too demanding. Of course, they can also be used for other stakeholder groups.

Challenges and Tips

Living Labs often include various professional or academic organisations that may typically rely on more formalised approaches to collect and analyse information. For instance, some organisations may typically rely on statistical analysis or standardised questionnaires. Such a reliance on formalised methods, however, may limit the scope and pertinence of information collected. Though these more formal methods present benefits, community members and local organisations may provide feedback or collect information in more informal or creative ways.

Organisations implementing Living Labs must therefore remain open and attentive to these seemingly less formal ways of communicating information. As Brett Smith and colleagues (2022) underline, different knowledge bases and contributions should be respected, valued, and combined.

Informal discussions, observations, or creative activities may all provide important clues concerning the needs and wants of local users. Furthermore, Living Labs need to consider the contextual appropriateness of methods. Not everyone will be willing or able to participate in a 90 minute focus group. For instance, as we describe in one of the examples below, playful alternatives might be needed to engage younger community members.

Example | Multi-Method Approach
Fotbal pro Rozvoj

The Living Lab used several methods to approach the different stakeholders. These methods were deeply discussed among the two main partners (UPOL and INEX) in order to take into account the research rigour and local context INEX is working in. The created methodology was also influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic and the impossibility to meet personally at the beginning of the project.

FFD is based on collaboration with social workers and their organisations. As part of the INEX model of cooperation, each participating Czech region is captained by one representative regional coordinator. The participants of the FFD programme (youth active in regular football3 trainings) were interviewed by the Olomouc FFD coordinator and a social worker that is regularly in touch with them. The interview data was collected during the football trainings. The university researchers (together with the local coordinator) decided that they will not intervene in this process as they would be perceived as strangers in the community context. The social worker played an important role as the gatekeeper in identification and reaching the possible Living Lab participants and communicating with different stakeholders.

The other stakeholders (professionals from education agency, municipality social workers and Roma advisors, regional Roma coordinators, municipal social prevention officials and workers from local offices of NGOs providing social work) participated in online focus groups. These were organised in order to see their perception of social work and they jointly discussed the topic of "social cohesion". The focus groups were led in a very open manner giving space to the participants to share what they felt was the most important. Each of the focus groups took around 1 hour.

Regarding regular activities in the FFD even beyond the Living Lab, INEX conducts monthly coordination calls with regional FFD coordinators, where they review the events, progress and needs in each region. This happens every month and provides a platform for exchange of best practices and improvement of processes. In addition, INEX organises strategic planning and evaluation meetings twice per year, which allows them to look deeper into their educational programme and cooperation model. This meeting serves to mainly improve and develop INEX's educational offer and impact. During those meetings, different facilitation methods are used to look at its educational programme critically. As for the participants in the FFD initiatives, INEX is relying on observation from coaches, but also surveys and feedback forms from a selected group of participants.

Finally, we can also mention one of the core methods used within FFD, football3.

Used as a long-term and holistic intervention, this method encourages the participants to create some elements of the game by themselves, for example by deciding on the rules of the game. But most importantly, it also enables gathering systematic feedback from the participants after each game, as the participants are invited to reflect on their playing time and comment on each other's attitude but also on the model itself for 'self-rule setting'. In this regard, we can also consider this method as an approach to engage with the participants and establish a dialogue between them and youth workers who facilitate this method.

Example | Multi-Method Approach

In Safe Hands

In the In Safe Hands programme, different child-adapted methods are used to engage and obtain input from children between the ages of 6 and 11 years old. Yet obtaining input and engagement from children requires special care and consideration. Firstly, children in this age bracket cannot necessarily be approached using conventional methods like focus group discussions. Thus, creative or alternative approaches are needed. Second, and most importantly, it is crucial to gain the trust of the children and provide a safe space during the sessions in which they can provide feedback without being judged.

For this latter point, it is a prerequisite that any person who comes into contact with the children visits the sessions regularly and becomes more and more involved in the exchange with the participants. Regularity and consistency help establish trust and a sense of safety for the children. In addition, child protection measures, such as background checks or child safeguarding education, should always be part of the equation. Ultimately, this person can observe specific aspects through participative observation and thus obtain an impression of what could be improved and what is deteriorating in terms of structure, interaction, communication, type of exercise and participation.

Building on this trust and feelings of safety, the person can conduct a whole feedback interview in a playful way and can ask specific questions to the children. For instance, when In Safe Hands conducts playful feedback interviews, sometimes different coloured cones symbolise the yes and no answers. The cones could be placed anywhere in the gym. After each question, the children are given the task of answering the question with yes or no by running to the corresponding cone. Meanwhile, they can be given certain movement tasks or materials such as balls and use them to playfully move to the cones.

Alternatively, at the end of a session, a mood or feeling can be represented by various colourful items, such as balls or juggling cloth. Here, each colour represents a feeling such as sad, happy, angry, fearful. All balls are collected in a box. Depending on which colour is chosen more, the 'mood picture' takes on a specific colour. Another creative method is used at the end of each session: the word flash round. A teddy bear, ball, or another object is passed around in turn. The child holding the teddy bear gets to say one word as feedback on what they thought of the session.

The feedback of the children can provide a helpful starting point to reflect about the reasons why and what happened during this session and what could be changed in future sessions.

Do	Don't	Key Questions
• Choose methods that fit to the addressed stakeholder group(s). • Consider contextual appropriateness of methods and think about who is the right person to deliver a method. • Embrace the informal learning moments and change course if needed. • Recognise value of formal, informal and creative data collection methods.	• Force usage of formal research methods and data collection. • Get discouraged if one method does not have desired outcome.	• What do we want to know from who? And what do we and others already know? • Why do we use this specific method? • What do we do with the results, what do we learn? • Who is the best person to implement a method?

8. Co-Creation

Working together in a real-life setting with multiple stakeholders is not easy. It requires a safe and open space wherein all stakeholders can speak up and learn from each other. The issues addressed by Living Labs are usually the kind of problems that cannot be solved by one stakeholder or organisation. Co-creation asks for new and innovative ways of working together, wherein equality is a crucial factor (Puerari et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2022).

There are different terms for co-creation. Kalinauskaite and colleagues (2021) speak about transdisciplinary collaboration between a variety of disciplines and a multitude of sectors. This way of working together is a very complex process, depending on interpersonal relationships, contextual factors and other dynamic variables (Kalinauskaite et al., 2021). The success of transdisciplinary collaborations strongly depends on interpersonal qualities and traits of collaborating parties, for example, openness, innovative mindset, and willingness to share and embrace transdisciplinary ethics. Moreover, the process of co-creation is not only about making together. It is also about learning together (Puerari et al., 2018).

Challenges and Tips

Co-creation can be one of the more challenging aspects of Living Labs, and it is highly influenced by all of the other components. As mentioned earlier, it is vital to be mindful of both the restrictions and opportunities afforded by the real-life setting that the Living Lab operates in. Otherwise, there is an inherent risk that co-created ideas may not actually be feasible or implementable, leading to disappointment for stakeholders and users.

A related challenge is to constantly ensure that whatever is being co-created aligns with the goals identified by the Living Lab. Any Living Lab will feature an ongoing process of trial and error. Nonetheless, it is vital that any co-created activities clearly contribute to the positive impact that the Living Lab seeks to achieve. Otherwise, there may be a risk of a sort of 'mission drift', whereby co-created activities may be perceived as interesting but do not necessarily contribute to the goals of the Lab. If this occurs, then stakeholders involved in the Living Lab may need to either rethink the value of the co-created activity or have an open discussion about redefining the goals of the Living Lab.

Example | Co-Creation
In Safe Hands

Within the Bunter Ball project, initially sport sessions were run by two ISH coaches visiting the target school. Given the size (circa 25-30 students) and highly active nature of the groups, two coaches were seen as necessary.

However, the presence of ISH coaches only within the appointed session times inhibits the development of coach-children relationships and prevents coaches from engaging in-depth with particular children. As one ISH coach said in an interview: "In the sessions, I often feel that some don't have enough time or attention and we still have to play". In turn, this makes relationship building challenging, limits coaches' ability to engage with the targeted socio-emotional subjects, and opens up situations where children actively challenge the coaches' authority as they do not see the coaches as possessing the same authority as their teachers. Indeed, the difficulty of managing sessions and connecting with children was highlighted by numerous stakeholders.

Responding to this feedback, during the second year of our Living Lab, it was agreed that every "Bunter Ball" session would be co-led by an ISH coach along with an educator from the local school. In this way, the educator, who is with the children almost every day, has gained their trust and respect and is able to guide them. Likewise, this provides a more consistent figure of trust and authority within the sessions. A supportive and healthy educator-coach dynamic is seen as crucial by all stakeholders. Thus, before launching this new approach, all stakeholders were engaged in discussions to ensure full transparency and clearly establish the goals, roles and responsibilities of all the individuals implementing sessions.

Sport Against Racism Ireland

Initial sessions with the stakeholder and community groups were held in November 2021 to gauge what issues were most important to the neighbourhood and what the Living Lab should focus on. In these sessions, the needs of children in the community were highlighted. The importance for children to have structure and something to do after school that would also be in a fun and safe environment was stressed. Football was identified as the most popular sport for children and adults alike in the neighbourhood. This prompted the decision to establish weekly after school sports sessions for primary school aged children.

Through the outcomes of focus groups and conversations with these groups it was determined early on that, given the sensitivity of working with and supporting this particular community which is so often "left behind", the priority was to build trust with both the children and the community more broadly. As a result, the SARI team has prioritised relationship building and modelling the tenets of social cohesion, over the need to "produce results" in a short space of time for the Living Lab.

It was important to continue to hold meetings with these groups, particularly the community group, throughout. And to identify potential youth leaders from the community who can work with the participants from the inside.

One of the challenges of co-creation, particularly with the stakeholder group, is changes in personnel. For example, having lost some of the original members, due to changes in their workplace, when replacements appointed they are not always as engaged as the original members.

Running various activities within the Living Lab can be impactful. For example, aside from the weekly football session we deliver an Anti-discrimination workshop in the local primary schools and host an annual Football for Unity festival incorporating 7-a-side football tournaments in various age categories. In this way the project becomes multi-faceted and has the potential to reach more people.

Do	Don't	Key Questions
• Have a common agreement on the date, taking into consideration the working hours of the stakeholders involved. Use a tool like doodle. Use it early enough and remind people. • Bring a practical experience to the stakeholders involved (ex. bring students to the practical activities) • Make sure all the stakeholders have a voice in the discussion and process. • Use a hands on approach to the stakeholders and introduction about the whole concept (ex. detailed briefing about the Living Lab approach). • Use a group appropriate language and activity to introduce the concept.	• Forget to do the co-creation, especially with the end-users. • Forget to have the end-users involved.	• What are the goals and possible pathways of the stakeholders? • What are the activities the group wants to do? • What are possible learning outcomes? • How, or in what way, are we contributing to a positive impact on society? • Do we listen to all perspectives? Are they all equally involved? • Can we be open and innovative enough? Or are we holding on to 'old' ways of working?

How to start: Potential steps of a Living Lab

As noted earlier, Living Labs are defined as "user-centred, open innovation ecosystems based on a systematic user co-creation approach, integrating research and innovation processes in real-life communities and settings" (European Network of Living Labs, 2021). The open, dynamic and real-life nature of Living Labs provides significant opportunities for trial, reflection and innovation. This dynamic nature, however, also makes linear, step-by-step guidance unrealistic and impractical.

Thus, we do not advise a fixed way to start a Living Lab. Nevertheless, some logical phases can be distinguished (see, e.g., ZonMW, 2020) and these phases, along with some initial guidance, are described below.

1. Identifying Community Goals

In this first phase, it is important to work on identifying the local challenges and goals. In other words, we must understand what different stakeholders in the community want and why. For our purposes, we understand community as a social unit composed of individuals who share a common geographic location. The exact size and definition of a location, however, is up to each Living Lab to determine.

A range of methods can support this phase, including focus groups, interviews, informal talks and various creative approaches. We expand on potential methods in the next chapter. Irrespective of the exact methods chosen, however, it is essential that end-users and other stakeholders are involved and interested in working together towards a shared goal. It is also crucial to keep in mind that, over time, goals may change and the Living Lab will need to adapt accordingly.

2. Exploring the Realities of Different Stakeholders

In this phase, the aim is to learn more about the community and potentially relevant stakeholders present in the area. In particular, focus is put on understanding different organisations, their realities, aims and activities. Once you get a sense of the different actors, try to work together with people and organisations who are willing to cooperate, and include people with differing perspectives.

One potentially useful way to document these realities is through what we call a context mapping. A context mapping encourages implementing organisations to systematically document the people, organisations, stakeholders and overall context of a given local community. We provide a template for this in the appendix.

3. Co-creating and Learning Through Continuous Reflection

With a multi-stakeholder group, it is essential to explore different perspectives, goals and challenges. By truly listening and trying to learn from each other on an equal basis, co-creation can happen. In other words, users and stakeholders can come together to define activities and approaches that can help achieve shared goals. Try to be open to other perspectives and strategies. Together, you can experiment and learn. After all, a Living Lab is a space for trial, error, reflection and learning.

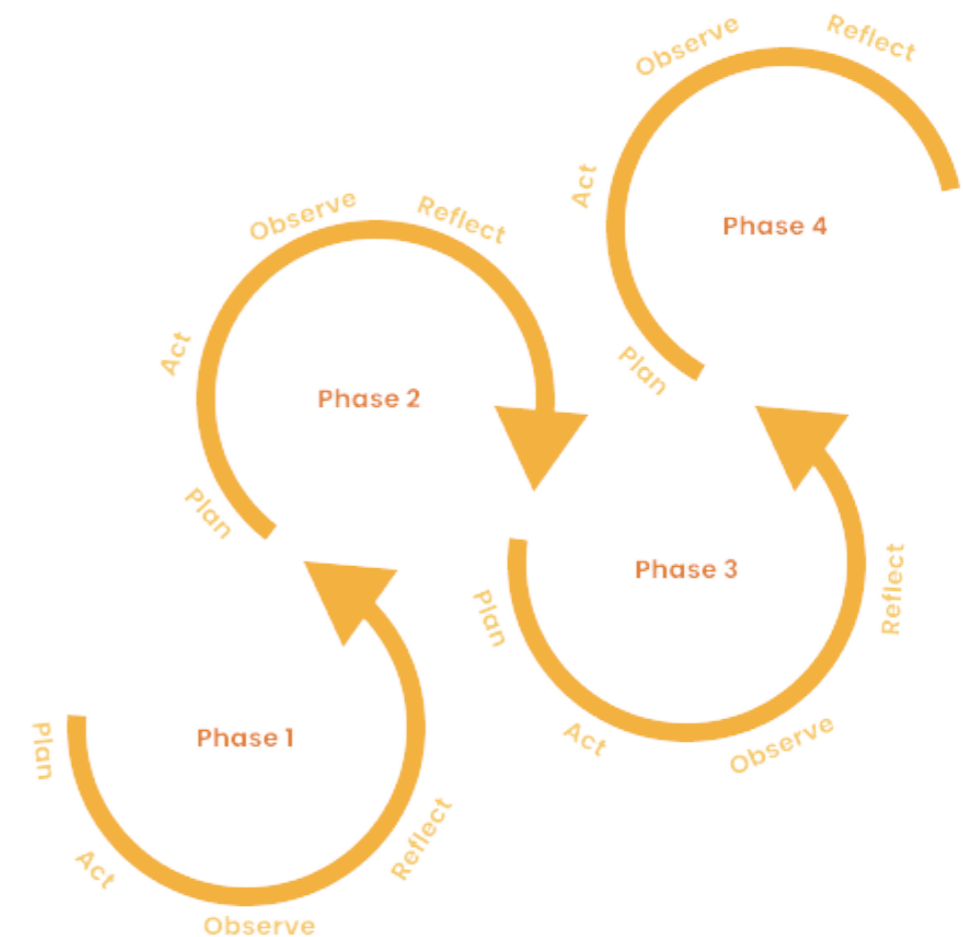Constant reflection on the overall collaboration and the activities is essential in

Figure 3. Based on the cyclic phases, action research is used to act and reflect while doing.

working in and with a Living Lab. As discussed earlier, we describe the need for an ethical attitude or a need for 'ethics work'. Therefore, this phase cannot be seen as a separate phase but must be seen as a constant need. This reflection phase is a continuous process. Because of this, we named this phase 1A, 2A and 3A. After and during each phase, reflection on the collaboration, the activities and the goals is needed to learn, adjust and repeat if necessary. In this figure below, we illustrate the cyclical process of reflection and adjusting.

Final Reflections

The Sport for Social Cohesion Lab (SSCL) project supported the implementation of a Living Lab approach within five sport for social cohesion programmes in four different European countries. This approach was chosen to help programmes directly engage programme participants, generate understanding of the elements that promote social cohesion in a sport setting and to co-create activities and tools to explore, support and understand social cohesion within these communities.

This toolkit documents our experiences designing and implementing Living Labs across these various contexts, and offers guidance to future Living Labs in sport and beyond. Looking back on our work from the past three years, there have been many benefits and lessons learned, and we want to conclude with some final reflections.

In numerous ways, adopting the Living Lab approach has offered benefits to partners and their stakeholders. The project has directly supported partners to more actively integrate participant feedback and to approach stakeholders who were not (yet) typically involved in the organisations' activities. The project has also been important in further strengthening collaboration between NGOs and local University partners. For instance, such cooperation offered opportunities to engage young students, support ongoing research and enhance relationships. Moving forward, some of these activities can even continue to be implemented without a specific project framework and rather as a part of the regular curriculum. And, most saliently, the SSCL project has provided a framework to allow programmes to be more responsive to community needs. From developing sport programming based on the wishes of local children to modifying delivery structures in response to stakeholder feedback, numerous instances of co-creation have emerged from the project.

Looking back, one of the most important lessons learned is to not be frozen or intimidated by the terminology of a Living Lab. In discussions at the start of the project, many partners realised that they were already implementing some of the main components of a Living Lab without necessarily using the exact same vocabulary. The values and the ethos of the Living Lab approach are what is most important, and the different components can help support reflection and development of more participatory approaches in different contexts.

Living Labs are organic and dependent on the people involved. Hence it is important to be aware that Living Labs cannot be forced but should be embraced organically as all the stakeholders share and drive towards a commonly understood goal. As just noted, some elements of a Living Lab may already be in place, and it is crucial not to disrupt existing dynamics but rather enhance them by involving new stakeholders or methods to improve the current structures.

More broadly, there is increasing recognition that sport-based social development initiatives must move beyond only individual-level interventions and target stakeholders across the community. Living Labs provide one potential way to address this need. Yet Living Labs are a relatively new approach, especially in the sport realm. Moving forward, there is a need to continue developing Living Lab approaches in the sport and sport for development sectors – as well as in other areas of collective expression such as leisure or the arts. Discussion, comparison and exchange with other Living Labs across different sectors and localities can help foster further learning and development. Indeed, encouraging this kind of learning and development is essential to normalising multi-stakeholder, participatory approaches like a Living Lab. It is our hope that this toolkit has contributed to doing just that.

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Glossary

Term	Definition
Co-creation	The joint creation of value, approaches and activities by different stakeholders.
Community	A network of people feeling connected with each other based on a common characteristic (i.e. geographical area, religion, sexuality). In the context of SSCL, our communities are primarily of a geographic nature.
Creative Method	Research methods that go beyond traditional survey or interview-based methods, and instead use visual, digital and artistic tools to gather feedback and data.
End Users	These are the main participants within the Living Lab. They are the experiential experts of the local challenge the Living Lab is addressing. They should be engaged from the initial phase for joint co-creation.
Ethical Attitude	A continuous factor in working in and with a Living Lab. Constant reflection on the collaboration and activities to assess and challenge underlying power structures.
Ethnic Minorities	Groups of People who are a minority in a specific context (i.e. a country) due to their ethnicity.
International Protection Applicant (IPA)	A person who has been forced to flee their home and is now seeking refuge in another country.
Interview	Method to obtain feedback and information about activities that involves sitting down with community members or stakeholders to obtain targeted responses to pre-determined questions.
LGBTQ+ Community	People who identify themselves as lesbian, gay, bi, trans or queer and thus often face discrimination within societies (and sport).

Term	Definition
Living Lab	"user-centred, open innovation ecosystems based on a systematic user co-creation approach, integrating research and innovation processes in real-life communities and settings"
Participatory approach	All stakeholders participate jointly in the process of decision-making. Characterised by equal status of the stakeholders and a low level of hierarchy.
Participatory observation	Method to obtain feedback and information about activities that involves actively participating in offered activities.
Real-life setting	A setting in a specific neighbourhood or context where the problem definition and actions are joint responsibilities. Different institutions and community members collaborate on specific challenges.
Social Cohesion	A multi-dimensional concept encompassing strong social relations, a sense of belonging, and civic participation, that bind a society together and allow it to progress in a common direction.
Sport for Development	The intentional use of sport, physical activity or play to achieve certain (development) objectives.
Stakeholders	Institutions, groups and individuals involved in or affected by a project (i.e. community members, sponsors, government, participants, coaches).
Survey	Method to obtain feedback and information that involves asking standardised questions in written form to pre-selected community members or stakeholders.
Top-down approach	A high level of hierarchy where a stakeholder in power (i.e. the project leader, the funder) makes decisions unilaterally. All others accept the decision without being included in the decision-making process.
User Engagement	Integrating community members (users) into the process of problem/solution identification and implementation for projects to be tailored to their needs.

Appendix

Context Mapping Outline

1. People

Who lives in the neighbourhood? What is their background? What do they do? What is their situation (e.g. employment, health, education, etc.)? What are their real and perceived needs (e.g. what do we/government think they need, what do they say they need?

2. Context

What is the neigbhourhood itself like? What are the general services or infrastructure like (e.g. roads, public transport, healthcare, sport, etc.)? What are the defining characteristics of the neighborhood?

What other organizations are active in the neighborhood?

3. Community Services/Activities

What kind of community (sport) offers already exist in this neigbhourhood? What activities do they deliver, for whom, and where? How do we ensure we can work with these other services (and not create unecessary competition)?

4. Facilities

What facilities, equipment or technology are being used for current community sport activities/offers?

5. Stakeholders

What stakeholders do we need /to engage with to maximise the success of our Living Lab? How and why?

Logbook

Location	Date (DD/MM/YYYY)	Action or intervention with stakeholders	What worked well?	What would you do differently next time?	What lessons did you learn?	What outstanding questions do you have following this action?	Which Living Lab phase best fits to this action?	Other comments or observations

Focus Group Guidelines

Goals

1. Understand how participants experience the local neigbhourhood

2. Understand how participants conceptualise social cohesion

3. Understand how a (sport) programme could support social cohesion and the neighbourhood as a whole

Participants and Timing

- 1 Focus group with 5-7 pmembers from the defined local community;

- Or 1 Focus group with 5-7 representatitves from one or many relevant stakeholders (e.g. municipality, sport organisation, coaches, etc.);

- Or 1 Focus group with 5-7 individuals mixing community members and stakeholders.

- Plan about 60-90 minutes for a focus group discussion.

Instructions

- Welcome participants and thank them for their time.

- Explain the purpose of the research, that we are trying to find out more about their experiences in their neighbourhood and what can be done to improve things.

- Clarify that participation is voluntary, that data from the interview will be used in publication and that identifying information will be kept anonymous.

- Let them read through the consent form and ask questions if there are any ⊠ sign consent form (if not done already)

- Gain express verbal consent to record the interview and then turn on the recorder

- A second facilitator is present to only take notes.

Instructions

These guidelines are divided into three parts: ice-breaker, main questions and wrap up. The questions go progressively into more depth and complexity. Each question highlights a general topic, and underneath there are numerous suggested follow-up questions or probes to generate additional responses. The interviewer should address each main topic question but does not need to ask every suggested follow-up – rather, these are only ideas and the interviewer should probe according to the answers and flow of the discussion.

The focus groups should be recorded and can optionally be transcribed verbatim. Two people should be present to support the focus group. One person should be responsible for moderating the discussion. A second person should be responsible for note taking. Notes should focus on participant responses (including quotations) and also include observations on the group dynamics, physical gestures, silence/non-verbal moments and the overall physical setting. The notes should be translated into English to support common analysis and the researchers can review the recording afterwards to integrate additional relevant quotations.

1. Ice breaker

Do an active ice breaker activity (e.g. line up participants in rows based on preferences, reveal a fun fact about yourself, ask a funny question like 'if you were stuck on an island, what is the one object you'd bring' etc.) And let the participants introduce themselves shortly.

2. Topics/Questions

Tell us a bit about how it is to live in this neighbourhood?

- How long have you lived in the neighbourhood?

- What do you like about the neigbhourhood? What don't you like about the neighbourhood?

- Do you feel close to your neighbours? How active is the city/government in your neigbhourhood?

- What are the services/sport offers in your neigbhourhood?

What can be improved in your neighbourhood, and how?

- Or, put differently, what would the ideal neighbourhood be like for you?

- Why would you like to see this change? How does this affect you personally? Is there already anything being done to address this issue?

When you hear the term' social cohesion', what does that mean to you?

- How would you describe social cohesion in your neighbourhood/city? What supports or limits social cohesion in your neighbourhood?

- How do you experience social cohesion in your day-to-day life?

- How do other organisation work to support social cohesion?

If we started a new community sport programme tomorrow, what could we do to address issues in your neighbourhood and support social cohesion?

- What kind of sport activities should we do? Why?

- What kind of non-sport activities should we consider? Why?

- Who should deliver our activites? Where should the activities be? Who should participate? What other organisations should be involved?
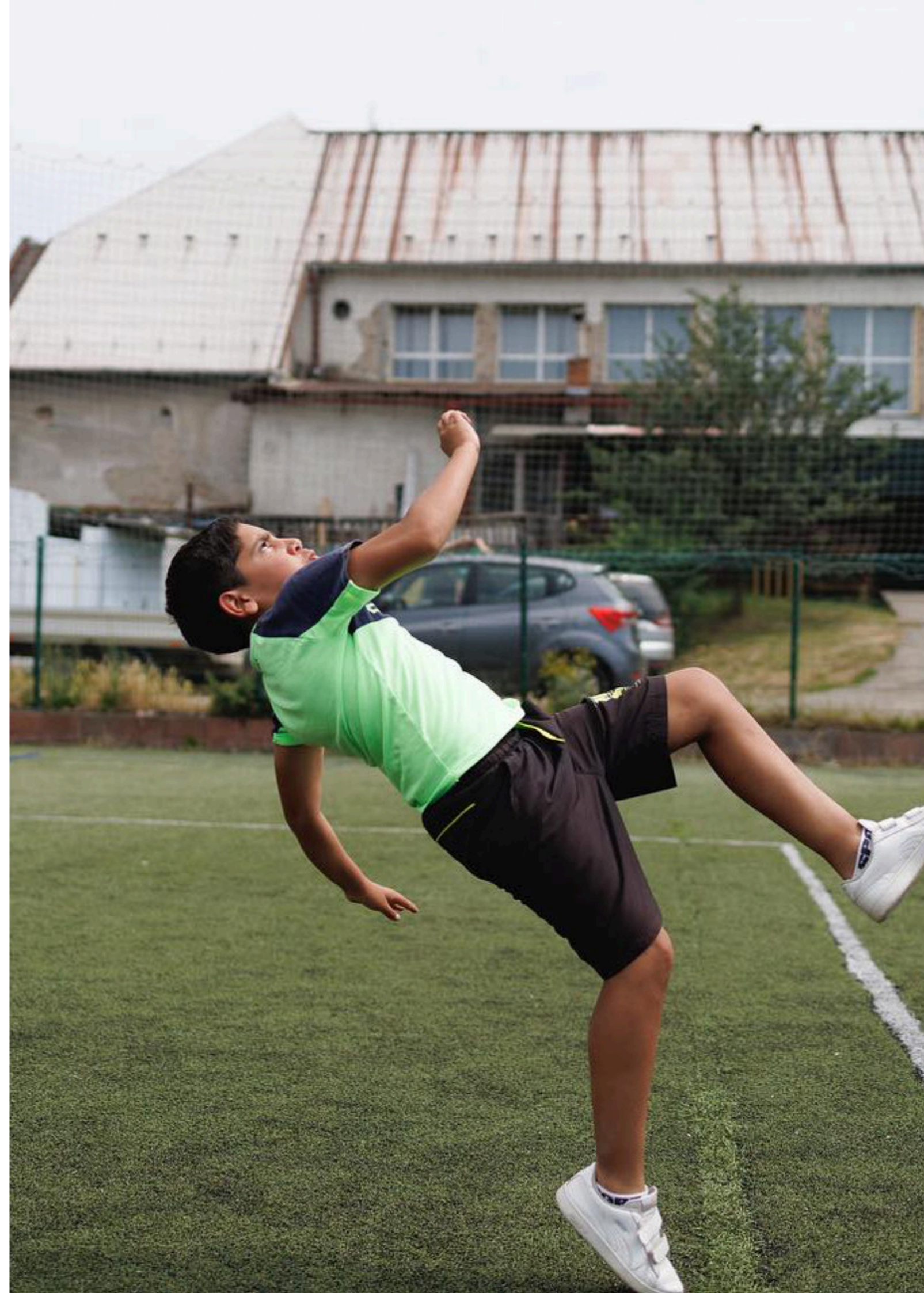
3. Wrap up

- We've come to the end of the discussion. The goal of our focus group was to understand your neighbourhoods, how you understand social cohesion and how sport can contribute to social cohesion.

- Should I have asked you something that I didn't give you an opportunity to share? Is there anything else you would like to talk about?

- Thank them again for participating. Ensure them that their data will be kept strictly confidential. Share contact details clearly with all. And let them know that they can always contact you if they forgot something to mention or if they have any questions or concerns.

Focus Group Field Notes Template

Date	
Time	
Duration	
Location	
Number of participants	

1. **General Notes**

2. **Participants** (Please describe the participants in this focus group, including their background, available demographic information)

3. **Setting** (Please describe the physical or digital setting of the focus group, including a description of the room/software and any other notable characteristics, like the temperature, technical issues, etc.)

4. **Response Notes**

5. **Neighbourhood Description** (Notes on the first topic and how participants describe the neighbourhood)

6. **Improvements in the Neighbourhood** (Notes on how participants would like to improve their neighbourhood)

7. **Social Cohesion** (Notes on how participants understand, live and experience social cohesion)

8. **Sport** (Notes on what participants would like to see from a sport programme in order to improve their lives/neighbourhood/cohesion)

9. **Other comments** (Notes on final/other remarks from participants)

10. **Other reflections** (Please describe any of your reflections or observations that do not fit into the other categories)