

GUTS-PROJECT

RAP & STORYTELLING IN PRISON



GUIDELINES & RECOMMENDATIONS



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*“The rap workshops
helped me find my
voice, not only in music,
but also in my own life.*

*I was able to tell my
story in a way I never
thought possible.”*

01 INTRODUCTION

In summary, the PR5 or the GUTS Guidelines & Recommendations are indispensable tools for translating the insights gained from the European GUTS-project on rap music for young offenders into tangible outcomes.

By providing actionable guidance and fostering knowledge sharing, they empower stakeholders to harness the potential of music-based interventions for promoting rehabilitation and reintegration in prison settings.

The recommendations and suggestions to make the project replicable will be very practical and will include: an explanation of the background of the project; a summary of the project ideas and a description of the project achievements; recommendations on how to repeat the experience in other countries; suggestions to ensure the projects sustainability and an explanation on how to work with the toolbox and some best practices.

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All detailed information can be found on www.gutsproject.eu



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A SYNOPSIS OF THE PROJECT CONCEPTS

Unlocking Potential: Harnessing Music's Power in Detention.

THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF MUSIC IN DETENTION

Music plays a pivotal role in the lives of detainees, serving as a catalyst for their well-being and rehabilitation. In carceral environments where freedom is constrained and tensions are high, music serves as a vital outlet for emotions and a source of solace. Prison music programs, ranging from choirs and bands to songwriting workshops, offer detainees a sense of freedom within their confined spaces. Through music, inmates express themselves, share their stories, and find comfort in familiar tunes, fostering a connection to life outside prison walls.

Moreover, music fosters social connections and community within prisons, reducing feelings of isolation and promoting solidarity among inmates. It serves as a therapeutic tool, alleviating stress, promoting relaxation, and aiding in the processing of trauma. Importantly, music contributes to detainees' rehabilitation by instilling discipline, perseverance, and teamwork—qualities crucial for successful reintegration into society. Overall, music in detention transcends mere entertainment, offering hope, empowerment, and avenues for personal growth, ultimately serving as a beacon of positivity amid the challenges of incarceration.

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WHY RAP MUSIC & STORYTELLING?

Rap music and storytelling intertwine seamlessly, offering a potent medium for conveying complex narratives, emotions, and societal messages. Rooted in the African American community yet resonating globally, rap serves as a voice for the marginalized, addressing social issues like racism and inequality with raw honesty. Through its rhythmic cadence and poetic flow, rap enables artists to express cultural identity, personal struggles, and dreams, empowering youth and fostering creativity.

Its innovative influence transcends music, shaping fashion, language, and culture. Rap's appeal lies in its ability to reflect the experiences and emotions of listeners, particularly young people, who find solace and inspiration in its verses.

For inmates undergoing rehabilitation, rap and storytelling offer avenues for emotional expression, self-reflection, and skill development. Through crafting lyrics and sharing narratives, inmates confront their past, foster personal growth, and build connections within and beyond prison walls. Ultimately, rap and storytelling serve as transformative tools, empowering individuals to reclaim their narratives, pursue positive change, and reintegrate into society.

In summary, rap music and storytelling are a powerful combination that not only provides entertainment, but also creates a platform for expression, awareness and social change. It appeals to young people because of its recognizable stories, its expressive power, its rhythmic and poetic elements, and the community dimension it offers. It often acts as a mirror of their own experiences and emotions, and as a platform for self-expression and creativity.

WHY IS THIS GUTS-PROJECT SO IMPORTANT?

The GUTS - **Grow Up Today and Support each other.** 'Music & Storytelling in prisons' - project fully responds to the importance of music in detention, more specifically through rap & storytelling. In this project we will use tools and the language of rap and hip hop culture as a tool for self-reflection and as a way to connect and communicate with the outside world.

The aim of the GUTS project is to develop a method to prevent relapse in young delinquents through music. The idea is to provide the target group with a means of communication through rap music and 'storytelling' to tell their own story and express their ideas and goals for the future.

Despite numerous attempts to reduce recidivism, the rates have remained largely unchanged in most Western countries. Finding effective approaches, particularly for young detainees aged 18 to 25, has proven challenging. This underscores the need for innovative strategies in creating successful pedagogical contexts to address recidivism. In the GUTS project, we employ the tools and language of rap and hip hop culture to facilitate self-reflection and communication with the broader community.

The general idea of the project is for young inmates to think about their crimes and imagine a future without crime, pursue positive goals and to reconnect with their aspirations from youth. We also want to take them back to their childhood when they had ambitions and dreams of becoming a lawyer, a pilot or maybe a police officer. We want them to learn from their mistakes and formulate ambitions and take steps towards a better future. The project will achieve this by working with autobiographical storytelling techniques and rap song writing. The overall ambition is to create an opportunity to rework the experience related to the crime, but also to realize an opportunity for mutual reflection on the experiences shared by all participants.

This project recognizes the complexity of the situation of most young offenders and the many factors that drive the path to an effective outcome. We aim for comparative research in the different partner countries to compare existing methodologies that work with storytelling and rap music and, above all, to find indicators for successful intervention in the rehabilitation process.

GUTS-project is vital due to the association between drill rap and youth violence, although most drill rappers don't act out their lyrics. While some use rap to break from crime, concerns linger about its influence on criminal behaviour. The project addresses why youth carry knives and aims to use drill rap's influence positively. By engaging with drill rap groups, we seek to steer young people away from crime, leveraging hip-hop's history of positive intervention and drill rap's portrayal of street life challenges.

We adopt a participatory research-action model, involving both sector operators and young inmates in co-creating methodologies and criteria for success. While rooted in prison education and training, our methodology seeks applicability beyond prison settings, benefiting those working with at-risk youth.

In the third phase, we will pilot group interventions in prisons, engaging family members, ex-offenders, prison staff, and relevant organizations. These efforts aim to foster mutual reflection among young offenders and facilitate their reintegration into positive educational activities.

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“Collaborating with other inmates during the workshops brought us together as a community. We shared our stories, supported each other and built a sense of connection that we had previously lacked.”

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OVERVIEW OF PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS: HIGHLIGHTING OUR PIONEERING SUCCESSES

It can be a challenge to carry out such a project if you encounter challenges with the partners. For us the project had a difficult start as 2 of the partners had to withdraw. Fortunately, we had good contacts and quickly brought in 2 new ones who could take over the responsibility for the outputs that the previous partners had. But this meant that we started the project several months late.

But the new partners have solved the tasks in a great way through the project, and the project has succeeded very well. In general, we have achieved the outputs that we planned, but with some adjustments.

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PR1 BENCHMARK REPORT

The main objective of the first project result was to identify success factors of projects carried out in partner countries. The research results lead to identifying integrated intervention models by comparing best practices. Recognizing the complexity of youth offender trajectories, the project aimed to analyse existing methodologies in partner countries, focusing on storytelling, music and intervention quality indicators. The first project goal is to identify successful intervention factors replicable and improvable in PR2.

Our Italian partner, STEPS, brought valuable experience in collecting and generating project reports. This experience proved beneficial, greatly enhancing the execution of the first Project Result (PR). The successful leadership and implementation of the first PR underscore the advantages of partnering with organizations with prior Erasmus+ project experience.

All partners were actively involved in the first phase of the project. Mapping of the best existing practices and methodologies in each participating country provided an important overview of intervention approaches in each country.

The benchmark report from STEPS proceeded as planned, with all partners effectively gathering materials, reflecting a commendable collaborative effort.

STEP SRL led the construction of a data collection template for intervention models and best practices, focusing on success and weakness indicators aligned with project goals. This template was shared with partners for feedback and used to analyse each country's situation, with a focus on recidivism rates. The project aimed to reduce recidivism rates and promote social reintegration by leveraging storytelling, art, and music education.

Best practices were identified through online research and in-depth interviews with relevant associations, institutions, experts, youth and social workers, teachers and operators in prison. Collected data were compared and summarized in a final report accessible to all partners, facilitating transferability to other fields of adult education research.

The Benchmark report was written in English and subsequently translated into Norwegian, Dutch, Portuguese and Italian.

www.gutsproject.eu/benchmark-report/

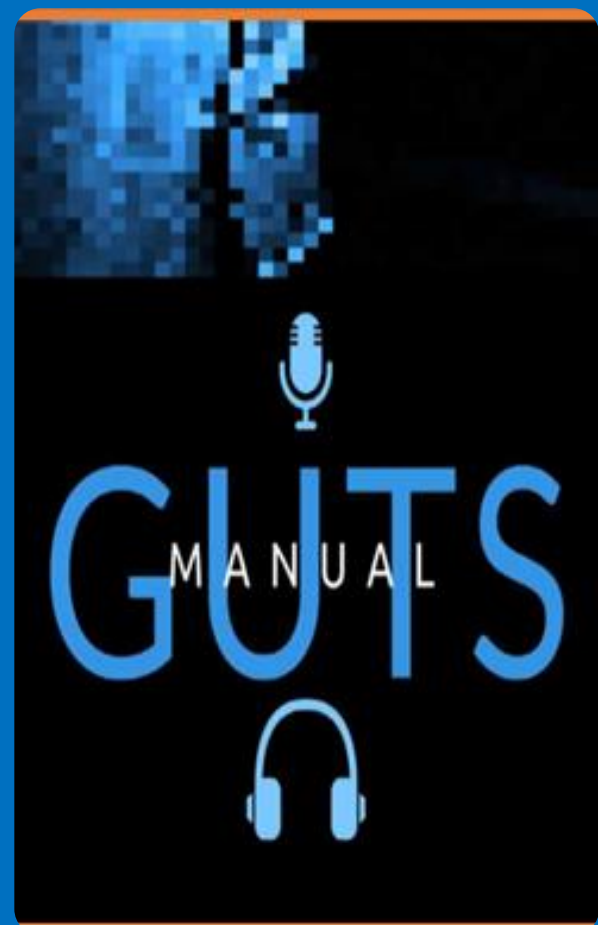
PR2 METHODOLOGY THROUGH PARTICIPATORY PROCESS

The initial version of the methodology was crafted based on the outcomes of PR1. It provided a comprehensive outline of the creative process, incorporating pedagogical and psychological elements.

This encompassed training trainers on establishing connections with trainees through artistic expression, storytelling and empathetic group work.

The methodology was designed to be adaptable for both virtual and in-person training sessions. This handbook or manual for trainers offers a new tool to those working in prisons or probation like teachers, trainers and prison staff.

Furthermore, the method had applicability beyond prison settings, extending its impact to social workers and trainers in other contexts. The digital handbook was tailored to suit various organizations, enhancing its potential for widespread adoption.



By implementing participatory rap projects in detention, prisoners can find a positive outlet for their emotions and experiences, build their self-confidence and develop important skills that can help them in their rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

These workshops are also being rolled out to the other European project partners: Jessheim Prison (Oslo, Norway), Changes & Changes (Utrecht, Netherlands), Steps (Bologna, Italy), La Fabbrica del Farò (Brindisi, Italy), Associação Form2you (Sintra, Portugal) and De Rode Antraciet vzw (Belgium).

The methods derived from Changes & Changes proceeded as anticipated. Our Dutch partner performed in investigating and establishing a pilot for the methodology, which all partners then implemented.

In some partner countries we had to make some adjustments to the pilots to align with the conditions within the prisons. Additionally, we obtained valuable insights and feedback from the inmates regarding the pilot program.

GUTS, A PARTICIPATORY PROJECT

The GUTS project was a collaborative effort that involved all stakeholders in decision-making, prioritizing inclusivity and diverse perspectives to reach common objectives. It employed a participatory research-action model, engaging sector operators and young detainees at various project stages to ensure their maximum involvement. Young detainees were encouraged to share experiences and contribute to discussions on project outcomes, guided by facilitators to ensure collective decision-making. Even small achievements were valued within the project, serving as catalysts for increased participation in other educational activities in prisons.

In the past, participatory rap projects in detention empowered prisoners through creative expression and skill development, fostering positive change. This approach, especially effective with young offenders, involved them, caregivers, social workers, and community members, promoting ownership and responsibility. By sharing experiences and aspirations, they actively shaped paths toward positive change, enhancing belonging and successful reintegration into society.

Project impact was assessed through various methods, including internal evaluation, participant feedback, pre- and post-training questionnaires, peer reviews of training content, and assessment of social skill improvement within the target group.

Incarcerated individuals can engage in participatory rap projects through:

- Workshops and classes led by professional rap artists or mentors, teaching basics like lyric writing, rhythm, and performance.
- Songwriting sessions encouraging inmates to express personal themes such as their incarceration experiences and future aspirations.
- Access to recording studios within the facility, allowing inmates to share their work within and outside the prison.
- Collaborations with local artists, providing mentorship and recording opportunities.
- Performances at events like talent shows inside prison, fostering connection and skill development.

PR3 TOOLKIT

The GUTS project focuses on storytelling techniques and rap song-writing to support inmates to reflect on themselves and their actions, providing an opportunity to enhance their problem-solving skills and sense of responsibility, in order to imagine a crime-free future.

The storytelling toolkit provides "ready-made workshop scenarios" that you can put into practice with groups of inmates within your organization or community. Each scenario includes detailed information that supports you in preparing and conducting the workshops effectively.

The compilation of the Toolkit was done by Cooperativa IL FARO who did an excellent job with this. The toolkit is translated in 5 languages and exist also in a printed version. The toolkit provides many examples of how you can work with storytelling and can be a useful tool for several subjects in prison education. Many of the methods can be useful both for those who are new to storytelling, but also for those who are more experienced.

PR4 RAP-FESTIVAL

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On April 15, 2024, an extraordinary event unfolded within the walls of Kroksrud prison in Norway. It marked the culmination of months of creativity, collaboration, and dedication across European borders. The occasion? A private online festival showcasing rap songs and video clips produced as part of the GUTS project.

This festival wasn't just any gathering; it was a celebration of art, resilience and rehabilitation.

Representatives from Norway, Portugal, the Netherlands, Belgium and Italy came together to share their musical creations, each offering a unique perspective on life and redemption. 15 rap songs made in prisons in the respective partner countries were expertly judged by an independent jury.

The spotlight shone brightly on the Norwegian leg of the festival, held at Romerike prison. With contributions pouring in from Halden, Romerike, and Drammen prisons, Norway's presence was undeniably strong. But this was a collective effort, and the stage welcomed guests from prisons, social organizations, music school and correctional services alike.

At the heart of the festival was a distinguished jury, comprising representatives from each participating country and seasoned professionals from the music industry. Their task? To assess each entry based on three critical factors: the lyrical content's resonance with themes of rehabilitation and personal growth, the musical composition's artistry, and the technical proficiency of the accompanying video. After careful deliberation, the verdict was in: "MONSTER inside" by Dendermonde prison in Belgium emerged victorious. Their contribution captivated the jury and encapsulated the spirit of the GUTS project.

Watch the clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uPh7LN7X8JQ>

The festival didn't just end within the prison walls; its impact rippled far beyond. The Norwegian Correctional Service documented the event, sharing it widely across their social media platforms and distributing the results to prisons nationwide. In Belgium, the news of Dendermonde prison's triumph spread like wildfire, igniting a sense of pride and accomplishment.

Reflecting on the festival, one lesson resonated deeply: the power of collaboration and community engagement. By transforming the event into a grand spectacle, involving diverse stakeholders, and broadcasting it across various platforms, the sense of accomplishment soared to new heights. It wasn't merely about showcasing talent; it was about fostering a sense of mastery and empowerment among all involved.

As the festival concluded, its impact lingered, echoing the resilience and creativity inherent in every rap song and video clip. Through art, unity, and shared purpose, the GUTS project continues to chart a path towards rehabilitation and transformation within Europe's prison systems.

We have also filmed the festival and we plan to send this video to all the partners, so that the inmates in each country can get an experience of the rap festival itself.

It was a great project with exciting partners and we are very pleased with the results. It has been important to show the inmates that this project that we have started must be completed: Inmates are often used to starting projects but not completing them. It was therefore a major success factor that the sub goals were completed and that we were able to collect enough rap videos for a festival.

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PR5 GUIDELINES & RECOMMENDATIONS

After completing a European project focused on rap music for young offenders in prisons, the value of guidelines and recommendations becomes abundantly clear. These tools serve as invaluable resources for ensuring that the knowledge and insights gained from the project are not only retained but effectively disseminated for broader benefit.

Guidelines provide a structured framework for implementing the lessons learned from the project. They offer a roadmap for practitioners, policymakers, and educators to incorporate rap music as a rehabilitative tool within the prison system. By outlining best practices, guidelines streamline the adoption process, reducing the likelihood of missteps and maximizing the potential impact of the project's findings.

Recommendations serve a complementary role by offering informed suggestions for optimizing the utilization of rap music in prison rehabilitation programs. Drawing on the project's research outcomes, recommendations highlight strategies for tailoring interventions to the specific needs and circumstances of young offenders. They encourage flexibility and innovation while ensuring that interventions remain grounded in evidence-based practices.

Furthermore, guidelines and recommendations facilitate knowledge sharing beyond the confines of the project itself. They provide a means for engaging with stakeholders across different sectors and jurisdictions, fostering collaboration and exchange of ideas. Through workshops, conferences, and online platforms, the project can disseminate its findings to a wider audience, catalyzing dialogue and collective action in the realm of prison reform.

In the final phase of the GUTS project on rap and storytelling for young offenders in prisons, our Belgian partner De Rode Antraciet, had the challenging task of converting all the information, data and experiences gathered into usable recommendations and guidelines. They succeeded well in formulating clear and ready-to-use guidelines and recommendations for organising rap & storytelling workshops both in prison settings as well as in other contexts with vulnerable target groups.

Our recommendations encapsulate the project's transformative journey, offering practical strategies for practitioners, policymakers, and stakeholders. These guidelines empower individuals and institutions to navigate rap and storytelling interventions with confidence and clarity.

All partners in the GUTS network are honoured to have played a role in shaping the project's legacy and remain committed to fostering positive change in rehabilitation and reintegration for young offenders in prisons.



“It is a unique and enriching experience. Our role as teacher is to pose questions for debate, create moments of brainstorming, and let the inmates plan the sessions in accordance with the objectives set by them, and simply be a navigator of the inmates' ideas and creations.”

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GUIDELINES & RECOMMENDATIONS TO REPLICATING THE EXPERIENCE ACROSS COUNTRIES

Coordinating activities within a prison setting comes with its challenges, necessitating adherence to essential guidelines for safety, efficacy, and legal compliance. To aid in this effort, we provide practical and tailored guidelines for operating in a prison environment, before initiating similar projects.

By following these guidelines and recommendations, organizations and individuals seeking to replicate rap and storytelling projects in prisons across various countries can develop initiatives that are effective, sustainable, and customized to each location's specific needs. This will ensure the establishment of resilient and long-lasting rap and storytelling projects within prison environments, offering continuous support to participants throughout their detention and beyond.

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PRACTICAL GUIDELINES

ENSURE SAFETY AND COMPLIANCE

- Ensure strict adherence to safety protocols by all participants, teachers, facilitators, and staff.
- Consistently observe and respect security procedures
- Establish partnerships and collaborations with local prison authorities and government agencies to secure necessary approvals and support for your activities. Their support is essential for programme implementation and continuity. Obtain approval from prison authorities regarding scheduling, timing, and venue.
- Familiarize yourself with the laws and regulations regarding prison systems and reintegration programs in each respective country to avoid legal complications.
- Ensure proper identification and registration of participants, teachers and facilitators.

BE MINDFUL OF CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

- Respect the cultural background of participants when choosing topics or activities and be prepared to adapt workshop content accordingly.
- Ensure that the programme allows for expression in the participants' mother tongue to strengthen emotional and cultural bonding.
- Create a clear programme for each workshop, indicating individual or group sessions, various interactive elements as well as breaks.
- Develop a format that is flexible and modular so that it can be adapted to the specific needs and interests of participants in different contexts.

PROVIDE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT, FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

- Provide an environment that promotes safety and inclusiveness, where all participants feel comfortable and respected.
- Assess the suitability of the space to meet practical needs for conducting workshop activities. Allocate sufficient resources, including funding, materials and staff, to support the successful implementation of workshop activities in the prison.
- Ensure that all materials comply with prison guidelines and regulations.

PROVIDE QUALIFIED TUTORS AND SUPERVISORS

- Ensure enough qualified teachers and facilitators to lead the workshop and to supervise the participants
- Implement comprehensive training programmes for supervisors and staff involved in leading workshops, addressing issues such as cultural competence, conflict resolution and necessary technical skills.

COMMUNICATE AND EVALUATE

- Ensure clear communication of planned activities with all stakeholders, including prison
- Clearly communicate the benefits of the project for inmates' rehabilitation and personal development
- Regularly conduct evaluations to identify areas for improvement and monitor the impact of workshops.

ONGOING FOLLOW-UP AND MONITORING

- Sustain ongoing communication with prison authorities to request feedback and investigate possibilities for additional collaboration.
- Provide follow-up support to participants and teachers

TAILORED GUIDELINES FOR OPERATING IN A PRISON ENVIRONMENT

UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS

- Ensure awareness of the diverse cultural backgrounds of the participants. In our experience, working with inmates from different cultural backgrounds enriched the project but required sensitivity and understanding.
- Find a common language to communicate

FOSTERING TRUST AND MUTUAL RESPECT

- Create an environment of trust where all ideas and opinions are valued and respected. This fosters a sense of ownership and commitment among the participants.
- Encourage open communication and active listening, ensuring that all ideas and opinions are valued and respected.
- By creating a safe space where participants feel heard and appreciated, you can cultivate a sense of ownership and commitment among them. This encourages active engagement and collaboration, ultimately enhancing the overall effectiveness and impact of the workshop.

RESPECT THE INDIVIDUAL

- Recognize Individual Diversity: Acknowledge that each individual comes with their own distinct background, life experiences, and obstacles. It is essential to honour their uniqueness and refrain from making assumptions.
- Consider Trauma Sensitivity: Understand that many inmates have undergone traumatic experiences in their lives. It is crucial to be mindful of this and establish an environment that is empathetic to their needs. This might involve offering a platform for discussing their experiences or providing resources to help them cope with trauma.

INVOLVE THE PARTICIPANTS IN DECISION MAKING

- Involve participants in decision-making processes, including setting objectives, planning sessions, and selecting final products. This cultivates a sense of ownership and empowerment among the participants.
- Let them choose their own language for rapping
- Involved some inmates in the process, they help and inspire other inmates.
- Read the inmates, when choosing a beat, the choice already says a lot about the mood of the inmate, you adjust to this and may want to discuss this.

AS A TEACHER OR FACILITATOR ... SOME GOOD ADVICE

- Be authentic.
- Never make promises you can't keep.
- There isn't always a set format to start; have a guideline in mind, but it is crucial to be highly flexible to adapt to the situation or the group's needs. Be flexible to keep everyone engaged.
- If necessary, clearly define boundaries, especially if limits are being exceeded. Begin by sharing your own life story, being disarmingly honest; this builds trust and recognition, giving people confidence.
- It's important to get participants on board and not position yourself above them, but rather on the same level.
- Create an open atmosphere where inmates feel safe and unashamed to discuss their experiences and chosen topics.
- Listen to them: learn about who they are and their life stories. Understand them as individuals.
- Start from their experiences. Speak their language; avoid using difficult words or abstract concepts.
- Work interactively: understand their expectations, whether it's writing their own lyrics, using existing texts, making music, or dancing.
- Small group or individual work often yields the best results. The more sessions/workshops with one group, the more you can achieve.
- Remember that each detainee is different, and not everyone feels comfortable sharing their story in a group setting.
- Knowing a prisoner's story can change your approach. Be patient, non-judgmental, and recognize that every verse reflects someone's inner thoughts.
- Treat them like people; offer perspective. Focus on both the mistakes and the good things in their lives.
- Be tolerant but also assert your limits when necessary. Demonstrate your skills occasionally; they can learn from you.
- Emphasize that the process is more important than the final product. The journey of writing, discovering, learning, and performing is paramount.
- Avoid censorship but point out that certain language may be offensive. Encourage alternative expressions.
- Identify and engage with informal leaders within the group to gain broader participation. Ensure that big egos don't dominate.
- Consider participants' backgrounds and adapt your approach accordingly. Highlight personal growth and positive contributions to their communities, reinforcing the project's significance beyond individual skill development.
- Success breeds motivation among participants.

TRAIN THE TRAINER

- If you are not working with experienced teachers, be sure to provide adequate trainings for teachers or facilitators to share best practices and ensure a consistent approach.
- Specific training is essential for effectively handling prisoners with mental health challenges.

EMBRACING FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY

- Flexibility and adaptability are essential qualities for effectively navigating the dynamic nature of group dynamics in this prison setting. It's imperative to remain open-minded and ready to adjust plans and approaches as the situation evolves.
- Be responsive to the changing needs, preferences, and dynamics of the participants.
- By embodying flexibility, facilitators can create an environment that addresses the diverse requirements of individuals and the group as a whole, promoting inclusivity and engagement throughout the workshop experience.
- Flexibility is key to accommodating the unique needs and preferences of the participants.

TIMING, STRUCTURED SESSIONS & GROUP SIZE

- Carefully planning workshops taking into account the working hours of inmates
- Ensuring continuity in workshops despite time constraints.
- Effective planning to accommodate all participants throughout the workshops, while also taking into account unforeseen circumstances (f.i.family visits, illness)
- Having ample time to schedule rap workshops is crucial as it's a process that requires patience and dedication. Providing sufficient time in preparation an implementation.
- Ensure that your group is not too large, allowing sufficient attention to be given to each participant and creating a safe environment for them to express themselves. (max 5 to 7)
- Try to have a fixed group for the period

FOCUS ON CREATIVITY

- Maintain a structured approach to sessions while allowing room for creativity and self-expression. A balance between structure and creative freedom encouraged engagement and participation.
- Aim to create tangible end products, such as original songs and video clips,.This provides accomplishment and motivating continued engagement
- Generate a sense of pride to encourage continued participation.
- Structure towards a final presentation or performance to maintain engagement.
- Guidance was always offered from the facilitators to support overcoming challenges and navigating the creative process. This ensured a supportive learning environment.
- It's beneficial to wholeheartedly promote and urge participants to convey both personal and societal frustrations in their writings. Moreover, suggesting integrating not just frustrations, but also aspirations and ambitions into their work, enabling them to articulate their goals. Invite the participants to make music for dear ones like wives, children, mothers or fathers.

DOCUMENTING THE PROCESS

Consider documenting the project process, through a documentary or report, to capture the journey, challenges, and successes. This not only serves as a valuable learning resource but also highlights the impact of the project on participants and the wider community.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Artistic projects, particularly music initiatives, play a pivotal role in prison settings, offering inmates opportunities for self-expression, rehabilitation, and personal growth. It's crucial to advocate for the promotion of such projects to governments and prison administrations. By recognizing the transformative impact of music in prisons, authorities can support and facilitate these initiatives, contributing to the overall well-being and successful reintegration of incarcerated individuals into society.
- A well-structured rap music course in prison should be comprehensive, include experienced instructors, provide necessary equipment, create a safe and supportive environment, have opportunities for performance and incorporate rehabilitation and reintegration goals, while also being evaluated
- Allowing ample time for rap workshops is crucial, recognizing that it's a process requiring patience and dedication. By scheduling sufficient sessions, participants can delve deep into the art form, honing their skills and expressing themselves authentically. With patience and commitment, each workshop becomes a transformative journey of self-discovery and growth.
- Recruit educators possessing a distinct skill set: experience in prison environments or with vulnerable demographics, alongside proficiency in crafting rap songs and storytelling techniques. These individuals hold a crucial role in nurturing creativity and facilitating rehabilitation within our programs, utilizing their expertise to empower and motivate our participants.
- Encourage and motivate the inmates to participate and to take an active role in their own learning. This can be achieved by giving them positive feedback and recognition for their efforts, and by providing them with opportunities to take on leadership roles.
- Integrate objectives focused on rehabilitation and societal reintegration, including the cultivation of communication, teamwork, and time management abilities.
- Take note of the environment you're teaching in, and show sensitivity to the distinct challenges and limitations of working within a prison setting. Familiarize yourself with the rules and regulations of the facility, ensuring strict adherence to them at all times.
- The key to progress lies in enhancing aftercare support for inmates. While workshops are accessible during their time in prison, there's a lack of follow-up or minimal support afterward.
- Maintain flexibility and adaptability in your teaching approach, ready to modify your methods if necessary. Embrace feedback and be prepared to implement adjustments as required.
- Encourage collaboration with small group activities, fostering new partnerships among participants. Initially, some inmates struggled to share in the circle due to unfamiliarity with such situations.

SPECIFIC TIPS FOR RAP AND STORYTELLING WORKSHOPS IN PRISON SETTINGS

- Instructors guiding rap workshops within prison walls should emphasize authenticity, adaptability, and respect, while cultivating a supportive and collaborative atmosphere.
- Concluding activities should involve reflection and recognition of accomplishments, with the opportunity for multimedia projects to enrich learning and self-expression.
- Acknowledge hip-hop's role in community bonding and individual growth. Highlight its empowering influence and encourage collaboration for success.
- Empower individuals to use resources effectively, reflecting on personal experiences.
- Recognize rap and storytelling as tools for reintegration and artistic development, with aspirations beyond street credibility.
- Connect to organizations that are active both inside and outside the walls > important for follow-up / consistency. Involve organisations working with rap and hip hop projects for vulnerable youngsters
- Facilitate the progression towards live performances by initiating with accessible activities such as beatboxing. Encourage participants to craft beats using diverse instrumentals, offering access to mobile studios in prison
- Build a bond with detainees by involving them in familiar activities and giving individual attention. Encourage them to share personal stories and emotions, exploring themes important to them, from personal experiences to broader social issues.
- Promote positive social interactions to discourage negative behavior. Exercise caution when telling stories in a group to ensure respect and freedom.
- Tailor workshop activities to participants' interests and frustrations within a clear framework. Encourage authentic lyric writing and foster self-expression to enhance the impact of rap lyrics.
- Practice self-expression to enhance the impact of rap lyrics
- Through rap and storytelling workshops, establish trust and offer a positive escape from the prison routine, instilling hope for a future beyond detention.
- Promote mutual respect and a supportive community vibe, fostering positive energy and freedom from personal criticism. Encourage storytelling and active listening, prompting critical thinking to tackle obstacles. Highlight individual strengths and passions, while reinforcing educational values.

"I often hear prisoners at the beginning of a track saying, "I write and record a rap lyric? I can't do that". A month later, you often see how amazed they are with themselves, and how proud they are of the result they have created. Working on confidence, self-esteem, trauma processing, emotional expression. It also gives them a chance to escape the negativity for a while, and to be "human" again for a while. Moreover, there are also real musical talents in prison, so these people can also get an outlet and development opportunities. However, I am also realistic, obviously a rap workshop is not going to solve the participants' problems, but every little bit helps to give the participants a boost. During the workshops, they are also treated as "people" for a while, not as "prisoners". They are heard, they get recognition that they are "somebody".

(Fatih, rapper, teacher)

05

SUGGESTIONS TO ENSURE THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PROJECT

Partners were assigned the task of implementing concrete measures and ideas to ensure the sustainability of GUTS project outputs, aiming to extend results to other countries and expand the community of users. Each partner took on the responsibility of engaging similar organisations to establish a network, laying the groundwork for future self-sustainability of the project. Throughout the process, the design of the project ensured that the beneficiary gradually took more ownership of the outcome.

Developing sustainable rap and storytelling projects in prisons requires careful planning and dedication, not only to support the programs themselves but also to ensure they have a long-term positive impact on participants.

SUGGESTIONS TO ENHANCE THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THESE INITIATIVES **23**

PROMOTING ADVOCACY AND AWARENESS

Promote arts-based interventions in prisons to highlight their positive impact on inmate rehabilitation and community well-being. Advocate for policy reforms and increased investment in music programs within prisons, emphasizing their role in prisoner rehabilitation and reintegration at national and international levels.

TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Invest in training and capacity building for project facilitators and staff to ensure continuity and effectiveness. Building a skilled team capable of managing and delivering the project's objectives is essential for its sustainability.

Invest in training prison staff and volunteers to run the workshops. This will ensure the quality and continuity of the programme.

Develop mentorship programmes involving external professionals to guide participants both during their time in the institution and after their release.

Implement robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the impact and effectiveness of the project regularly. Monitoring allows for timely adjustments and ensures that the project remains aligned with its objectives.

FORGING SUSTAINABLE PARTNERSHIPS

Forge sustainable partnerships with relevant stakeholders, including prison authorities, community organizations, and funders, providing stability and support beyond initial phases.

Promote a European network to support musical and artistic activities beyond prison walls, complementing social and work reintegration.

Encourage local partners to utilize the toolkit and manual for similar initiatives, creating working groups and fostering collaboration with other organizations for sustained support. Engage local communities and civil society organizations in workshop planning and implementation for relevance, sustainability, and community support.

Build an international network of similar programs to share experiences, conduct regular conferences, and engage local communities through public events and performances for increased visibility and social inclusion.

Collaborate with government agencies, non-profits, academic institutions, and social partners to leverage expertise and resources. Seek partnerships with organizations dedicated to art & music therapy, reintegration of ex-prisoners, and prison education for financial support, materials, and expertise

Help participants build a network in the art and music industry for future opportunities.

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DISSEMINATION AND STORY SHARING

Disseminate project results through various channels such as meetings, seminars, articles, and communication on websites and other media platforms, including a dedicated web portal.

Organize showcases and performances both inside and outside the prison to present participants' works, boosting their self-confidence and aiding in their societal reintegration. Share the songs created during the GUTS-project as publicity materials and host workshops to share the methodology, whether in or outside the prison setting.

Document and share success stories of participants through social media, newsletters and local media to increase program visibility and garner more support.

Facilitate cross-border knowledge exchange on best practices and innovative ideas, creating networking opportunities among stakeholders.

Encourage prisons involved in the pilot phase to continue using the proposed methodology in their activities, highlighting the transferability of methods and products for sustainable impact.

Develop a structured methodology or programme framework that can be easily copied and adapted in different settings and go changing needs and circumstances.

A well-defined learning plan provides consistency and ensures that the project remains focused on its goals over time.

Implement regular evaluation and feedback mechanisms to measure the impact of the programme and make adjustments where necessary.

AFTERCARE

Addressing a key challenge involves enhancing post-release support for individuals transitioning from detention back into society. Currently, there is a noticeable lack of follow-up or guidance provided, leaving individuals with minimal support upon their return. Despite workshops being available during incarceration, there is often limited or no follow-up afterward, exacerbating the issue. Furthermore, post-release support relies heavily on the goodwill of prison authorities, further compounding the challenge.

To mitigate this, integrating the music project with existing rehabilitation programs within the prison system is crucial. This integration ensures the continuity and effectiveness of the project in supporting inmate rehabilitation and successful reintegration into society.

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CREATE A STABLE FUNDING PLAN

Make a plan to get funding from different places, like grants, donations, and partnerships. Having enough money means having what you need to keep music projects going for a long time.

Keeping the project going depends on having enough money. Look for grants from governments, hold fundraising events, and ask for donations from people and businesses or try Crowdfunding. This can also bring people together who support the project.

USE TECHNOLOGY

If possible, develop or use online platforms where participants can share their work and receive feedback. This can also help build a supportive community outside prison walls. Implement robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the impact and effectiveness of the project regularly. Monitoring allows for timely adjustments and ensures that the project remains aligned with its objectives.

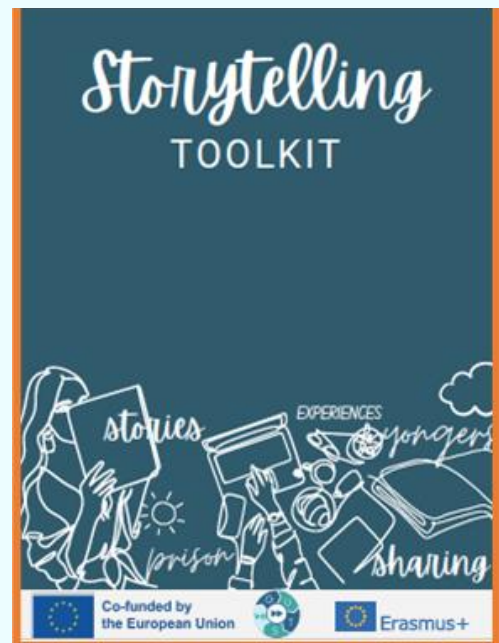
06

STORYTELLING TOOLKIT

Mastering the Toolbox: A Step-by-Step Guide

What makes storytelling so powerful? It's the ability to connect with your audience on both emotional and rational levels simultaneously. This unique capacity sets storytelling apart from other forms of communication. There's no denying that stories have an unparalleled impact when it comes to conveying messages.

The GUTS project recognizes this power and focuses on utilizing storytelling techniques and rap song-writing to support inmates in reflecting on their lives and actions. By engaging with storytelling, participants are given a platform to enhance their problem-solving skills and sense of responsibility, ultimately envisioning a future free from crime.



26

In collaboration with several practitioners, the GUTS project has developed a storytelling toolkit aimed at organisations committed to empowering individuals in diverse communities. This comprehensive toolkit consists of a series of workshops carefully designed to develop new skills, forge connections and elevate voices within communities.

Moreover, the development of the storytelling toolkit is a collaborative effort by all partners of the GUTS project, ensuring relevance and usability for organisations working with a broad spectrum of young and adult groups in diverse communities or settings, such as detention. This comprehensive resource contains a diverse range of workshops specifically tailored to the different needs. By emphasising skills enhancement, community engagement and strengthening your voice, these workshops are precisely tailored to promote empowerment and inclusiveness.

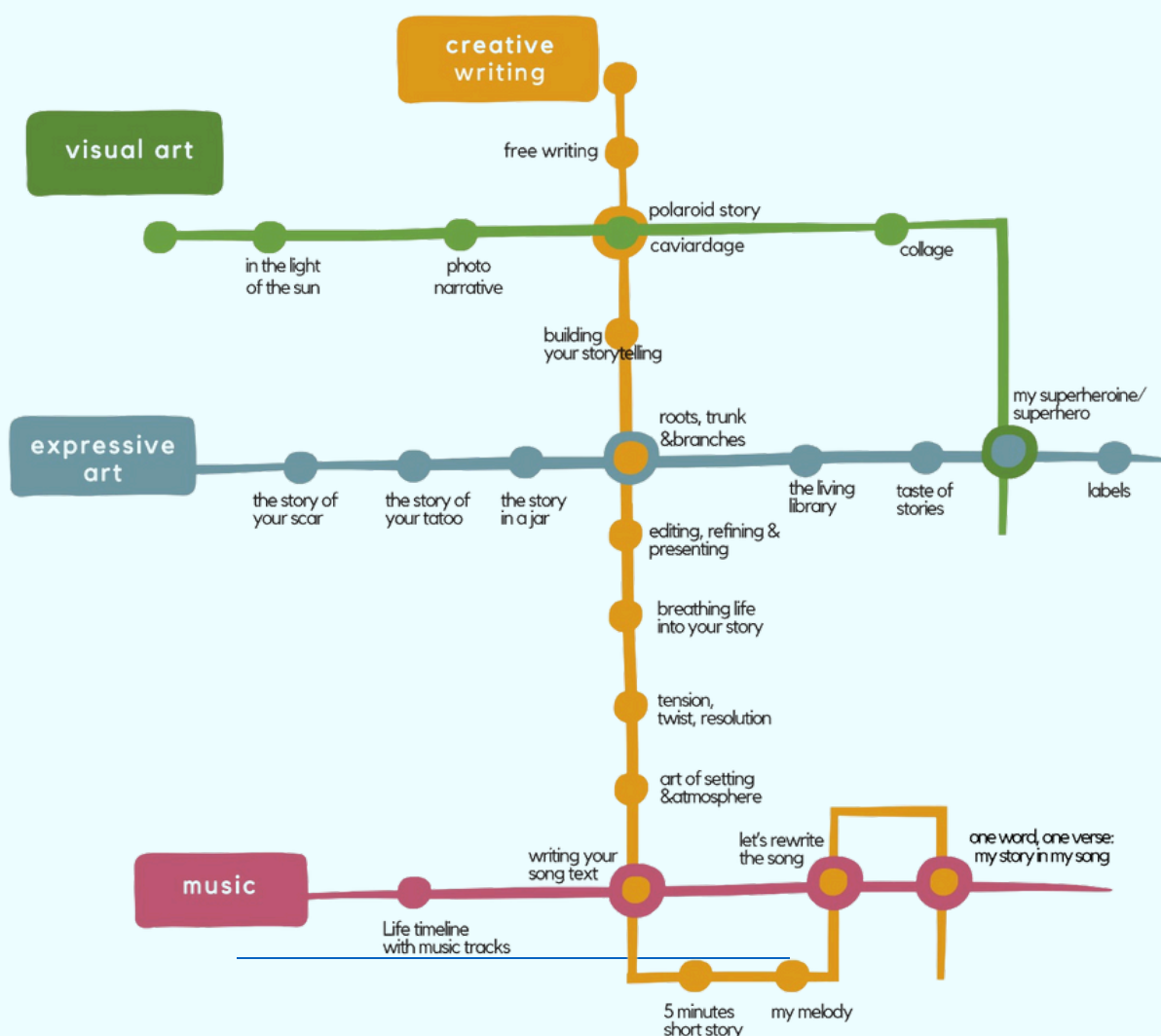
Within this toolkit, you will find "ready-made workshop scenarios" meticulously designed as practical resources for implementation in organizational or communal settings. Each scenario offers comprehensive guidance for effectively planning and conducting workshops, serving as a catalyst to inspire adults and young people to share their stories - whether by creating, sharing, or amplifying their own experiences or those of others.

When selecting workshops, it's essential to consider their alignment with the goals and needs of the target audience, ensuring relevance and effectiveness. Additionally, the toolkit includes a selection of workshops suitable for organizations aiming to facilitate skill development, bridge-building, and the empowerment of young people within their communities. These workshops are designed to empower participants with the tools and resources necessary to cultivate a stronger voice and actively contribute to community initiatives.

MAP OF STORYTELLING TOPICS

We've designed a storytelling workshop map, akin to an 'underground' guide, providing a visual roadmap to navigate and select the suitable workshop for your group. The workshops collected in this toolkit can be used to inspire adult and young prisoners to tell their stories by creating, sharing and amplifying their stories or those of others.

For all details : <https://www.gutsproject.eu/how-to-use-the-toolkit/>



"Freestyle rap lyrics are a form of therapy for me. It's a way to organize my thoughts and express my emotions in a way I've never experienced before. I find it difficult to write down lyrics. When freestyle rapping, the words just flow out of my mouth. Recording my own text gave me a feeling of pride and satisfaction. I was able to make my voice heard, even from behind bars, and that felt like a victory."

GERTJAN (26)

07

SET OF BEST PRACTICES

By implementing these best practices, workshops for rap music in prison settings can serve as a transformative experience for participants, empowering them to express themselves creatively, develop valuable skills, and find a positive outlet for self-expression and personal growth

INCLUSIVE DECISION-MAKING

Actively involve inmates in program planning by seeking their input on objectives, activities, and outcomes. Facilitate group discussions and brainstorming sessions to gather ideas and preferences.

This collaborative approach ensures programs are responsive to inmates' needs and interests, enhancing engagement.

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BALANCED STRUCTURE AND FLEXIBILITY

Structure program sessions for consistency and progress tracking, while remaining adaptable to group dynamics. Each session should have clear objectives, activities, and reflection periods, with the flexibility to adjust based on participant feedback or unforeseen challenges. This balance fosters focus and productivity while accommodating the group's unique circumstances.

BUILDING TRUST AND RESPECT

Establish a supportive environment where inmates feel comfortable expressing themselves. Facilitators should show genuine interest and empathy, respecting participants' experiences without judgment. Trust and respect are essential for meaningful engagement and collaboration.

FLEXIBLE SESSION STRUCTURE

Structure program sessions for consistency while remaining adaptable to the group's evolving needs. Each session should have clear objectives, activities, and reflection periods. Facilitators should adjust plans based on participant feedback, emergent themes, or challenges, ensuring focus and productivity while accommodating unique circumstances.

RECOGNIZING PERSONAL GROWTH AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

Throughout the program, celebrate participants' progress and contributions. Acknowledge individual achievements, highlight collaboration within the group, and showcase the impact of participants' work on their communities. This fosters a sense of purpose and value in participants, reinforcing their commitment to positive change.

SHARING SUCCESS STORIES

Collect testimonials, anecdotes, and examples of personal growth from participants. Share these stories internally with stakeholders and externally with the broader community through reports, presentations, or media outreach. This builds credibility, inspires others, and secures support for the program's continuation and expansion.

SKILL-BUILDING WORKSHOPS & LIVE ACTS

Provide rap music workshops covering lyrics, rhythm, flow, and delivery, offering guidance to improve skills. Organize group writing sessions or cyphers to encourage teamwork and creativity.

Invite professional rappers or industry experts to share experiences and insights, inspiring participants to pursue their passion for rap music.

Provide opportunities for participants to record their rap song in a studio setting. Recording sessions not only give inmates a chance to showcase their talent but also teach valuable technical skills and provide a sense of accomplishment.

Organize rap battles, open mics, or showcases where participants can perform their original songs in front of an audience. Public performances boost confidence, foster community support, and validate participants' artistic endeavours.

THERAPEUTIC APPROACH

Recognize rap music's therapeutic benefits in prisons by incorporating elements of music therapy like lyric analysis and songwriting to promote self-reflection and emotional healing.

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CULTURAL APPRECIATION

Explore rap music's cultural roots, history, and impact on marginalized communities, fostering discussions about its role in artistic expression and activism.

CONTINUED SUPPORT & FOLLOW UP

Provide ongoing support after workshops, offering resources like recording equipment and mentorship programs for inmates to continue their musical pursuits.

08

PARTICIPANTS HAVE THEIR SAY

These quotes underscore the profound impact of participatory rap projects within detention centers. They vividly demonstrate how these initiatives empower prisoners to articulate their thoughts and emotions, engage in deep self-reflection, and foster personal growth. Through the creative process of making music, inmates can find a constructive outlet for their experiences, which significantly aids in their rehabilitation. Moreover, these projects play a crucial role in facilitating their successful reintegration into society by helping them build a positive identity and develop essential life skills.

“I REGISTER FOR AS MANY ACTIVITIES AS POSSIBLE. I THOUGHT THIS WOULD BE A FUN WORKSHOP. I LIKE MUSIC, MORE LIKE RAP/HH. I DID BREAK DANCING IN MY CHILDHOOD. MUSIC WAS ALSO IMPORTANT TO ME IN THE PAST, INCLUDING GOSPEL IN CHURCH. WRITING LYRICS IS REALLY DIFFICULT, ESPECIALLY UNDER PRESSURE. BUT WITH SOME HELP, I CAN STILL PUT SOMETHING ON PAPER. I JUST NEED MORE TIME FOR IT. WORKING ON A SONG TOGETHER STIMULATES ME AND I ALSO LEARN FROM OTHERS. THIS IS THE BEST WORKSHOP EVER. IT WOULD BE GREAT IF THERE COULD ALSO BE SOME PIZZA OR SOFT DRINKS, THAT WOULD HAVE MADE IT EVEN BETTER.”

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GT (21)

“I constantly have music in his head. I was immediately enthusiastic when I saw the call. I previously thought it was just about listening to rap, not so much about rapping myself. Music is very important to me. It makes me forget the time “Passez le temps”. I’ve recorded some songs before. I like different genres: rap, hip-hop, Arabic music, but also romantic ballads. I create the lyrics in my head. I mainly write for my mother, for my 2-year-old daughter and for my family. Especially when I’m tired, I often write about problems and about my family. In the beginning I didn’t know anyone, but now because of this workshop I have more confidence in Glenn and GT. I am very enthusiastic about my participation in this workshop and really happy with the result. It gives me energy.”

BILAL (18)

"I was immediately interested when I saw the call for the workshops. I have been doing music for over 15 years, I had a studio and also made beats. Music means everything to me. It calms me down and allows me to express my feelings. I also write lyrics. I write down everything that comes to mind, sometimes there is a theme in my head, sometimes I write for other people. It was really great to participate in these workshops. Together with Kris as a professional and with the group, I am proud of the result. I have also sung some songs alone. My stage name is Pegase. I want to make my own songs again later. The more the better of these workshops. It really does good. The free rapping during the show was great." AZZEDINE (38)

"I have previously participated in music workshops here: beatbox, djembe and wanted to experience this too. I haven't done anything with rap and hip-hop yet. Music means everything to me. All emotions. I used to be a DJ for a long time, mainly electronic music, techno, house, ambient, also some classic music. I don't write lyrics myself, but I used to. Difficult to write about myself, at times I succeed, under the influence it gets better... Working in a group is not always easy, language is often a barrier. Normally you rarely come into contact with others here. I learned new things through the workshops. It would be good if we could be more involved with music here, a music studio in the prison, music programming via the computer. It would bring a lot of peace. More workshops, free stage, learning to write lyrics, further training in music, ... The presentation moment with the audience was really cool. This way we can let others hear that there is talent within the walls here."

MICHEL (59)

"When I heard about the GUTS workshops I was immediately enthusiastic. I thought it would be more freestyle singing, not in a group. I often rapped with my brother at home. Music means a lot to me. Away from the stress. It calms me down. I like Hip-hop, R&B, Afro-Latino, pop, rock, jazz but also opera. I also write lyrics myself, so I can put my emotions into words. I learned a lot in these workshops, including things outside my comfort zone. Working together in a group was fun. Listening to others, learning from each other, getting to know each other better. I'm really satisfied with the outcome of our song and also the clip. Got to dance and rap in prison for this clip, yes, really great. It would be fantastic if artists were allowed to come in and make music with them. Fatih was great. He taught us a lot and offered help when we needed it. I want to continue in music in the future. It was very nice to watch the result of the song and the clip together with everyone who worked on it. Very proud of the result. And when it comes online...great."

KEVIN (27)

"Music is my life. Music is everything. I've worked with a lot of artists in the past, as a backing singer. I have a bachelor's degree in ICT, 3D programming. During this workshop I was mainly interested in making the video clip, the animation. I hadn't really done anything with rap yet, but I had done a lot of other music. Music brings peace, puts me in a different world, is very emotional. I like different genres of music: salsa, schlagers, pop & rock, reggae, less rap. These types of workshops should be organized much more often and for a longer period of time; in any case, much more music would be better. When I write it is about emotions, it is an outlet, I also draw a lot.

Working with the guys was fun. I knew most of them from the walk or I work with them. I am very happy with the result of our workshops (song + video).

It will be an MTV award winning song! It would be nice to make our own CD with songs from the talent here."

GARINO (48)

"I participate in this workshop to give myself peace in the music, to express emotions in the songs. Outside, music keeps me busy.

I'm Roma and we sing a lot. I like gypsy music, R&B, pop (the Weekend, Michael Jackson, ...)

I write lyrics to express my emotions. I think these types of workshops should happen much more often. It is easy to make/find a melody, but it is more difficult to quickly come up with lyrics/words because they do not immediately occur to me.

Putting your thoughts on paper gives you hope to look forward to freedom.

It was good that it was a small group. We worked on one song together.

I would have preferred to have sung more lyrics instead of just 8 bars.

But the song is good. The recordings were valuable.

I would like to share it with others.

I found it difficult to concentrate. I would have preferred individual recordings.

too many people around me now. It would be good

to be more involved with music, or build a studio.

or have access to the internet and download music that way."

HARUN (31)

"I definitely wanted to participate in this workshop because I like to rap and work with music. I've also been to a studio a few times. I have been writing lyrics for almost 10 years. This way I can express myself when words don't work, then with music. There is a sense of satisfaction in having worked on something. Music is really an outlet, it is a part of me, ever since I was little, I have always been busy with music and dancing. It makes me happy and genuinely happy. In this song everyone had their own thing/lyrics, but when it all comes together it is really something unique. I am very satisfied with the result. Beautiful.

It's a shame that we couldn't listen to beats in our cell to prepare.

My choice of music is diverse: Rap, hip hop, Czech music or when I hear a nice song and it feels good. When I go outside I want to be more involved with music and recording in a studio."

Elbro(25)



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