MUSIC FOR FREEDOM

RESULT 3:
GUIDELINES FOR THE MANAGEMENT
OF AUDIO MUSIC WORKSHOP IN PRISON

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AUTHORS

The third project result has been developed under
the guidance of **Aufbruch**
and the contribution of all the partners.

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We extend our thanks to all partners for their collaboration
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over the course of the WP4,
expanded into additional areas of study
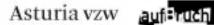
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1. Introduction

The present document, "Guidelines for the Management of Audio Music Workshops in Prison", is the third output of the M4F project and serves both as a reflective and foresight tool. It brings together theoretical, pedagogical, and operational knowledge acquired throughout the first two and a half years of the project's implementation in five European countries: Italy, Turkey, Romania, Germany, and Belgium.

Its core objective is to provide a clear, comprehensive, and transferable set of guidelines to design, manage, and support audio music laboratories and workshops based on hip hop and rap culture within correctional facilities.

Therefore, this report is addressed to professionals and institutions interested in replicating or adapting the M4F model, namely:

- Civil society organizations and cultural associations seeking to implement music-based educational interventions in penitentiary environments;
- Correctional institutions considering the integration of creative, skills-based programming;
- Politicians and educational experts focusing on the innovation of educational and rehabilitative approaches in prisons.

The report is built on and implements the first the first two project outputs, the **R1 – Competence Framework for Hip Hop Music Production** and the **R2 – Training Manual for Audio Editing Methodologies and Technologies in Prison**.

This third outcome, R3, is a natural evolution from R1 and R2 and embodies insights from the field. It gathers practical lessons, adaptations, and innovations that occurred during real-world experimentation in the correctional institutions of the consortium. Notably, M4F activities were pioneering in each of the national context involved - there was no prior structured experience of implementing audio production labs based on hip hop culture (or otherwise) in prisons or correctional facilities within these countries.

As a result of the diversity of national correctional systems and cultural contexts, project's implementation has led to different results and required specific local adaptations. This document aims to provide a synthesis of those experiences, offering a multi-contextual view while extracting common practices and principles.

Overall, the purpose of these guidelines is not only to provide a record of what has been done, but also to serve as a scalable model for future initiatives in creative rehabilitation, where music is used as a vehicle for learning, expression and reintegration.

1.1 Methodology and sources (WP2, WP3, monitoring documents, surveys outcomes etc.)

The development of these guidelines relies on a multi-source, evidence-informed methodology that mirrors the full life cycle of the M4F project.

The document is based on a combination of theoretical frameworks, practical training methodologies, and empirical feedback collected during the operational phase in correctional settings.

1. Result 1 - Competence Framework for Hip Hop Music Production (R1):

2. Result 2 - Training Manual for Audio Editing Methodologies and Technologies in Prison (R2):

3. Monitoring was continuous and participatory. Each partner organization documented their progress by using shared reporting templates developed by the consortium. In the preparation of this report, an extensive use of monitoring documents was made.

From a methodological point of view, the core contribution of this paper stems from Work Package 3 (WP3), which involved the experimental deployment of the music production workshops in real prison environments in five partner countries. This phase provided:

- Practical validation of the R1 and R2 frameworks;
- Specific adaptations to suit national specific contexts;
- Data and insights from direct observation, institutional collaborations, and participant outcomes.

Given the cross-national nature of the M4F consortium—operating in Italy, Turkey, Romania, Germany, and Belgium—a comparative methodological lens was applied to capture differences in:

- Correctional infrastructure and access;
- Institutional support and restrictions;
- Cultural reception of hip hop as an educational tool;
- Logistical feasibility of audio technology deployment.

The comparative element was crucial in shaping adaptable recommendations that can serve a variety of different contexts.

1.2 General state of the art

To the present time, the M4F project has completed its main implementation phase, with music production workshops set up and tested in prisons of five European countries: Italy, Turkey, Romania, Germany and Belgium. These workshops, implemented by local partner organizations, were based on the pedagogical framework outlined in R1 and the operational guidelines provided in R2.

Despite the differences in institutional frameworks, target populations, and logistical constraints, all partners succeeded in:

- Setting up basic audio production laboratories using a Digital Audio Workstation;
- Implementing structured music education programs focused on hip hop and rap;
- Supporting participants in composing, recording, and producing original tracks;
- Documenting and monitoring educational, emotional, and social impacts.

Each national context presented unique challenges and opportunities, ranging from juvenile detention environments to probationary settings and young adult facilities. The following chapters will explore these experiences in more detail, offering a comparative lens into what worked, what needed to be adjusted and what can be learnt for future replication.

2. Educational

This chapter outlines the educational and pedagogical methodology developed and applied throughout the M4F project.

At its core, M4F is an initiative designed to teach digital music production—specifically within the context of correctional institutions. The aim is to enable participants to create hip hop "beats," the instrumental foundations over which rap lyrics are performed.

The choice of hip hop is deliberate and pedagogically significant. As a genre rooted in self-expression, cultural identity, and social commentary, hip hop offers unique educational value in environments characterised by exclusion, marginalization, and institutional control. The M4F project focuses on beat production rather than lyric writing, the two elements are inherently complementary and mutually reinforcing. We experienced that the connection between writing and production is an important part of the overall learning process which will be highlighted throughout this chapter.

The first section illustrates the technical and pedagogical methodology developed for teaching music production, with a specific focus on the practice of lyric writing, suggested as a highly complementary component of the production-based workshops.

An analysis of the educational and social impacts observed among the inmate participants is then provided, with reference to the competence areas defined in R1. Finally, the chapter closes with a comparative summary of the implementation status in each partner country, laying the groundwork for further reflections on operational challenges and best practices.

2.1 The Educational Approach (writing/producing)

As outlined in R1, hip hop is not merely a cultural style or a musical preference. It is a pedagogical model rooted in informal learning, creativity, social reflection, and identity work. Hip hop-based education is especially relevant for contexts of social exclusion - such as prisons - where traditional educational models often fail to engage.

According to R1, hip hop education is:

- **Culturally grounded**, drawing on narratives and forms of expression that resonate with marginalized youth and adults;
- **Learner-centred**, placing participants in an active creative role where they become producers of knowledge and meaning;
- **Process-based**, prioritising learning through creation, experimentation, and iteration rather than rote instruction;
- **Relational**, relying on collaboration, peer feedback, and group dynamics as drivers of learning;
- **Empowering**, offering tools to reclaim personal narratives and express suppressed or stigmatized identities.

These features make hip hop an ideal framework for prison education since it offers a pathway for reconnection, through culture, creativity, and expression, allowing participants perceive themselves not merely as passive recipients of punishment, but as active creators of meaning.

Although M4F did not formally include lyric writing as part of its core curriculum, the pedagogical value of writing, as highlighted in R1, was repeatedly validated in practice.

Writing lyrics serves educational objectives in several ways:

- **Language and literacy development**: construction of rhymes, use of rhythm and syntax, expansion of the vocabulary;
- **Narrative thinking**: organization of personal stories, reflection on experiences, and expression of identity through written compositions;
- **Emotional and social learning**: naming and processing emotions, confronting difficult experiences, and visualising alternative futures;
- **Civic and critical engagement**: use of lyrics as a platform for self-representation, critique, and community belonging.Lyric composition also plays a key role in what in R1 was called the "Social Dimension" of competence development, particularly in relation to self-awareness, communication, and group interaction. In many partner countries, trainers observed that once participants had created a beat, they instinctively wanted to "complete" it by adding lyrics— albeit this was not a formal target of the project.

This reinforces what suggested in R1: beat making and lyricism can be two sides of the same educational coin. One fosters technical and cognitive development; the other facilitates emotional, linguistic, and narrative expression. When combined, they offer a holistic creative process that can engage both intellect and voice— hence making them suited to correctional environments where learners are often disconnected from both. While lyric writing naturally emerged as a complementary practice in many M4F workshops, the principal focus of the project, as conceived and structured, was the teaching of music production, specifically the creation of hip hop beats using accessible digital tools.

This choice was made since it responded to multiple educational, technical, and institutional considerations. As a matter of fact, producing music engages participants in creative, technical, and procedural learning, resulting in a unique and powerful method for rehabilitation and skills development in restricted environments. Additionally, it can also serve as a tool employability.

The foundation for this training was defined in R2 – Training Manual for Audio Editing Methodologies and Technologies in Prison – a practical and flexible curriculum designed around four progressive modules.

The methodology was tailored to be versatile and adaptable to different literacy levels, technical conditions and time constraints, and was improved on the basis of real-world input from trainers and institutions.

Each module contributes to a broader learning arc, ranging from introduction to independent production, and reflects both pedagogical principles and real constraints in prison education. The report will now briefly review each module but, if you require more in-depth and precise information, we invite you to directly consult the R2 freely downloadable from the M4F website (titles slightly abridged for narrative clarity).

1) Module 1: Introduction to Hip Hop Culture and Music Technology

This first module sets the stage by connecting participants with the cultural foundations of hip hop and providing a basic introduction to the tools of digital audio production. Its purpose is to spark curiosity and demystify the technical setup, especially for learners unfamiliar with music software.

Key educational functions:

- Introducing hip hop's social origins, core elements (DJing, MCing, beatboxing, graffiti, breakdance), and values (resistance, identity, expression);
- Familiarizing learners with key concepts in digital music: samples, loops, tempo, bars, patterns;
- Exploring basic functionalities of DAWs (e.g., Ableton Live, Audacity, Logic Pro) in a non-pressuring and exploratory way.

2) Module 2: Writing and Arranging a Beat

Once learners understand the software interface and basic concepts, Module 2 introduces structured beat composition. Participants begin to experiment with creating musical ideas: selecting drums, arranging patterns, building progressions.

Key educational functions:

- Developing and understanding of beat structure (intro, verse, chorus, bridge);
- Encouraging rhythmic awareness and pattern variation;
- Promoting decision-making and creative intent;
- Introducing basic concepts of arrangement and song flow.

3) Module 3: Beat Production and Development

This module focuses on refining and building complexity in the learner's music. This represents the pivotal creative foundation of the training process, where participants deepen their technical skills and aesthetic judgement.

Key educational functions:

- Working with multi-layered compositions (drums, basslines, melodies, effects);
- Exploring texture, mood, and genre conventions (trap, drill, boom-bap, lo-fi);
- Experimenting with automation, effects (reverb, EQ, filters), and dynamics;
- Developing a personal "sound" and musical identity.

4) Module 4: Mixing and Mastering (Post-Production)

This concluding module shows learners how to polish and finalise their tracks, helping them not only to reinforce technical skills but also to instil pride and a sense of completion. Provided that not all labs fully completed this module, its pedagogical value was noticeable when implemented.

Key educational functions:

- Learning the basics of gain staging, volume balancing, and EQ;
- Understanding stereo field, compression, and exporting;
- Encouraging reflection, iteration, and final decision-making;
- Creating presentable, shareable outputs.

2.2 Educational and Social Impacts on Inmates

One of the primary ambitions of the M4F project was to assess whether creative digital education - in particular hip-hop-based music production - could serve as an effective tool for the development of key competences and soft skills among prisoners. The workshops aimed not only to teach technical skills, but to foster also personal development, social reintegration potential, and emotional resilience.

Across all pilot sites, participants demonstrated meaningful progress in several of the transversal competences identified in R1. These included:

- **Digital competence:** Learners developed hands-on skills using DAWs (Ableton, Audacity, Logic Pro), learned to manipulate audio tracks, create loops, apply basic effects, and export final versions of their beats. Even participants with low digital literacy gained confidence with software-based workflows
- **Learning to learn:** Many participants, especially those with interrupted or negative prior educational experiences, re-engaged with learning through a non-traditional, self-paced process. The iterative, trial-and-error nature of beat making helped build persistence, reflection, and self-correction.
- **Creativity and initiative:** Producing original beats enabled learners to make creative decisions, solve problems in real time, and express stylistic preferences, encouraging personal initiative and experimentation.

- **Teamwork and communication:** In group sessions, participants exchanged feedback, worked together on tracks, and supported each other's learning. This was particularly noted in Italy, Germany, and Belgium, where peer mentoring emerged informally.
- **Sense of self and identity:** Several trainers reported visible shifts in participants' confidence, posture, and willingness to share thoughts, particularly when lyrics or vocal performance were integrated.

These developments were consistent regardless of the participant's prior experience with music or technology.

In a variety of circumstances, music production provided more than technical learning, offering a space for emotional processing, reflection, and release. Several youth workers noted that participants used their beats as soundtracks for unspoken stories, feelings, or memories. When lyric composition spontaneously arose, participants often wrote autobiographical texts, looking into themes such as family, freedom, guilt and hope. Similarly, in contexts where the texts were not explicitly taught, the beats themselves were described by the trainers as 'emotionally charged' or 'deeply personal'.

The non-verbal, rhythmic nature of music production enabled some participants to express themselves without facing language or literacy barriers. Trainers noted that the structure and repetition in beat making helped learners experience emotional regulation, especially in moments of agitation or disengagement.

The workshops also offered participants a sense of achievement and forward momentum, a break from passive institutional routines. The act of producing a complete track, hearing it played and receiving feedback instilled a form of tangible success. In Italy and Belgium, plans were developed to formally publish tracks or organize public presentations, giving learners a pathway toward external recognition.

M4F demonstrated that creative digital education can bridge the gap between institutional barriers and individual potential, facilitating the development of transferable competences, boosting motivation and contributing to more inclusive learning ecosystems - even in contexts of deprivation.

2.3 Strengths and challenges

This section provides a structured reflection on the key strengths and future challenges of the M4F project. It will shift from the general strengths of hip-hop as a pedagogical tool to the specificity of our workshops.

Strengths

Its key strengths in general educational settings include:

- **Cultural relevance and accessibility**: Hip hop connects with learners who often feel excluded from mainstream educational models. Its roots in marginalized communities make it an ideal entry point for re-engaging individuals in learning.
- **Low entry barriers:** No prior musical training is required to start producing or writing, thus enabling it to be inclusive regardless of formal education level.
- **Multi-dimensional learning:** Hip hop engages emotional, cognitive, and social domains simultane-

ously, combining artistic expression with personal development.

- **Process-oriented methodology:** Emphasis on trial-and-error, remixing, and iteration promotes resilience, self-reflection, and persistence.
- **Learner agency and authorship:** Participants become active creators of content, narratives, and meaning - not just static recipients of information.

This framework has been widely adopted in non-formal education across Europe and globally, especially in urban youth programs.

When applied in prison contexts, hip hop-based education offers a uniquely effective response to the structural and psychological barriers commonly faced by incarcerated individuals.

M4F implementation validated several of these advantages:

- **Emotional and psychological resonance:** The themes of hip hop, resistance, identity, survival, and aspiration, reflect inmates' personal experiences, creating deep emotional engagement.
- **Structure within chaos:** The rhythm, repetition, and formality of beat production give participants a sense of control and predictability in an otherwise rigid or chaotic institutional setting.
- **Alternative communication channel:** For individuals who struggle with verbal expression or emotional regulation, music becomes a safe and powerful outlet.
- **Rehabilitation through creation:** Creative expression fosters a sense of worth and future orientation, two essential elements in reintegration efforts.
- **Positive group dynamics:** Hip hop's inherently collaborative nature reinforces teamwork, listening, and mutual support - counterbalancing the isolation common in correctional environments.

M4F workshops proved that even participants with disciplinary records or learning difficulties were able to integrate themselves into group learning processes when the structure was based on co-creation and mutual feedback.

The specific methodology developed through M4F - detailed in R2 - was found to be particularly suited to the constraints and opportunities of prison-based education. Its strengths, observed in all partner countries, include:

- **Modular and adaptable structure:** The four-module format allowed trainers to adjust the depth and pacing of content according to technical capacity, group size, and institutional timeframes.
- **Accessible technology:** The use of industry-standard DAWs combined with simplified workflows ensured both quality outcomes and accessibility for first-time users.
- **Step-by-step skill development:** The methodology built confidence progressively, from loop-based exploration to full beat production, allowing learners to experience early success while still challenges.
- **Engagement through autonomy:** Participants were given the creative freedom to develop their own musical identity, choose genres and take ownership of their projects.
- **Flexible trainer role:** Trainers acted as facilitators rather than instructors, supporting learning through encouragement, personal connection, and collaborative discovery - a tailored approach suited to correctional dynamics.

- **Tangible results:** the workshops enabled inmates to produce finished tracks - concrete evidence of their achievement that could be shared with others, boosting confidence and providing emotional closure.

Challenges

Although the M4F methodology proved to be effective and adaptable, several challenges recurred in different national contexts. Rather than undermining the value and effectiveness of the approach, these obstacles highlighted critical evaluations for future adaptation, replication and scaling.resilience, self-reflection, and persistence.

The prison environment presents inherent constraints that impact any educational or cultural intervention. In the case of M4F, key institutional / prison-related challenges included:

- **Restricted access and shifting permissions:** Partners in Germany, Italy and Belgium reported schedule changes, or restrictions on equipment use due to internal policies or administrative turnover.
- **Bureaucratic complexity:** Establishing formal agreements (MoUs or letters of support) often required extended negotiation and coordination across multiple departments (e.g., security, education, administration).
- **Lack of continuity:** In some contexts (e.g., Germany, Romania, Italy), participant turnover due to release dates, transfers, or disciplinary actions disrupted the learning flow.
- **Limited institutional prioritization:** In several cases, despite initial interest, prison authorities deprioritized cultural education focusing more on security concerns or more "traditional" vocational programs.

These issues bring to light the importance of early engagement with prison leadership, flexibility in scheduling, and strong institutional anchoring from the outset. This topic will be addressed more specifically in the next chapter

Pedagogical sensitivity and adaptability are two essential qualities required to engage a vulnerable and often under-skilled population through creative digital education. Two main challenges related to the laboratory implementation from a pedagogical point of view were identified:

- **Low baseline literacy or digital skills:** in some cases, learners had never used a computer or had difficulty reading, requiring trainers to significantly simplify tasks and use visual or tactile learning strategies. Each organization produced and printed tables and schemes on A3 sheets with shortcuts and general tips both for using the DAW and the computer.

  Teaching music production becomes a computer literacy course as well.

- **Low motivation or attention span:** especially in the first sessions, participants with negative prior educational experiences were hesitant to engage or lacked confidence in their ability to learn.

  Learning to produce a beat is like learning another "classical" instrument (such a guitar): it requires time and entails an initial learning-curve that can be frightening for inmates. Fo this reason, ETIC developed a methodology to maximize the sense of engagement from the very beginning.

  This aim is achieved by providing inmates with a professionally produced beat, developed specifically for the project, which serves as the foundation for the learning process. To access further details, please consult R2.

The implementation of music production in secure environments also presents specific technical and logistical issues, namely:

- **Hardware and software constraints:** Some institutions limited internet access or software installation. In Belgium (Merksplas Prison), the team had to use Audacity instead of Ableton due to IT restrictions.

- **Room limitations:** Acoustic quality, privacy, and noise control were often lacking. In Germany, the mobile studio setup had to be relocated multiple times.

- **Trainer capacity:** In a few contexts, the limited availability of trainers with both social/pedagogical and technical/musical skills resulted in complication in the delivery of the full methodology. This obstacle was specifically flagged in Romania and Turkey.

- **Time constraints:** The short duration of sessions, interruptions due to institutional routines (head counts, lockdowns, disciplinary incidents), and the overall time-limited nature of the pilot made it difficult to complete all four modules.

These logistical barriers reaffirm the need for flexible planning, minimal-tech alternatives - where necessary - and the recruitment or training of multidisciplinary facilitators capable of navigating both educational and technical domains.

One of the overarching ambitions of the M4F project was to support employability pathways through creative and digital innovations. Although the workshops successfully introduced participants to digital audio production and fostered valuable transversal skills, the application of these skills into concrete professional opportunities proved to be much more complex.

Key challenges include:

- **Difficulty in the connection between prison-based training and external job markets:** Most correctional institutions lack structured follow-up mechanisms or partnerships with the creative/music industry that could support inmates' transition from educational participation to real-world job access.

- **Low formal recognition of competences:** Despite real skill development, participants often left the program without a formal certificate or qualification that could be recognized in the job market -particularly in contexts where vocational training is still prioritized over cultural/creative education.

- **Barriers due to criminal records:** Even highly motivated individuals faced systemic discrimination or legal obstacles in finding employment in music-related fields (event spaces, youth centres, media), limiting the practical utility of their new skills.

- **Lack of continuity after release:** Without structured reintegration support, many participants lost access to tools, spaces, or networks necessary to continue the production of music after leaving their release. Only a few pilots (e.g., Turkey's permanent studio or Belgium's adult education track) have set in place mechanisms to ensure continuity.

- **Gap in professional mentoring:** Despite the fact that trainers were effective educators and facilitators, few of them had direct links to music industry pathways that could be called into action for internships, concerts or job exposure.

    These challenges highlight a critical next step for the M4F model: building structured bridges between prison-based creative education and post-release employability, through certification, partnerships with the creative sector, and integration with national or regional job-market services. The project team is currently working on this issue, which is the goal of WP4, the final project's work package.

2.4 Summary of the workshop's implementations

In the last paragraph of this chapter, we will briefly go through the various laboratories.

Italy - Arci Liguria

- **Implementation Context:** Conducted at *Casa Circondariale* of La Spezia under a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the prison administration.

- **Trainers and Schedule:** Led by Danilo Manganelli (artist/social worker) and assistant Filippo Marcellini. Classes occurred twice a week (Mon/Wed) alongside extended writing and recording sessions.

- **Technical Setup:** Used Ableton Live 12 with a full digital lab (Focusrite, MIDI controllers, monitors). Equipment followed R2 specifications.

- **Curriculum Coverage:** Modules 1–3 fully implemented; Module 4 (Mixing/Mastering) partially covered. Included personal projects and ETIC remix exercises.

- **Participant Profile:** Adult male inmates with different musical backgrounds. Improvement recorded in nearly all R1-defined competences.

- **Outcomes:** Production of both individual and collaborative tracks. Implementation of technical skills, musical expression, and collaboration.

- **Stakeholders and Sustainability:** Strong engagement with ALFA (skill certification regional agency), legal experts, and Arci's national network. Planning music publication and public concert in Genoa.

The Arci Liguria lab operated with a consistent weekly schedule and delivered all three modules of the manual, with partial coverage of the final one. Participants used an ETIC-provided reference beat throughout the project, alongside self-directed production projects. The trainer applied the manual as a framework, while allowing flexibility in artistic expression. The remixing assignments produced boom-bap and drill-style tracks with vocals. Skill assessments at the beginning and end of the workshop showed clear improvement across R1's competence areas. Coordination with ALFA and legal experts have been consistent to coordinate public sharing of the inmates' work, with progress toward copyright registration, potential releases, and national-level advocacy through Arci.

Turkey - İzmir Probation Directorate

- **Implementation Context:** conducted inside İzmir Probation Directorate's facility. A permanent two-room studio was created exclusively for M4F use.

- **Trainers and Schedule:** Delivered by Gürcan (engineer/educator) and Metin (legal professional with creative interests). Sessions run three times a week (Mon/Wed/Fri, 3 hours each).

- **Technical Setup:** Fully equipped studio using MacBooks, Focusrite, MIDI controllers, acoustic isolation, and Ableton Live.

- **Curriculum Coverage:** All four R2 modules were addressed, with adaptive pacing based on group engagement.

- **Participant Profile**: Six young probationers (4 men, 2 women, aged 20–27), selected via expert-led motivational interviews.

- **Outcomes:** Developed DAW and music composition skills; strengthened teamwork and self-expression. The studio became a positive alternative space within the correctional setting.

- **Stakeholders and Sustainability:** Initial outreach to universities, NGOs, and hip-hop artists. Long-term plan for continuous use of studio beyond the project.

The İzmir Probation Directorate established a dedicated music studio composed of a classroom and an acoustically treated recording room. The equipment was efficiently sourced, and some hardware repurposed from an unused studio in another correctional facility. Although no official external stakeholders were involved at this stage, informal contacts were established with local NGOs and artists, alongside discussions with the Ministry of Education regarding certification were initiated but still not concluded.

Romania - CPIP

- **Implementation Context:** Workshop held at *Timișoara Penitentiary*, using an informal agreement and verbal protocols.
- **Trainers and Schedule:** Delivered by prison educator Dan-Orest Nicolau and external technician Samuel Bogdan. Sessions occurred 3 times a week for 4 months (for a total amount of 50 hours).
- **Technical Setup:** Lab equipped with PCs, MIDI controllers, microphones, and Ableton Live.
- **Curriculum Coverage:** Modules 1–3 fully implemented; Module 4 introduced at a basic level with adapted content for literacy challenges.
- **Participant Profile**: Four adult male inmates with limited digital and literacy skills. Selected via prison announcement and educator screening.
- **Outcomes:** Participants gained first-time exposure to music production. Significant improvements in confidence, teamwork, and self-expression.
- **Stakeholders and Sustainability:** Developing partnerships with cultural organizations (e.g., PLAI, Ceva De Spus). Aiming to establish post-project support network.

The CPIP lab in Timișoara adapted the R2 manual to address the needs of a small group of inmates with low literacy and no prior musical training. Instructions were simplified and visually supported and a strong emphasis was placed on repetition and hands-on practice. Even though lyric writing was successfully introduced, participants were reluctant to record their voices. Beat production was more widely embraced, and learners gradually gained confidence in using DAWs, organizing sound layers, and experimenting with loops and effects. Module 4 wasn't tackled in its entirety and was kept at an introductory level. Stakeholder involvement began during the pilot phase, focusing on partnerships with cultural NGOs in the Timișoara area.

Implementation:

Given the limited digital and literacy skills of the participants, the implementation process faced several challenges. The learning pace proceeded slowly, and constant support from trainers was necessary throughout the program. Although participants made progress in acquiring both basic technical skills (such as creating simple beats, using digital audio workstations, and layering sounds) and soft skills (such as collaboration, creativity, and confidence building), they remained dependent on structured guidance. By the end of the program, they were capable of engaging in music production activities with support; however, they were not yet able to independently manage or initiate complex projects on their own.

For instance, while participants gradually learned to create beats and organize musical structures, they

still needed step-by-step assistance to navigate the software environment. Reading and comprehension difficulties limited their ability to engage fully with more complex aspects such as lyric writing or advanced sound editing. Trainers adapted the methodology by emphasizing practical, hands-on activities and simplifying instructions.

Additionally, participants showed reluctance in activities that involved vocal recording or public self-expression, and trainers had to reorient parts of the curriculum toward instrumental production and non-verbal musical creativity. Collaborative work was introduced to stimulate peer learning.

Overall, despite these limitations, the workshop succeeded in building a foundation of digital and creative competencies, alongside improvements in self-confidence and interpersonal communication.

Germany - AufBruch

- **Implementation Context:** Due to youth prison restrictions, workshops were held at *Plötzensee Prison* and a *youth center* in Berlin.
- **Trainers and Schedule:** Led by a multidisciplinary team (artists, technicians, project staff). Sessions held weekly for both groups (prison + ex-prisoners), Nov 2024–Mar 2025.
- **Technical Setup:** Flexible mobile studio using Logic Pro, MacBooks, and portable acoustic materials.
- **Curriculum Coverage:** Content adapted: Group 1 focused on performance and lyric creation; Group 2 on technical aspects. Modules selectively applied due to varying skill levels.
- **Participant Profile**: Group 1: 12 young inmates; Group 2: 6 ex-prisoners. Many faced instability, health issues, or low digital skills.
- **Outcomes:** Group 1 successfully presented 11 live performances; Group 2 gained basic production skills. Workshops emphasized empowerment, motivation, and creativity.
- **Stakeholders and Sustainability:** Supported by Plötzensee staff, Theaterhaus Mitte, Gangway e.V., and media coverage. Flexible model suited to shifting institutional access.

AufBruch adapted its implementation to shifting access in the Berlin prison system by launching two parallel workshops. Group 1, inside Plötzensee Prison, engaged in a blended format combining body work, lyrical development, and performance. Group 2, composed of former inmates, met at Theaterhaus Mitte but faced high dropout rates due to unstable life circumstances. In Group 1, participants produced original lyrics, learned to use microphones and studio equipment, and performed in 11 live presentations attended by internal and external audiences. Group 2 completed a reduced program focused on basic DAW operation and self-expression. Post-processing was completed by staff due to technical challenges among participants.

Belgium - Asturia vzw

- **Implementation Context:** Conducted in *Merksplas Prison* and *CVO EduKempen* adult education institute.
- **Trainers and Schedule:** Wendy Trimbos (in prison) and Jan Pypers (in CVO). Courses ran twice a week (3 hours/session) over two consecutive training cycles.
- **Technical Setup:** Use of Audacity in prison and Ableton Live in adult education. Equipment included laptops, MIDI keyboards, headphones, and projectors.

- **Curriculum Coverage:** Modules 1–3 fully implemented; Module 4 introduced partially, adapted to technical limitations and language challenges.
- **Participant Profile**: Group 1: prisoners selected via interviews; Groups 2–3: ex-prisoners/low-skilled learners. All assessed using R1 framework.
- **Outcomes:** development of audio editing, beat creation, and collaborative skills. Educational gains were noted in terms of confidence, listening, and peer interaction.
- **Stakeholders and Sustainability:** Strong collaboration with **VOCVO** and the Ministry of Belgium. Planning national expansion and exploring legal rights for track distribution.

Asturia ran three iterations of the workshop: one in Merksplas Prison and two at the CVO EduKempen institute. Participants were low-skilled learners, including current and former inmates. Interviews were conducted at the start and end of each cycle to assess expectations and outcomes.

Group 1 used Audacity due to prison software limitations, while Ableton Live was used in Groups 2 and 3. Participants selected beats from a shared database and worked on individual compositions. Trainers had to provide extra language and literacy support. Module 4 (mixing and mastering) was only partially covered. Stakeholder engagement was ongoing with prison education authorities and the legal frameworks for music distribution were under review.

1.4 Concluding thoughts on the implementation

The M4F project proved that hip hop-based digital music production offers a powerful, flexible, and culturally relevant approach to education in prison contexts. This is boosted when the writing practice is added to the production part. This very feature is enhanced when the writing practice is added to the production phase.

Grounded in a well-defined pedagogical framework (R1) and delivered through a practical, modular methodology (R2), the workshops successfully supported inmates in developing both technical skills and transversal competences, including creativity, collaboration, self-expression, and digital literacy.

The approach turned out to be particularly effective in reaching individuals often excluded from traditional learning environments and providing them with meaningful experiences of achievement, identity exploration, and emotional engagement. The methodology's adaptability to different institutional settings, and the emergence of unplanned yet impactful practices such as lyric writing, further demonstrate its relevance and scalability.

However, the implementation also revealed key systemic and structural challenges, notably in areas such as institutional access, trainer capacity, and pedagogical adaptation for low-skill learners.

The project was able to overcome these challenges and create a space to allow all the members to share their best practices.

While the project succeeded in equipping participants with concrete skills and creative confidence, the transition to recognised professional opportunities remains difficult. These challenges will be addressed in the project's WP4.

3. Operational Model for Music Production Workshop in Prison

The purpose of this chapter is to define the technical, human, and institutional conditions necessary to implement a music production workshop within correctional settings, based on the practical experience of the M4F project. While the previous chapters focused on the pedagogical and social impact of hip hop-based education, this section presents a structured, replicable operational model that can guide public authorities, NGOs, educators, and correctional facilities interested in applying the M4F approach.

Drawing on implementation data from five European countries, this chapter outlines the spatial, technical, and security requirements needed to safely and effectively run a digital music production workshop within correctional facilities. It further specifies the competences required of trainers, the profile and selection procedures for participants, and the institutional frameworks that support sustainable collaboration between civil society organizations and penitentiary administrations.

The chapter is intended as a practical reference for replication. It highlights the diversity of approaches successfully implemented within the M4F partnership, while also identifying common denominators essential for quality, safety, and educational impact.

Each section includes observations gathered from on-site implementation and monitoring reports and is designed to facilitate both pilot initiatives and long-term programmatic integration of music education in prison settings.

3.1 Spatial and technical requirements

Establishing a music production laboratory within a correctional facility presents a complex operational challenge that combines the technical demands with the regulatory, logistical, and security requirements of a prison environment. The M4F project addressed this challenge by defining a flexible but structured operational model that could be adapted by other organizations for future implementations.

The spatial and technical requirements presented here are the result of a multi-phase, collaborative process between M4F partner organisations and their penitentiary administrations. Each national team faced distinct regulations, infrastructural conditions, and institutional cultures; nonetheless, a shared methodology emerged from field experience which may guide future replications.

1) Planning and Coordination Phase

The first step in each setting involved a joint assessment of available space within the prison or probation facility. This included:

- Identification of a designated or multi-use room that could be reserved during fixed hours;

- Evaluation of basic infrastructure conditions (electricity, ventilation, acoustics, lighting);
- Definition of institutional access protocols and physical control mechanisms (e.g., keys, staff accompaniment, working hours).

In several cases, existing rooms were adapted for creative use. For example:

- In Romania, a former radio room was repurposed and adjusted with basic acoustic treatment.
- In Italy, a hallway space was restructured into a semi-permanent creative lab, supported by prison staff.
- In Turkey, a new permanent two-room studio was conceived within the İzmir Probation Directorate facilities and is integrated with a classroom-style space and one recording booth.

These setups required negotiation and collaboration with prison technical staff, who supported infrastructure upgrades (e.g., power outlets, wiring) and ensured compliance with internal regulations.

2) Institutional Needs and Constraints

From the prison administration's perspective, the setup of a music workshop must address several core needs:

- **Security and risk management:** All equipment and software must be compliant with internal safety protocols. This may include disconnection from internet networks, pre-installation of software outside the institution, disabling USB ports, and securing all transportable gear after each session.
- **Access control and traceability:** Movement of participants and external trainers must be recorded. Equipment logs, session schedules, and storage procedures must be transparent and agreed upon in advance.
- **Stability of routines:** Workshop timing must fit within the institutional calendar and avoid overlap with sensitive periods (e.g., security operations, meal distribution, etc.). Room availability must be guaranteed in advance to avoid last-minute cancellations.
- **Institutional liability and clarity of roles:** The partner organisation must provide proof of legal compliance, staff identity verification, and clear documentation of responsibilities. The appointment of an internal educator or staff representative was a key success factor in most implementations.

3) Functional Requirements for Educational Use

While satisfying institutional constraints, the space must also meet minimum conditions for pedagogical effectiveness and creative work. These include:

- **Acoustic evaluation:** Although full soundproofing is not required, the room should have minimal echo or external noise, to allow monitoring, mixing, and recording with reasonable audio clarity.
- **Furniture and layout:** Tables must accommodate laptops, controllers, and interfaces. Seating arrangements should allow for both individual and group work, with a clear view for the trainer.
- **Electricity and hardware protection:** Reliable power sources are critical. Where possible, surge protectors and secured cable arrangements should be installed.
- **Visual aids and projection:** In some countries (e.g. Belgium, Romania, Italy), projectors or monitors were used to support visual learning, especially in low-literacy groups.

To conclude, the space must be technically functional, secure, and cognitively supportive—allowing learners to engage with music production tools in an environment that feels safe but at the same time stimulating. Even the most modest rooms, when properly equipped and supported, proved highly effective across the M4F implementation sites.

The following subsections outline the specific studio equipment configurations used in the M4F model (Section 3.1.1) and the security measures and operational safeguards that ensured compliance with institutional protocols (Section 3.1.2).

3.1.1 Studio Equipment

The heart of the M4F workshop model is the digital music production laboratory, tailored to fit the specific requirements of prison or probation environments. The equipment setup had to satisfy multiple criteria, including portability, security compliance, pedagogical suitability, and scalability. Each partner organization set up a local laboratory using a shared baseline of essential hardware and software, adapted to institutional constraints and available infrastructure.

A standard configuration was defined through field experimentation and was applied across both fixed-location and mobile setups, depending on national conditions.

Minimum Technical Setup (Standard Configuration)

The M4F project proved that hip hop-based digital music production offers a powerful, flexible, and culturally relevant approach to education in prison contexts. This is boosted when the writing practice is added to the production part. This very feature is enhanced when the writing practice is added to the production phase.

Each laboratory was equipped with the following baseline elements:

Table 1 – Equipment list		
Equipment Item	**Function**	**Specification / Notes**
Laptop or Desktop Computer	Central unit for operating DAW software	Minimum 8GB RAM, Windows or macOS
Digital Audio Workstation (DAW)	Music production environment	Ableton Live, Logic Pro, or Audacity (in restricted settings, for restricted operations). In any case, any DAW is fine.
MIDI Controller	Beat making and arrangement input	25- or 49-key, with pads/knobs for flexibility
Audio Interface	External sound card for microphone/headphone routing	Focusrite Scarlett or equivalent
Studio Headphones	Individual monitoring	Closed-back, suitable for shared settings
Microphone and Stand	Vocal or sample recording (where permitted)	With pop filter and stand
Cables, Adapters, Power Strips	Electrical reliability and equipment connection	Fully labelled and inventoried

All equipment was configured to meet institutional security standards: software was installed and tested outside the prison; internet connectivity was disabled or restricted; and user permissions were preset to avoid unauthorized changes or data transfer.

In several pilot sites, and particularly in Italy, Turkey, and the Belgian reintegration centre, additional elements were included to improve the professional quality and pedagogical versatility of the labs:

- **Monitor speakers**: Used for group listening and mixing in acoustically suitable rooms;
- **Acoustic treatment materials**: Foam panels and carpets to reduce reflections in untreated spaces;
- **Projector or secondary monitor**: To support visual instruction and DAW demonstration;
- **Sound-isolating screens or booths**: In Turkey, a dedicated recording space was established for improved vocal production.

While these additions were not strictly necessary, they significantly improved the learner experience, particularly when workshops progressed into vocal performance and remix production.

Regarding the price, it is hard to give a precise estimation, especially now in April 25 with the recent international tariffs. The average price the above equipment list with 5 computers, 5 DAWs, 5 MIDI Controller, 5 Headphones was around 7.000 EUR, by the end of 2024.

Worth of mention is the mobile lab model, implemented by AufBruch in Germany. Due to access restrictions in youth prisons and logistical limitations in fixed installations, the team assembled a portable studio that could be transported and used flexibly across multiple locations.

The mobile lab included:

- Lightweight MacBooks pre-installed with Logic Pro and licensed plug-ins;
- Compact MIDI controllers (e.g., Akai MPK Mini) that could fit in backpacks;
- Foldable microphones and tabletop stands;
- A portable audio interface and headphones;
- All items stored in custom foam-padded travel cases, compliant with institutional regulations.

This configuration allowed trainers to set up and dismantle the studio within minutes, operate in multi-purpose spaces (e.g., youth centers, external classrooms), and respond to rapidly changing institutional conditions. It also made it possible to continue training with former inmates in reintegration programs outside prison walls.

The mobile model demonstrated that the M4F approach could be scaled down without compromising core objectives, and remains a highly transferable solution for pilot projects or low-resource institutions.

Each partner was responsible for equipment procurement, pre-installation, and institutional approval. Key operational practices included:

- Software activation and DAW configuration prior to entering the prison;
- Password protection and user account setup to limit access and prevent system modifications;
- Centralized sample libraries, loop packs, and templates preloaded to support the R2 curriculum;
- Inventory tracking of all physical items, with transport logs and serial number registration.

In some cases, open-source or simplified software (e.g., Audacity) was used in facilities with severe IT restrictions (as in Merksplas Prison, Belgium). In Romania, additional visual aids and keyboard stickers were used to help low-literacy learners navigate the software.

3.1.2 Security measures

Operating a digital music production workshop inside correctional environments necessitates a rigorous adherence to security protocols. Prisons and probation facilities function under strict rules regarding access, digital infrastructure, and equipment handling. The M4F model was designed with these conditions in mind, and security compliance was systematically integrated into every phase of implementation, from equipment selection to session management and post-session storage.

While specific rules varied by country and institution, the following common measures were identified as essential for institutional approval and operational continuity.

1) Digital and IT Security

Music production relies on laptops and software that could present risks if not properly controlled. To prevent any security breach or non-compliant usage, all partners adopted the following digital safeguards:

- **No internet access**: All DAWs and sample libraries were pre-installed offline. Computers had Wi-Fi adapters disabled or physically removed.
- **User account restrictions:** Computers were configured with limited-access user profiles to prevent software installation, system changes, or unauthorized file management.
- **External media control:** USB ports were either disabled or restricted; no external USB drives, CDs, or SD cards were allowed unless explicitly approved.
- **Data protection and backup:** Projects were stored locally on the device, or, when permitted, uploaded via controlled institutional channels (e.g., in Italy and Turkey) by authorized staff only. In some cases, finished tracks were exported by trainers under supervision.
- **Software licensing:** All DAWs were legally licensed, activated in advance, and did not require online validation during use.

These precautions ensured full compliance with internal IT regulations, avoiding issues related to malware, data transfer, or system access.

2) Physical Equipment Control

To comply with the prison's risk management requirements and ensure continuity across sessions, all equipment was subjected to **strict handling, storage, and supervision protocols**:

- **Inventory lists:** Each item (computer, cables, controllers, microphones, etc.) was catalogued with serial numbers and cross-checked before and after every session.
- **Storage protocols:** Equipment was stored in a secure room or cabinet within the prison, under the control of designated staff. In some cases, external trainers transported equipment in and out under daily access logs (e.g., in Germany's mobile lab model).

- **Labelling and identification:** All devices were visibly marked with project identifiers and ownership information to ensure traceability.
- **Transport safety:** Equipment was carried in protective cases, and in some cases, accompanied by detailed checklists validated by prison staff on entry and exit.

These measures reassured prison administrations of the project's accountability and made it easier to build trust between staff and facilitators.

3) Supervision and Access Control

In all countries, the M4F workshops operated under predefined access rules to ensure participant and institutional safety:

- **Trainer accreditation:** All external personnel were pre-approved by the prison authorities, with background checks, ID clearance, and role descriptions submitted in advance.
- **Participant movement:** Prison staff coordinated escorting and attendance procedures, ensuring that learners arrived and left the space under controlled conditions.

4) Adaptability and Institutional Confidence

M4F partners demonstrated that educational innovation is possible within secure environments, provided that:

- Open dialogue with prison staff is preserved from the outset;
- Institutional rules are fully respected and not bypassed;
- Flexibility is embedded in the operating model, allowing for real-time adjustments (e.g., moving sessions, reconfiguring access, or scaling down equipment as needed).

Over time, in several contexts (e.g., Italy, Turkey, Belgium), the consistent application of these safeguards led to greater institutional trust, and in some cases, to increased autonomy for the workshops and expanded support from prison staff.

3.2 Trainers/Youth Workers roles and competencies

The effectiveness of the M4F workshop model is rooted in the competence of those who deliver it. As outlined in R1 – Competence Framework for Hip Hop Music Production, the role of the trainer in this context extends far beyond technical instruction.

It requires a blended profile, combining music production expertise with educational and social facilitation skills, adapted to the realities of prison settings and vulnerable learners.

The R1 framework identified and structured the trainer's role into three interconnected competence domains, which have been directly confirmed by the implementation experience across the partner countries.

According to R1, the effective trainer in a hip hop-based prison workshop must demonstrate competence in the following three areas:

Table 2 – Trainer / Youth-Worker Competence Map (R1 > R3)		
R1 Competence Area	**Focus in R3 Guidelines**	**Typical Trainer Outcomes in Workshop**
Technical	Advanced use of Digital Audio Workstations, hardware setup, troubleshooting, safe IT configuration inside prison.	Runs multi-track sessions; demonstrates recording, editing, basic mixing; maintains compliant, secure lab infrastructure.
Creative	Hip-hop beat design across genres; arrangement coaching; linking production to lyric writing.	Curates reference beats; mentors participants through structure, hook, dynamics; adapts creative tasks to group culture.
Transversal	Session planning, scaffolding, formative feedback, progress tracking, documentation for evaluation.	Produces modular lesson plans; applies the R1 competence descriptors for informal assessment; keeps monitoring logs.
Social	Trauma-sensitive facilitation, conflict de-escalation, cultural mediation, networking with external stakeholders.	Builds trust and safe space; negotiates rules with inmates and staff; liaises with community partners for post-release options.

Each of these domains is further detailed in R1 through competence units and descriptors, which remain valid as a reference for trainer recruitment, preparation, and performance evaluation.

The implementation phase confirmed that the R1-defined trainer profile is both **necessary and realistic**, though not always available in a single person. Most partners adopted a **dual-delivery model**, combining:

- **A technical lead** (e.g., a music producer, audio technician, or artist), and
- A **facilitator or educator** (e.g., social worker, prison educator, youth worker).

Examples include:

- **Romania:** A prison educator provided structure and group management, while a sound technician managed the production workflow.
- **Germany:** Trainers had artistic backgrounds and experience in trauma-informed work, essential for building trust with at-risk youth.
- **Italy:** The trainer was both a hip hop practitioner and a social educator, closely aligned with the R1 ideal profile.
- **Belgium and Turkey:** Trainers brought a mix of adult education and technical experience, adapted to institutional limitations and group diversity.

R1 provides a clear mapping of trainer activities across the workshop lifecycle. The following key responsibilities were consistently observed:

Table 3 – Activities mapping	
Workshop Phase	**Trainer Role (as per R1)**
Preparation	Setting up software/hardware, adapting content, coordinating with prison staff
Delivery	Guiding music production, offering feedback, balancing group and individual work
Facilitation	Managing group dynamics, motivating learners, addressing behavioural or emotional issues
Evaluation	Informal assessment of competence acquisition, progress tracking, reflective discussions

These tasks reflect the hybrid role of the trainer: part facilitator, part producer, part educator.

As noted in R1 and confirmed in the final implementation reports, a major challenge remains the availability of professionals who combine all three competencies. In many national contexts, music producers lack pedagogical training, while educators may not be fluent with music technology. As such, future implementations should:

- Promote cross-training opportunities (e.g., music producers receiving youth work guidance, and vice versa),
- Develop trainer induction modules based on R1 and R2 content,
- Encourage peer exchange and observation across institutions and countries.

In conclusion, the trainer competence framework defined in R1 proved operationally valid and pedagogically essential. It should be maintained as the reference point for any replication of the M4F model, and used as a guideline for recruitment, onboarding, and ongoing professional development within prison-based creative education.

3.3 Inmates

The primary target group of the M4F project is composed of incarcerated individuals, a population characterised by diverse socio-cultural backgrounds, often interrupted educational trajectories, and high rates of social exclusion.

Delivering an educational programme in this context requires recognising the specific vulnerabilities and institutional constraints that shape both learning conditions and participant engagement.

Inmates are not traditional learners. They operate within a highly structured and often punitive environment, with limited access to technology, inconsistent educational histories, and, in many cases, emotional or behavioural challenges linked to personal trauma or marginalisation.

The M4F methodology was designed to be inclusive, modular, and flexible, making it suitable for participants with a wide range of competences, motivation levels, and learning styles.

This section outlines the framework of competences targeted for inmate learners, and the selection and participation procedures developed across the partnership to ensure fairness, feasibility, and institutional cooperation.

3.3.1 Framework of competences

The pedagogical strategy of the M4F project was built around a dedicated Competence Framework for Learners, as defined in R1. This framework was developed specifically to support the design and assessment of learning in prison settings, where learners may present highly diverse educational, cognitive, and emotional profiles.

The R1 framework defines competences not only in terms of technical skills, but also in relation to transversal and personal development objectives. It offers a structured but flexible tool for shaping the learning pathway of inmates engaged in music production.

As set out in R1, the competence framework is structured around four dimensions, each of which reflects a distinct area of development, not in order of importance:

Table 4 – Inmate / Learner Competence Map (R1 > R3)		
R1 Competence Area	**Focus in R3 Guidelines**	**Observable Learner Progress**
Technical	Entry-level DAW navigation; loop creation; basic recording and export.	Can arm tracks, trigger/clap loops, adjust volume/pan, bounce a rough mix.
Creative	Beat construction from sample packs; experimenting with tempo, swing, FX; linking beats to potential lyrics.	Produces an original 8–16-bar loop; varies drum patterns; selects sounds reflecting personal taste/story.
Transversal	Team-work, persistence, problem-solving, following workshop schedules and lab rules.	Arrives on time; collaborates in peer-listening circles; seeks help rather than giving up on errors.
Social	Self-expression, identity-building, respectful collaboration, positive group dynamics.	Shares track origins in group discussion; offers constructive feedback; reports increased confidence and sense of belonging.

Each of these dimensions is broken down in R1 into competence units, with descriptors and indicative behaviours that were used by trainers as informal reference points during delivery.

As we already stated, the R1 stresses that this framework must be applicable across a wide range of learner abilities, including:

- First-time users of computers or audio equipment,
- Individuals with low literacy or language barriers,
- Participants with histories of educational exclusion or social marginalisation.

In response to this, the M4F methodology (detailed in R2) was intentionally designed to allow entry at any competence level.

This structure ensured that the workshop remained engaging and meaningful for all participants - regardless of whether they had prior experience in music, digital skills, or formal learning environments.

This confirms R1's assertion that competence development in creative digital production is both achievable and measurable in prison settings, when pedagogy is adapted to the learners' real-world starting points.

3.3.2 Selection procedures and participation rules

While the M4F model promotes open and inclusive participation, practical implementation in correctional settings required coordination with prison authorities to define clear selection criteria and behavioural expectations. The aim was to balance accessibility with security, group cohesion, and learning effectiveness.

Across the partnership, the following shared principles and procedures were applied:

1) Selection Criteria

- **Voluntary participation:** Inmates were invited to participate on a voluntary basis; motivation and curiosity were valued more than previous experience
- **Institutional recommendation:** Participants were often identified in collaboration with prison educators, social workers, or reintegration staff based on behavioural stability, interest in creative activities, and suitability for group work.
- **Diversity of profiles:** There was no exclusion based on sentence type or educational level; efforts were made to ensure a balance of age, background, and experience.
- **Security clearance:** In some settings (e.g. closed institutions), additional security screening was required before inmates could access technical equipment.

2) Participation Rules

- **Regular attendance:** Participants were expected to attend all sessions unless institutional duties or emergencies intervened.

- **Respectful conduct:** Ground rules were established at the start of each cycle, including respect for peers, equipment, and the learning process.
- **Collaborative spirit:** While individual work was encouraged, peer exchange and shared listening sessions were integrated into the format.
- **Adherence to security procedures:** Participants were briefed on the limits of use (e.g., no copying files, no unauthorized use of computers), and agreed to respect institutional constraints.

In some cases, such as Belgium's CVO track, participation also included adult education follow-up components, giving learners the opportunity to continue developing skills beyond the prison. In Germany, the mobile lab format enabled the continuation of activities in reintegration centres with more flexible selection criteria.

3.4 Institutional Framework

3.4.1 Agreement/Protocol template with the Penitentiary Institutions

The implementation of a music production workshop in a correctional facility requires a solid institutional foundation, beginning with a formal agreement between the implementing organisation and the host prison.

Within the M4F project, such agreements took different forms across countries, ranging from Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) to letters of support or local cooperation protocols, but all served a common purpose: to clearly define the legal, operational, and logistical conditions under which the workshops could be carried out inside custodial institutions.

Based on this experience, we recommend that any organisation wishing to establish similar activities in prison environments ensure that their agreement covers a number of essential elements.

The agreement should begin by identifying the <u>two signatory parties</u>: the implementing organisation (typically an NGO, cultural association, or training provider), and the prison or correctional facility. Both entities must be clearly described in their legal capacity, confirming their authority to enter into such an agreement.

Following this, it is important to provide <u>a short preamble that outlines the context of the project</u>. This includes a reference to the funding framework, if any, the purpose of the collaboration and the nature of the activity to be implemented. In this case, the delivery of music production workshops targeting inmates as part of a broader educational and rehabilitative effort.

A central component of the agreement should be the <u>reference to the equipment being installed within the facility</u>. A complete inventory is typically annexed to the protocol, including laptops, MIDI controllers, headphones, audio interfaces, and any necessary support materials.

The protocol should <u>specify that all equipment remains the property of the implementing organisation</u>, is provided free of charge, and is to be used exclusively for educational purposes defined within the scope of the project.

The document must then set out the <u>mutual responsibilities of each party</u>.

On the prison side, this typically includes the <u>provision of a suitable room for the workshops</u>, the <u>scheduling of regular sessions</u> in coordination with prison routines, and the <u>assignment of a staff contact or liaison</u> who will support logistical coordination and monitor access.

On the implementing organisation's side, responsibilities include ensuring that all equipment and software comply with the institution's digital security protocols, supervising all external trainers and visitors, and maintaining full responsibility for the integrity and proper use of the equipment.

Another critical aspect to include in the agreement is the <u>section on security and access control</u>. Here, it should be clearly stated that all activities involving the equipment will take place under supervision, that only authorised personnel will be permitted to access the material, and that any transfer of digital files or connection to external devices will require prior institutional approval. This provides reassurance to the prison administration that the educational activity will operate fully within the parameters of institutional safety and regulation.

Finally, the agreement should include a <u>clause on liability</u>, making it clear that the prison cannot be held responsible for any damage to the equipment unless directly caused by prison staff or institutional negligence. The implementing partner, by contrast, assumes responsibility for the conduct of its personnel and for any misuse of the equipment by participants under its supervision.

The protocol concludes with <u>the formal signatures of both parties</u>, typically the legal representative of the implementing organisation and the director of the prison, and should be accompanied by annexes including the detailed equipment inventory, the names of approved trainers, and, where possible, a draft implementation calendar.

This structured, transparent, and mutually agreed-upon framework was a key factor in the smooth implementation of M4F activities in several partner countries and is strongly recommended for any future replication of the model.

CONCLUSIONS
4. Conclusion and WP4

This Guidelines for the Management of Audio-Music Workshops in Prison constitutes Result 3 of the Music 4 Freedom project. It consolidates the pedagogical, operational, and institutional knowledge generated during two-and-a-half years of design and experimentation across five national prison systems.

Result 1, the *Competence Framework for Hip-Hop Music Production*, and Result 2, the *Training Manual*, laid the conceptual and didactic foundations of a model that is simultaneously educational, creative and rehabilitative. Building on those frameworks, the consortium tested M4F in highly diverse correctional environments, each with its own administrative constraints, infrastructural realities and learner profiles.

The evidence presented here is both encouraging and instructive. Hip-hop education and digital music production proved remarkably effective in reaching learners typically excluded from mainstream provision. Participants with minimal digital literacy and low self-confidence produced, arranged and refined tracks that expressed personal identity, fostered collaboration and strengthened their capacity to learn.
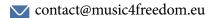
At the same time, the project confirmed that prison education must extend beyond content delivery. Impact depended on the adaptability of the methodology, the competence and sensitivity of trainers, the institutional openness of the host facility and, above all, the creation of a secure yet inspiring workspace inside a highly regulated setting. The operational guidelines in Chapter 3 therefore specify room layouts, IT configurations, security protocols and step-by-step stakeholder engagement strategies for practitioners wishing to replicate the model.

Long-term viability rests on a partnership architecture that reaches far beyond the prison gate. Implementation experience revealed three concentric stakeholder circles. The inner circle comprises prison directors, educators and IT officers who ensure daily access and compliance. The second circle involves local cultural actors, hip-hop artists, youth centres, adult-education providers and municipal reintegration services, whose presence enriches the pedagogy and guarantees continuity after release. The outer circle engages labour-market and certification bodies, including VET authorities, public-employment agencies and music-industry platforms, to translate workshop competences into recognised micro-credentials and employment pathways.

With Result 3 delivered, the consortium now turns to the end of the WP 4, where these stakeholder alliances will be formalised, and a community-of-practice will be launched, ensuring that the creative, educational and rehabilitative gains documented here are converted into sustainable structures and lasting opportunities for the people we serve.

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