

**ADDED**  
COMMUNITY VALUES



## TOOLS AND METHODS

**Porttiteatteri / Theatre  
for Prisoners in  
Helsinki**

**Finland 2023**



**SOCIAL INCLUSION**

## TOOL SUMMARY

<b>Tool/method name</b>	<b>Porttiteatteri/Societal Theatre for Prisoners</b>
<b>Tool/method summary description</b>	The basic idea is to use theatre and music to strengthen the participants and to get included in the society.
<b>Country observed</b>	Finland
<b>Year observed</b>	2023
<b>Programme area</b>	Social inclusion
<b>Tool type</b>	Methodology
<b>Specific topic</b>	Inclusion of prisoners and former prisoners in the wider society
<b>Beneficiaries of tool</b>	Prisoners and former prisoners
<b>Can this tool be applied to other beneficiaries: yes/no</b>	Yes
<b>What type of beneficiaries: ALL, or specific ones?</b>	Especially on vulnerable groups
<b>If specific ones, which?</b>	LGBTI persons, Immigrants, Persons with neuropsychiatric diagnosis...

## Description

### About:

- Porttiteatteri is a community theatre for prisoners who are in the process of being released and who have already been released. Porttiteatteri is led by art professionals and in addition to them, the community includes peer counsellors and a social counsellor. It is addressing both men and women in the age 20-70.

### Values:

- A positive outlook on mankind, to see all as equals and that everybody deserves a new chance.

### Vision:

- The basic idea with the organization is to use theatre and music to strengthen the participants and via the theatre community find a way into the wider society. The staff embrace common values even if they have different specialist skills; musicians, actors, social workers, directors and former criminals.. Since the staff have one foot in the participants life world and one in the public society with all the support and possibilities that are offered there, they bridge that gap and help the participants in getting the support they need for creating a good life. The trust that is created while processing the performances makes this role possible.

### Mission:

- The theatre presents two sets of performances every year. The performances are based on the life stories of the participants and written by themselves with support of professional directors, actors and music creators. It takes about 5-6 months to prepare and create a ready performance. Some participants leaves the group after this period and some stays longer, some for several years. The performances are highly appreciated and visited in Helsinki and gets reviews and acknowledgement in all media in the city.

The activities gives the participants tools to express themselves, higher self esteem and a way in to the society. The theatre serves as a community based on equality, mutual learning, tolerance and respect. Through its public performances, Porttiteatteri reduces the stigma attached to lawbreakers, and thus also prevents recidivism. It offers the general public the opportunity to look at the world through the eyes of those released from prison. At the same time, their rights as citizens and residents are made visible.

The life situations of performers from this background are often challenging and affect their participation opportunities. Porttiteatteri inculcates sensitive social guidance as part of its activities and expands its network also on the organizational side of social sector operators. The effort is to enable more and more new people with a criminal background to join Porttiteatteri's operations in the future.

Porttiteatteri produces artistically interesting and high-quality premieres twice a year and organizes workshops in prisons and day centers serving people with a criminal background.

30-40 performers with a criminal background are involved in Porttiteatteri's performances every year, and in addition, workshops in open prisons and other day activity centers serving people with a criminal background reach around 100 people with a criminal background.

## Basic Concepts, tools och indicators

**Trust:** We believe in meeting participants on an eye level. There are no superiors, all are equal and learning together.

Indicators:

- We are having drama exercises that creates trust within the group.
- We never judge the participants for what they have been doing in their life.
- We truly believe in peoples will to perform and that all are potentially competent.
- We give full responsibility to the participants to carry through activities.

**Treatment/Approach:** How to meet and treat vulnerable persons is very crucial. It must be based on honesty, humbleness and respect.

Indicators:

- We are using circular communication techniques in all our meetings.
- We allow and promote participants to take one step at a time.
- We fully respect each others life stories even if they have not been according to "good" moral or law.
- We have no hierarchy in our activities.

**Premises:** Since all our participants are imprisoned or newly released it is important that the premises is something else then what they have experienced in prison..

Indicators:

- The premises are made for social gathering and mutual discussions.
- The furniture is comfortable and practical.

**Values:** We think it is very important that all staff embrace the same values, in our case a positive outlook on mankind, to see all as equal and that there are no hieraschy.

Indicators:

- The values are embraced by all employees.
- The values are regularly discussed by the organisations board and employees in relation to the activities.

**Staff:** We think it is important to have a mix of competencies and social background in our staff. Besides important educational competencies it is good if our participants can identify with our staff just as it is important that staff can understand the participants.

Indicators:

- The staff has different educational complimentary background.
- The staff has different social background.
- The staff is equally gender diversified.
- The staff has regularly group supervision and/or coaching.

**Support:** One key competence is to meet persons where they are and not support too much and not too little.

Indicators:

- We analyze and discuss what kind of support a person needs.
- We meet persons where they are and promote a step-by-step development.
- We use media to show all development and achievements that are made by our participants.

## For more resources and information

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