



**FIT FOR THE
FUTURE**

Case Study - Crazy for Football

WP 2

Activity 1 (Cases)

Developed by Upwell | November, 2025



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Case Card

Name/ title of case study Organization/institution name:	Crazy for Football
Location:	Rome, Italy (national reach across multiple regions and psychiatric centers)
Size and scale of organization:	Medium – dozens of staff, volunteers, and institutional partners; national network of local football teams, psychiatric centers, and the Italian Psychiatric National Team
Industry/Sector:	Non-profit / Health / Sport / Social Inclusion
Contact info (for follow up, if available):	https://www.crazyforfootball.org/contattaci/
Additional details:	
Sources of information/References:	<p>https://www.crazyforfootball.org</p> <p>Rullo, S., & Trento, F. (2021, October 19). <i>Castellitto, in Crazy for Football calcio aiuta a “guarire”</i>. ANSA. https://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/cultura/tv/2021/10/19/castellitto-in-crazy-for-football-calcio-aiuta-a-guarire_3f254ae4-723a-404b-a9b3-adf7db7947b3.html</p> <p>FIGC – Federazione Italiana Giuoco Calcio. (n.d.). <i>Calcio per tutte le abilità – Crazy for Football</i>. FIGC. https://figc.it/it/federazione/sostenibilita/calcio-per-tutte-le-abilita</p> <p>FIGC – Federazione Italiana Giuoco Calcio. (2017, February 16). <i>Al Senato presentazione di “Crazy for Football”, il documentario patrocinato dalla FIGC</i>. FIGC. https://www.figc.it/it/federazione/news/al-senato-presentazione-di-crazy-for-football-il-documentario-patrocinato-dalla-figc</p>



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Case Data/Content

The bias illustrated in this case:	Mental Health Bias in Sports/Work
Context and specifics of the bias present:	People with psychiatric conditions are often stigmatized as incapable of participating in structured activities such as sport. This stigma leads to systematic exclusion from clubs, teams, and leadership roles, reinforcing stereotypes of incapacity and marginalization. It deprives individuals of the rehabilitative benefits of physical activity and perpetuates their invisibility in society.
Why this case matters:	<p>Crazy for Football has successfully implemented numerous local projects across Italy, from football teams integrated into psychiatric services to inclusive national tournaments. They have also established strategic collaborations with institutions such as the Italian Football Federation (FIGC), universities, and psychiatric associations. Qualitatively, their initiatives have shifted public perception of mental health by showcasing the abilities and resilience of players, amplified the voices of individuals with psychiatric conditions, and enhanced professional practices in both sport and healthcare. Moreover, they have produced key resources — including guidelines and communication tools for journalists — to promote responsible media narratives and reduce stigma.</p> <p>Extra notes: An ad hoc scientific committee was created, led by Santo Rullo (one of the founding members) which monitors the systematic inclusion of people with mental health in the sports selection of athletes.</p> <p>- The “Crazy For Football” national team has also become one of the pilot actions of the European project SPHERE (2018-2020), coordinated by ECOS in cooperation with six international organizations, united by the common goal of including sport in psychiatric rehabilitation programs, observing and monitoring the benefits of physical activity for people with psychiatric problems.</p> <p>Under the SPHERE European project, they’ve developed and disseminated guidelines and training modules for sports and psychiatric institutions, enabling the systematic inclusion of mental health in rehabilitation through sport and in protocols for sports societies in hiring people with mental health issues. Their protocols include structured athlete selection, regular retreats, clinical monitoring using health surveys and mental assessments (e.g. SF-36, QoL Test, Th.O.M.A.S.), and formalized staff training</p>





<p>Action Plan - methods and strategies used to address the bias:</p>	<p>Inclusive recruitment and training: psychiatric patients integrated into local and national football teams with tailored coaching.</p> <p>Professional collaboration: partnership with psychiatrists, sports therapists, and institutions (FIGC, CONI, Ministry of Health).</p> <p>Scientific oversight: creation of an ad hoc scientific committee, clinical monitoring with validated tools (SF-36, QoL Test, Th.O.M.A.S.).</p> <p>Guidelines and training modules: developed under the SPHERE EU project to embed sport into psychiatric rehabilitation protocols.</p> <p>Media and awareness campaigns: films, school screenings, and journalist guidelines to challenge stereotypes and shift narratives.</p> <p>Knowledge transfer: collection and dissemination of best practices for workplaces and organizations employing people with mental health issues.</p>
<p>Measurable outcomes and impact:</p>	<p>Crazy for Football has successfully implemented numerous local projects across Italy, from football teams integrated into psychiatric services to inclusive national tournaments. They have also established strategic collaborations with institutions such as the Italian Football Federation (FIGC), universities, and psychiatric associations. Qualitatively, their initiatives have shifted public perception of mental health by showcasing the abilities and resilience of players, amplified the voices of individuals with psychiatric conditions, and enhanced professional practices in both sport and healthcare. Moreover, they have produced key resources — including guidelines and communication tools for journalists — to promote responsible media narratives and reduce stigma.</p> <p>Extra notes:</p> <p>An ad hoc scientific committee was created, led by Santo Rullo (one of the founding members) which monitors the systematic inclusion of people with mental health in the sports selection of athletes.</p> <p>- The “Crazy For Football” national team has also become one of the pilot actions of the European project SPHERE (2018-2020), coordinated by ECOS in cooperation with six international organizations, united by the common goal of including sport in psychiatric rehabilitation programs, observing and monitoring the benefits of physical activity for people with psychiatric problems.</p> <p>Under the SPHERE European project, they’ve developed and disseminated guidelines and training modules for sports and psychiatric institutions, enabling the systematic inclusion of mental health in rehabilitation through sport and in</p>



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Key lessons learned:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sport is a uniquely effective tool to fight stigma and improve mental health rehabilitation.• Institutional partnerships (health systems + sports federations) are essential for credibility and scaling.• Structured monitoring and guidelines transform grassroots activities into systemic, replicable practices.• Media visibility and storytelling are as crucial as clinical results to change societal perceptions
Other info/notes:	





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