

When sport becomes part of preparedness



A practical guide for municipalities and community sport clubs in Norway and Europe

Sport Singularity · Evidence cutoff: 12 September 2026

For decisions in 2026 to 2028 · Looking ahead to 2030 to 2035 · Main age group: 10 to 18

A club may be asked to help families during a power cut, keep young people connected when a venue closes, or support learning about emergencies. Before adding activities, ask a simpler question: **who will make the plan work when everyday arrangements fail?**

Our suggested starting point is to agree adult responsibilities, protect ordinary sport and check access. Then consider a small learning activity where sport offers something useful. Feeling more confident is valuable, but it does not prove that a young person knows what to do in an emergency.

Start with the adults

Keep four tasks separate. Each needs its own people and checks.

FOUR THINGS TO PLAN FOR



Children and young people

Help young people feel supported

Do they feel safe and know an adult they can approach?

Practise a specific skill

Can they explain how to seek help or follow an agreed instruction?

Keep ordinary activity going

Can families stay in contact and use an accessible alternative venue?

Support the local emergency plan

Who requests help, opens the building and checks that volunteers are available?

A trusted coach may also need to look after their own family. A sports hall may be needed for evacuees. Neither trust nor a building guarantees availability.

Agree limited roles with the municipality. Clubs can contribute without becoming emergency services. Include staff time, transport, heating and alternative venues in the plan. Avoid arrangements that depend on one building or create unnecessary travel.

Why this is on the agenda

The EU's 2025 preparedness strategy names youth and sport organisations among those invited to seek programme support. Preparedness also appears in the Erasmus+ 2026 priorities for sport partnerships and the current cooperation guidance. These are opportunities to explore, not proof that your club has funding. [EU strategy, action 16](#), [2026 work programme](#), [cooperation guidance](#).

In Norway, NIF's May 2026 leadership-meeting account presents a speaker's argument for sport's preparedness role. This does not establish extra club staff or resources. [NIF account](#).

Aurskog-Høland offers a concrete example. Its municipal notice, updated on 7 September 2026, describes a formal agreement with the sports council: possible information points during communication failures and facilities for evacuees and families. Help is voluntary; emergency-service duties stay with those services. The notice describes earlier cooperation too. It shows a more formal arrangement, not measured new capacity, national adoption or better outcomes for children. The update date is not an established signing date. [Municipal notice](#).

Norway's preparedness white paper also aims to preserve meeting places for sport and volunteering during crises and war, as far as possible. That intention still needs practical support. [Government white paper, section 6.4.2](#).

What the research tells us

Two studies in Uganda show why “sport builds resilience” is too broad a promise.

TWO STUDIES, DIFFERENT RESULTS

Game Connect, 2025:

a 16-week programme for displaced and host-community participants aged 15 to 24 with anxiety and/or depression symptoms.

What happened

Compared with a randomly allocated waiting-list group, participants had larger symptom reductions immediately afterwards.

What this does not establish

Lasting emergency skills, or sport's contribution separate from the programme's other support. The study includes adults. [Study](#).

Gulu after conflict, 2014:

boys aged 11 to 14 allocated by chance to a competitive football-based programme or a waiting list.

What happened

Boys in the programme had worse depression-like and anxiety-like symptom outcomes.

What this does not establish

That competition caused the result, or that all sport is harmful. [Study](#).

The separate girls' comparison in Gulu did not use random allocation and found no statistically significant improvement. That does not prove girls cannot benefit.

The programmes and participants differed, so these results cannot tell us which ingredient explains the contrast. Neither study demonstrates effective behaviour during war, evacuation or disaster. Support after a crisis is also a different task from learning skills before one.

Choose a skill you can observe. A young person might explain whom to contact or demonstrate clear communication in a cooperative game. These are ideas to test with qualified partners, not proven emergency-training methods. Compare them with a simpler school, youth-service or family activity.

Make it work for children

Let children help choose the format, ask questions and decline an activity. Keep ordinary sport available. Avoid frightening simulations, toughness rankings and loyalty tests.

UNICEF's emergency guidance calls for accessible communication and involvement of children with disabilities and their caregivers in programme decisions. Test access with the people concerned, rather than assuming that an invitation is enough. [UNICEF guidance](#).

A school or municipal youth-service partner should help provide a route for non-members, including informal activity. Ask young people who have stopped attending what would make participation possible. If no accessible route exists, describe the offer as limited to the group it can actually reach.

Schools may be the better lead. The 2026 European education mapping covers early childhood and primary education through voluntary national responses. It describes policies, not tested emergency behaviour; its younger age range and exclusion of separate special-needs programmes limit its use for this whole age group. [European education report](#).

Sporting settings also need active protection. European Commission guidance recognises extremist attitudes and recruitment risks within sport. It concerns preventing radicalisation, not disaster training, but challenges the assumption that sport is automatically a safe setting. [Commission guidance](#).

Three possible futures

These are possible directions for 2030 to 2035, not predictions. Different places could follow different paths.

THREE POSSIBLE DIRECTIONS

Local partnerships get proper support.

Municipalities fund coordination and agree limited roles with clubs and schools.

What it means for a club

Join a shared plan; add learning activities only with staff and access arrangements in place.

What to watch

Budgets, named adults and practice exercises that resolve gaps.

Schools lead; clubs add selected activities.

Schools and youth services organise learning, while sport offers practice and continued contact.

What it means for a club

Share useful activities and avoid building a second full programme.

What to watch

A funded school or youth-service lead that reaches the relevant ages, including non-members.

Expectations grow faster than support.

Clubs receive extra tasks without dependable staffing or money.

What it means for a club

Protect ordinary participation and decline duties you cannot sustain.

What to watch

Volunteer withdrawal, lost activity time or plans without a clear owner.

The practical choice changes with the evidence. A funded partnership may justify a small trial. An effective school-led offer may make a separate club programme unnecessary. Missing capacity is a reason to wait or reduce the task.

Try one small step

Use the first 90 days after a local decision to explore one realistic problem. The following roles are suggestions, not appointments made by this report.

1. Choose the problem

Who

Municipal sport/youth lead

What to do

Bring together the preparedness coordinator, a club representative and a school or youth-service partner. Choose one local risk, such as heat, flooding or loss of communication.

2. Agree the adult plan

Who

Preparedness coordinator and club

What to do

Agree who decides, who is available, how families are contacted and where ordinary activity continues. Check whether the same adult has several conflicting duties.

3. Check who can join

Who

Youth-service partner, children and families

What to do

Test access, including a route that needs no club membership. Agree how concerns will be heard.

4. Pick useful skills

Who

Qualified education/preparedness partner

What to do

Decide whether a sport activity adds value. Select two age-appropriate skills and a suitable comparison activity before starting.

5. Check the experience

Who

Delivery lead

What to do

Record skills before and after, attendance, access barriers, distress and adult workload. The delivery organisation handles consent, children's agreement and safeguarding.

If staffing and protection are in place, consider an **eight-week trial in two willing settings**, with a **four-week follow-up** to check the chosen skills again. These are proposed timings and design choices, not proven standards. Adapt the activity to the risk; outdoor sessions may need to stop in unsafe conditions.

Two settings cannot reliably separate the effects of the activity from differences in staff, sites or participants. The trial can show whether delivery and measurement are workable. It cannot prove effectiveness or readiness for real war. A small or unclear skill change alone proves neither success nor failure.

Know when to change the plan

Before starting, agree acceptable workload, access and measurement requirements. Consider a stronger evaluation only when these are met without unresolved signs of harm. Pause on a serious safeguarding concern or an unresolved increase in distress. Stop or redesign when costs, access barriers or lost ordinary activity make the offer unsuitable.

Ask one difficult planning question: **what if phones stop working and the usual sports hall is unavailable at the same time?** This is an imagined test, not a forecast. Check a second accessible venue, an offline contact route and who keeps youth activity going. Young people's suggestions may reveal options adults have missed; ask rather than assume.

Suggested next review: **12 December 2026**, or sooner after a relevant funding decision, evaluation or serious incident. The municipality should check roles and exercised plans; the club should check workload and participation; education and youth partners should check learning, access and children's experiences. No owner or monitoring service has been appointed for this report.

About the evidence: this AI-assisted desk study uses selected published sources available by 12 September 2026. It is not a complete research review. No children, families or practitioners were interviewed. Local costs, capacity and acceptability remain untested. Sport Singularity may benefit from advisory work, but the findings do not establish a need to buy a programme or service.