SELF Project

Grassroots Onboarding Manual

A practical guide for grassroots clubs to implement the SELF methodology



Co-funded by the European Union

INTRODUCTION

TRAIN THE MIND.
GROW THE PLAYER.



PURPOSE – SELF METHODOLOGY

Engaged and motivated players who learn to **think for themselves** on the pitch. Confident, curious, and eager to improve with every training session, making meaningful progress in both their technical and tactical development. Coaches who have the satisfaction of seeing that growth unfold right before their eyes.

PLAYERS
Confident, curious and eager to improve.

COACHES
The satisfaction of seeing growth.

IMPACT
Lasting progress in both development and mindset.

That is what the **SELF Toolkit** is designed to achieve.
It equips coaches with practical tools to foster self-regulation skills in their players, without requiring them to completely change the way they coach.

The result: minimal disruption to existing training routines, with a lasting impact on player development.



PURPOSE OF THIS MANUAL

This manual provides practical guidance for grassroots sports clubs that want to implement the **SELF methodology** and **philosophy** in their daily coaching practice.

- HOW CLUBS CAN INTRODUCE THE METHODOLOGY
- PREPARE COACHES
- ENGAGE PLAYERS AND PARENTS
- BUILD A SUSTAINABLE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

Rather than explaining the **SELF tools** for the coaches, this guide focuses on how clubs can introduce the methodology, prepare coaches, engage players and parents, and build a sustainable implementation process.

The recommendations in this manual are **flexible** and can be **adapted** to different sports, club sizes and coaching environments.



ONE TEAM. ONE JOURNEY. BETTER EVERY DAY.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Purpose SELF methodology

Engaged and motivated players who learn to think for themselves on the pitch. Confident, curious, and eager to improve with every training session, making meaningful progress in both their technical and tactical development. Coaches who have the satisfaction of seeing that growth unfold right before their eyes.

That is what the SELF Toolkit is designed to achieve. It equips coaches with practical tools to foster self-regulation skills in their players, without requiring them to completely change the way they coach. The result: minimal disruption to existing training routines, with a lasting impact on player development.

Purpose of this Manual

This manual provides practical guidance for grassroots sports clubs that want to implement the SELF methodology and philosophy in their daily coaching practice.

Rather than explaining the SELF tools for the coaches, this guide focuses on **how clubs** can introduce the methodology, prepare coaches, engage players and parents, and build a sustainable implementation process.

The recommendations in this manual are flexible and can be adapted to different sports, club sizes and coaching environments.

Who is this Manual for?

This manual is intended for:

- Coach educators
- Technical sport managers/directors
- Volunteers
- National Federations supporting grassroots development

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Before You Start

Before implementing SELF, make sure your club has:

- support from club leadership;
- at least one committed coach;
- a pilot team (players aged between 8 and 16 years old) to begin with;
- access to the SELF Toolkit.

We strongly recommend that SELF is introduced gradually. Start with one team, learn from the experience and expand when coaches feel confident.

Key Message

Start small, support your coaches and build SELF into your existing coaching programmed step by step.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

GETTING READY FOR IMPLEMENTATION



OBJECTIVE

Before introducing the SELF methodology, clubs should ensure they are prepared for a successful implementation. Good preparation helps coaches feel confident, creates a shared understanding of the project and makes the implementation process smoother.

1 GAIN CLUB SUPPORT



Introduce the SELF project to club leaders and explain how it supports player development. Materials for this introduction are available at: https://toolkit.selfregulation.eu/

→ **Leadership support is important to encourage coaches and provide time for implementation.**

2 APPOINT A SELF COORDINATOR



Choose one person to coordinate the implementation. This could be a head coach, club manager or another experienced coach.

The coordinator should:

- support coaches;
- monitor progress;
- organise communication within the club.

3 SELECT A PILOT TEAM



Start with one team rather than the whole club. Choose a team with:

- regular training sessions;
- motivated players, ages somewhere between 8 and 16 years old;
- a coach who is open to trying new ideas.

→ **A successful pilot creates a strong foundation for future expansion.**



4 INFORM PARENTS



Before the pilot begins, explain the purpose of SELF to parents. Keep the message simple:

- SELF supports both sportive and personal development.
- Players will take a more active role in their learning, while coaches may take a step back.
- Parents are encouraged to support and motivate their children throughout the process.



IMPLEMENTATION TIP

DON'T RUSH THE IMPLEMENTATION.

A well-prepared pilot is more valuable than introducing SELF to many teams without proper planning.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Preparing Coaches

Objective

Coaches are essential to the successful implementation of SELF. Before starting the pilot, they should understand the principles of self-regulation, SELF and the implementation process, and feel confident using the methodology during regular training sessions.

Coach Preparation

Before the first session, coaches should:

- Read the SELF Toolkit manual.
- Understand the objectives of the pilot.
- Navigate to https://toolkit.selfregulation.eu/ on their phone (or pc).
- Plan how to introduce the first SELF activity.
- Start with one tool and build gradually.

There is no need to change the entire training programme. SELF should be integrated into existing sessions.Tools are the sauce over the exercises so they coach does not have to change his exercises.

Supporting Coaches

Implementation is a learning process. Encourage coaches to:

- ask questions;
- share experiences with colleagues;
- reflect after each training session;
- adapt their approach based on feedback.

Regular communication helps coaches feel supported throughout the pilot.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Implementation Tip

Start simple.
Using one SELF activity consistently is more effective than introducing several activities at the same time.

Introducing SELF to Players and Parents

Objective

A successful implementation begins with a clear introduction. Players and parents should understand why SELF is being introduced and how it will support player development.

Introducing SELF to Players

Keep the first explanation simple and positive.

Explain that SELF will help players:

- become more independent;
- think about their own performance;
- set personal goals;
- learn from their experiences.

Avoid long explanations. Let players discover the approach through regular training activities.

Informing Parents

Parents should understand that SELF is designed to support both sporting and personal development.

Explain that players will be encouraged to:

- take responsibility for their learning;
- make decisions during training;
- reflect on their progress.

Encourage parents to support and motivate their children without putting pressure on results.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Creating a Positive Environment

Successful implementation depends on a supportive learning environment.

Coaches should:

- encourage questions;
- recognise effort as well as performance;
- allow players to make decisions;
- allow players to experiment and make mistakes;
- provide positive and constructive feedback.

A positive atmosphere helps players feel confident to learn and develop.

Implementation Tip

Keep the introduction simple.
Players and parents do not need to understand every detail of SELF before the pilot begins. A short explanation followed by practical experience is the most effective approach.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

INTEGRATING SELF INTO TRAININGS

TRAIN THE MIND. GROW THE PLAYER.



OBJECTIVE

SELF should become part of regular trainings without changing the existing coaching programme. The aim is to gradually integrate SELF activities into sessions, allowing players and coaches to build confidence over time.

1 START WITH EXISTING TRAINING



There is no need to redesign your training sessions.
Instead, use the SELF Toolkit to complement activities that are already part of your coaching programme.

→ **Introduce one SELF activity** at a time and allow players to become familiar with it before adding another.



2 PLAN YOUR SESSIONS



When planning training, consider:

- Which SELF activity fits today's objective?
- When will it be introduced during the session?
- How much time is needed?
- How will players reflect on the activity?
- Which materials can I use?

→ **SELF activities should support the learning process, not interrupt it.**



3 BUILD A ROUTINE



Consistency is more important than frequency.
A simple routine could be:

- BEFORE TRAINING: Introduce the learning focus.
- DURING TRAINING: Use one SELF activity.
- AFTER TRAINING: Spend a few minutes reflecting with the players.

Repeating this routine helps players become familiar with the SELF approach.



4 MONITOR AND ADAPT



Observe how players respond during training.
If an activity is too difficult or takes longer than expected, adapt it to suit the age and experience of the group.

→ **The goal is meaningful learning, not perfect delivery.**



IMPLEMENTATION TIP

KEEP SELF SIMPLE AND CONSISTENT.

Small changes introduced regularly have a greater impact than trying to implement everything at once.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Running your first pilot

Objective

The pilot phase allows your club to test the SELF methodology with one team before introducing it more widely. It is an opportunity to gain experience, collect feedback and identify areas for improvement.

Plan the Pilot

Keep the pilot simple and realistic.

Before starting, decide:

- Which team will participate?
- How long will the pilot last? *(e.g. 4–6 weeks)*
- Which coaches will be involved?
- How will feedback be collected?

During the Pilot

Coaches should:

- follow the implementation plan;
- introduce SELF activities gradually;
- encourage player participation;
- observe player engagement;
- keep short notes after each session.

The aim is to learn from the process rather than achieve perfect implementation.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Review the Pilot

At the end of the pilot, organize a short meeting with the coaches.

Discuss:

- What worked well?
- What challenges did you face?
- How did players respond?
- What should be improved before expanding SELF to other teams?

Use this feedback to adjust your implementation plan.

Implementation Tip

View the pilot as a learning experience.
Every challenge provides useful information that will help improve future implementation.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.



Common Challenges and Practical Solutions

During implementation, clubs may face different challenges. Most of them can be solved with good planning, communication and gradual implementation.

Challenge	Practical Solution
Coaches feel unsure about using SELF.	Start with one activity, possibly at first with only one or two players, provide support and encourage coaches to share experiences.
Players lose interest.	Keep activities simple, engaging and appropriate for the players' age and ability. Vary with tools and materials.
Parents do not understand the project.	Explain the purpose of SELF before the pilot and maintain regular communication.
Limited time during training.	Integrate SELF into existing sessions instead of adding extra activities.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Challenge	Practical Solution
Coaches try to introduce too many activities at once.	Introduce one activity at a time and build confidence gradually.
Different coaches use SELF differently.	Hold regular meetings to share experiences and agree on a consistent approach.

Implementation Tip

Be flexible.
Every club is different. Adapt the implementation process to suit your coaches, players and available resources.

Sustainability objective

The goal of SELF is not only to complete a pilot programme but to become part of everyday coaching practice. Sustainable implementation is achieved through continuous use, regular reflection and ongoing support for coaches.

Continue the Journey

After completing the pilot:

- Continue using SELF during regular training sessions.
- Introduce the methodology to additional teams gradually.
- Let coaches with no experience with SELF observe a training session of coaches who already have implemented SELF.
- Encourage coaches to share experiences and good practice.
- Review the implementation at least once each season.

Small, consistent improvements will help SELF become part of your club's coaching culture.

Support Continuous Development

Successful implementation depends on continuous learning.

Clubs should:

- support new coaches;
- encourage regular reflection;

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

- celebrate good practice;
- update implementation plans when needed.

SELF should develop alongside your club, adapting to new players, coaches and future challenges.



Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.