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CLUBS & SUPPORTERS FOR BETTER GOVERNANCE IN FOOTBALL

A two-year collaborative partnership between member-run football clubs and national supporters organisations coordinated by SD Europe and co-financed by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union and UEFA.



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Additional information about the **Clubs and Supporters for Better Governance in Football** (CSBGiF) project is available on the SD Europe website (www.sdeurope.eu) in the **Resources** section or by emailing info@sdeurope.eu.

substance.

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A Few Words

Football would not be the game it is today without the passion and dedication of its fans. I hope that by cooperating closely, we can make important decisions for the good of European football.

Aleksander Čeferin, Uefa president

Speaking at a meeting with supporter organisations in April 2017

"No matter what the size of the member-run club, we all share the same struggles, hopes and hopefully solutions. I can see this network growing even bigger. Learning from one another is vital and very encouraging."

John Kennedy,
board member, Cork City FC, partner in Ireland

"Looking back to the years when the EU started to conceive a European Sport policy, I remember how reluctantly decision makers looked to the involvement of supporters in club ownership. The development of SD Europe throughout our continent has demonstrated how supporter trusts can have a positive influence in football governance. This Erasmus+ project is making possible the exchange of good practices, which are having a real impact the governance of football clubs and governing bodies."

Pedro Velazquez,
formerly Deputy Head of the European Commission's sports unit

"Over the past two years it showed how much can be achieved if football clubs and supporters work together. This cooperation of like-minded, skilled, enthusiastic people who care about football and their communities was exciting and has to continue."

Antonia Hagemann, CEO of SD Europe

"This project was important for us as a national supporters' organisation. We can learn from other national groups - how they try to face the authorities, how to work with members etc. It is important to see others are doing the same and to receive such support."

Mimmo Dolente,
board member, Supporters in Campo,
partner in Italy

"Football clubs should reflect society, and be diverse and rich by involving their communities. It is important for leaders in football to find new ways for people to be actively (involved in their clubs). Football fans also shouldn't have blinkers on. There are lessons to be learned from other organisations and businesses that can be applied in football. Different experiences and cultural traditions in different countries can teach us lessons. No matter how small a club is, how old or new, there is always something to learn from each other."

Andy Walsh,
Advisory board, SD Europe



Executive Summary

Unique collaborative approach

The project has been unique. By bringing together member-run football clubs and national supporters organisations from across Europe, the project identified their real and current development needs.

It created a tailored training programme and series of exchange visits designed to highlight best practice in the areas of Good Governance, Sustainable Finance and Member & Volunteer engagement. A project research partner, Substance, evaluated the impact of the project, and this collaborative approach will be mirrored in our latest Erasmus+ project LIAISE (Liaison-based Integrated Approach to Improving Supporter Engagement), which kicks off in January 2018.

Sharing the benefits

SD Europe was keen to ensure the benefits of the project were spread as widely as possible. By the end of the two years, representatives from 19 countries and 66 individual organisations had been involved in the project in some way, demonstrating the clear demand for knowledge and support.

Football supporters are usually seen dressed in their club colours and singing in support of their team. There is, however, a growing movement across Europe that seeks to give fans a seat at the table and an input into key decisions, creating a more sustainable game for all in the process.

SD Europe supports this movement in its everyday work but this project is an excellent example of how the European Union can have a direct impact on improving governance in grassroots sport while providing a vital funding boost to support the sustainable development of member-run clubs and supporters organisations.

“Inspiring, a priceless experience, lasting cooperation”

“Proper implementation of good governance standards and principles is needed to ensure that sport and sport governing bodies are not vulnerable and can cope with certain risks that they might face.”

SD Europe has signed up to the European Commission’s pledge to implement Good Governance in European Sport, and nowhere is that value more evident in our work than in the Clubs and Supporters for Better Governance in Football (CSBGiF) project.

In response to numerous financial struggles at clubs at all levels of the game over the past decade, supporters are determined to be involved in decision-making processes in football and to be recognised as essential stakeholders with invaluable skills and expertise to contribute. The movement is vibrant, one that activates citizens and ensures they realise the important role they can play in helping to create a more democratic, sustainable and transparent game for everyone involved.

¹https://ec.europa.eu/sport/policy/organisation-of-sport/pledge_en



Project Partners



SD Europe

SD Europe is a not-for-profit members organisation meeting the need for meaningful supporter involvement in the running of football clubs and the sustainable development of the game as a whole. The organisation represents grassroots and national supporters organisations as well as amateur and professional member-run football clubs, and supports the implementation of the supporter liaison officer (SLO) licensing requirement on behalf of Uefa.



Cava United

Cava United is a member-run club, which was promoted to Italy's Seconda Categoria during the project. Founded in 2014, it is the first Italian team to be wholly owned and managed by its supporters.

Irish Supporters Network

Irish Supporters Network (ISN)

The ISN brings together the growing number of member-run clubs, supporters' trusts and fan organisations in the Republic of Ireland, and was founded in 2013.



FC United of Manchester

F.C. United of Manchester is a member-run club, which competes in England's National League North and now resides in the Moston area of the city.



Supporters in Campo

Supporters in Campo is the national organisation for democratic supporters groups and member-run clubs in Italy, having been founded in 2013.



C.A.P. Ciudad de Murcia

C.A.P. Ciudad de Murcia is a member-run club, which competes in Spain's Preferente Autonómica (4th tier). Founded in 2010, it is part of the 'Fútbol Popular' network of Spanish clubs.



Cork City FC (Foras)

Cork City FC is a member-run club that was crowned League of Ireland and FAI Cup champions in 2017. Its key principles are sustainability, community, and volunteerism.



Schalke 04

Schalke 04 is a member-run club that competes in Germany's Bundesliga. Founded in 1904, today it is the fifth-biggest member-run sports club in the world with over 150,000 members.



Federación de Accionistas y Socios del Fútbol Español (Fasfe)

Fasfe is a national organisation for democratic supporters groups and member-run clubs in Spain, founded in 2008. Its motto "Cambiamos El Fútbol" ("Let's change football") is central to activities.



Svenska Fotbollsupporterunionen (SFSU)

Founded in 2008, SFSU is the national organisation for supporters groups in Sweden, ensuring that the voices of supporters are represented at the highest level of the game.



Malmö FF

Malmö FF is a member-run club, which competes in Sweden's Allsvenskan. The club officially claimed their second 'star' for 20 Championship wins in 2017.



Unsere Kurve

Founded in 2005, Unsere Kurve bridges the club-related divide for the benefit of common interests - particularly the preservation and promotion of Germany's revered '50+1' rule.

Project activities

Project Background

The **Clubs and Supporters for Better Governance in Football** project brought together six member-run football clubs and five national supporters organisations and focused on themes of good governance, sustainable finance as well as member and volunteer engagement.

The project was inspired by the experience and findings of the Preparatory Action in the Field of Sport (EAC/18/2011) '**Improving Football Governance through Supporter Involvement and Community Ownership**', which was coordinated by SD Europe from March 2012 to June 2013.

That initiative was the first time a structured approach was taken to the development of democratic supporters organisations in Europe, with the primary objective of improving governance across the game. Leveraging the Action's key outcomes, this project's purpose was to further promote and support good governance in sport through the training, education and exchange of partners in seven European countries.

Needs analysis

In line with international best practice, the project's work was informed by an initial needs analysis exercise conducted with the project partners in early 2016. The interviews and survey were prepared by independently by **Substance** before being collated and shared with partners.

Needs analysis: key priorities



Encouraging members to be engaged in the democratic process



Establishing good governance structures



Training / managing volunteers



Managing the conflict between being profitable and 'selling out'



Ensuring transparency with members



Exploring alternative sources of income



Making members feel like part of the club



Communicating with members

Training workshops

Good Governance workshop: Manchester, UK (June 13-15, 2016)

The project's first training event was held at Broadhurst Park, the home of FC United of Manchester. It focused on how governance can be properly established and maintained within democratic organisations, specifically member-run clubs and supporters organisations.

Good Governance sessions

- Developing Good Governance (Sylvia Schenk, Transparency International Germany)
- Member Engagement (Supporters in Campo, Italy)
- Transparency (Cork City FC, Ireland)
- Knowledge of Members (Schalke 04, Germany)
- Growth (Fasfe, Spain)
- Monitoring and evaluating your organisation's governance (Dr. Adam Brown, Substance)
- Project evaluation – what's required? (Dr. Adam Brown, Substance)



Expert Spotlight

Sylvia Schenk, a noted campaigner for improved sports governance and representing Transparency International Deutschland, led an interactive session entitled: Developing Good Governance. Sylvia gave invaluable context and insight into the practical challenges that can arise on a daily basis at sports organisations. Volunteer charters, risk assessments and a willingness to address challenges right from the top of organisations were all discussed, with Sylvia providing an experienced perspective at every stage.

Training workshops

Member & Volunteer engagement workshop: Gelsenkirchen, Germany (June 16-18, 2017)

The home of one of the biggest members-run clubs in the world, FC Schalke 04, hosted the third and final training event. Participants heard a variety of presentations, discussions and contributions from across Europe, the US and Africa.

Member & Volunteer engagement sessions

- Working with member and volunteers in an inclusive way (Cafe, Fare network)
- Managing membership (Malmö FF, Supporters in Campo)
- Involving members in the democratic process (Schalke 04, SFSU)
- The challenge of meeting members' expectations (Cork City FC, ISN)
- Developing, training and managing volunteers (FC United of Manchester, Fasfe)



Expert Spotlight

A training session on 'Working with members and volunteers in an inclusive way' was particularly well received by participants. CAFE, the Centre for Access to Football in Europe, outlined the key considerations in working with supporters and volunteers with disabilities, while FARE network highlighted best practice in creating a genuine environment and ethos of inclusion within democratic organisations.

Partner feedback: most useful knowledge learned



Members need to be educated about transparency



Irrespective of ethnicity or club size, our perceived challenges are very similar



Likening of governance to the game itself: structure, rules, communication and discipline are key

Partner feedback: most useful knowledge learned



The importance of engaging volunteers and tips on how to do it



A lot learnt from CAFE: I haven't thought of the diversity of disabled people in that way before.



Engaging with members and volunteers requires a plan and a consistent process.

Sustainable Finance workshop: Malmö, Sweden (November 25-26, 2016)

The project's second training event took place at the Swedbank Stadion, home of Malmö FF in Sweden. Good financial practices are at the heart of every sustainable business, and football clubs and national supporters' organisation are no different.

Sustainable Finance sessions

- Exploring sustainable finance and how it can be achieved in practical terms (Pontus Hansson, Malmö FF Board Member, Sweden)
- A discussion entitled 'Not Selling Out' and finding the right balance between commercial needs and the ethos of your membership (Schalke 04, Germany; SFSU, Sweden)
- Evaluating Finance (Sefton Perry, Uefa)
- Alternative sources of finance (Dave Boyle, The Community Shares Company)
- Funding for community work (Andy Cheshire, Community and Education Manager, FC United of Manchester, UK)
- The importance of evaluating your work (Dr Adam Brown, Substance)



Expert Spotlight

Sefton Perry, now Head of Uefa's intelligence centre, gave an insightful presentation into the importance of - and challenges involved with - Evaluating Finance in football across Europe today. Giving members additional historical context and relevant detail about future plans, as well as clear, accessible narrative information with financial statements, is essential in allowing supporters and stakeholders alike understand any figures they review.



Online Training Tool

Working with the Co-operative College, an education charity in Manchester, an online training tool was developed in the Autumn of 2017 as part of project activities. Based on presentation materials, discussion and feedback from the three training events and the 17 exchange visits, the tool ensures the key learnings from the two-year project are shared quickly and easily amongst project partners and the wider SD Europe network. In addition, individual presentations, videos, evaluation reports and event summaries are available from the Resources section on the SD Europe website (www.sdeurope.eu).

Partner feedback: most useful knowledge learned



Improved understanding of financial reporting and communicating this to members



Lots to learn from talking to others with similar experiences and tapping into their knowledge



Ideas on how to plan and build a crowdfunding campaign



Funding for community work

Exchange Visits

The value and impact of face-to-face learning exchanges were first seen in SD Europe's Preparatory Action in 2012/13 when partners had the opportunity and funding to travel to other countries and discuss relevant, practical information. They were also able to fully understand how the experience and knowledge of others can have a powerful impact on their own organisation.

Exchange visits were considered a vital learning element for this project as a result, with partners encouraged to organise trips well in advance and gain as much benefit as possible.

Seventeen visits were arranged, matching partners that had similar requirements, with relevancy and networking potential were also taken into account. The exchanges lasted two to three days, and participants were asked to return a series of evaluation forms describing activities and key learnings.



Exchange visits

Case study: Club exchange

Cork City FC / Foras (Ireland) & Malmö FF (Sweden)

Malmö FF travelled to Cork from April 6th-8th, 2017. The Swedes were impressed at how Cork City FC integrates volunteers into club activities, particularly on match day. They also noted the strong relationship between Cork City FC and its local university - University College Cork is the club's main shirt sponsor - and Malmö FF now hopes to further improve their own connections with the universities of Malmö and Lund.

Cork City FC paid a return visit on October 11th-13th, 2017. In speaking to Malmö board members and CEO Niclas Carlén, the Cork City FC representatives were able to understand the club's structures and day-to-day operations. The Irish club has since added an Advisory board and election committee to its own structure, improvements that are a direct result of the exchange.



Exchange visits

Case study: Club exchange

Schalke 04 (Germany) to Malmö FF (Sweden)

Schalke 04 representatives travelled to Sweden from September 25th to 27th, 2016. Both clubs face similar challenges and key learnings included: the importance of integrating members in key decisions and how member-run clubs can focus on young people to ensure they feel connected to their club. Malmö FF, for their part, have an excellent schools programme that encourages students to improve their football skills while improving their academic ability.

In return, Malmö FF gained first-hand experience of how supporter liaison officers (SLOs) work at one of the biggest football clubs in Germany. There was a lengthy discussion around member communications and the Swedish delegation also took home valuable insights into the set-up and uses of the Veltins-Arena on and away from match day.



Case study: National supporters organisation exchange

Federación de Accionistas y Socios del Fútbol Español (Spain), SFSU (Sweden) and Supporters in Campo (Italy)

A three-way exchange between Federación de Accionistas y Socios del Fútbol Español (Fasfe), SFSU and Supporters in Campo took place in Madrid from July 21st to 23rd, 2017 to coincide with the summer meeting of the 'Fútbol Popular' (member-run club) movement.

SFSU gave a presentation on Sweden's '50+' governance regulation, which all sports clubs adhere to, while Supporters in Campo outlined the development of their own organisation in Italy and explained a number of their successes and challenges. The visitors learned how Fasfe and the Fútbol Popular network operates and develops despite being spread across a vast area.



Case study: National supporters organisation exchange

Svenska Fotbollssupporterunionen (Sweden) & Supporters in Campo (Italy)

SFSU travelled to Italy on September 24th-25th, 2016. The delegation presented the structure and funding arrangements of their organisation, noting how involved SinC members are at their AGM and taking on board the 'consensus' approach used (discussing a topic until an acceptable agreement for all is reached).

Supporters in Campo travelled to Malmö on June 10th-11th, 2017 to observe and take part in SFSU's summer meeting in the city. For the Italian visitors, learning new approaches to fundraising and building campaigns was key. The importance of lobbying and engaging with media and relevant stakeholders was also noted.



Case study: Club exchange

C.A.P Ciudad de Murcia (Spain), Cava United (Italy) and FC United of Manchester (UK)

A member-run club exchange between three partners took place in Manchester from October 27th to 29th, 2017. CAP CDM and Cava United travelled to Broadhurst Park, experiencing match day in Moston and discussing topics around governance, finance and facility development.

The Spanish delegation noted ideas and information in the areas of infrastructure, volunteers and democratic participation, while taking the time to share their own experiences with FC United board members and volunteers. Representatives from Cava United focused on recruitment, communication with and retention of members. They also returned home with a greater understanding of what's needed as they continue to grow in the coming years.



Exchange visits: most useful knowledge learned



The process of signing up new members should be as easy as possible



Ensure members have an opportunity to contribute at their AGM, as getting people engaged in the democratic process is essential and not always straightforward



Working with local, non-football stakeholders should be a key focus for the long-term sustainability of any organisation



Member engagement is an ongoing process that can always be improved



Volunteers need to be appreciated and acknowledged. Each voluntary role should have a specific and clear role description provided.



Funding for community projects can be secured from a variety of non-football sources



The role of supporter liaison officer (SLO), when effective, is a very important tool in building improved relations and enhanced dialogue between supporters and other stakeholders.



Greater transparency around financial considerations is essential to building and maintaining trust with members.



Outputs & Outcomes

Highlights from the Final Evaluation Report of the project demonstrate the significant impact and outputs recorded. The full evaluation prepared by Substance is available from www.sdeurope.eu.

Project Outputs

Volunteers

Over 300 volunteers (36% of those females) were involved in the project, contributing a total of 4,401 hours of time to activities. Volunteers also provided just over €10,000 of additional time (outside of funded hours) in support of project activities and volunteer numbers increased at all organisations except one, with eight of 11 partners reporting that the project likely had a positive influence on their membership.

"We've arranged a series of FORAS roadshows that give us a direct line of engaging with members and volunteers. This face-to-face informal meeting setting has received excellent feedback and we're receiving no end of requests to visit different parts of the county and further afield. The roadshows were inspired by Schalke 04's ambassadors initiative."

Foras

Dissemination

The extent to which the project has been shared was extensive.

- 1624** | items of dissemination from website articles to social media posts
- 457** | "internal" meetings involving partner organisations
- 166** | 'external' meetings with other organisations
- 76** | events/initiatives involving the project and its themes, in addition to formal project meetings

Contacts

A significant level of new contacts between project partners and other organisations were established during the two-year timeframe. These included 47 new contacts between partners and national associations and leagues, 120 with other clubs, 95 with other supporter organisations, 22 with other football organisations and 14 other organisations.

Project Outcomes

Improved knowledge

Over 90% of partners said the project had a 'significant' or 'very significant' impact on their understanding of good governance as well as member and volunteer engagement.

"At the beginning of the season we planned more in-depth all the aspects concerning finance, governance and volunteer engagement. For example, we decided to involve more small sponsors with the help of our members."

Cava United

"To participate and work actively in this project with SD Europe is very important for Malmö FF. By sharing expertise with other like-minded clubs across Europe, this initiative helps us to develop our organisation and long term unite all parties around the club."

Håkan Jeppsson, chairman of Malmö FF

Impact on Other Organisation

Eight of 11 organisations said the project had an impact within their own country, while five of 11 organisations believe the project had an impact on organisations they knew of within Europe. In total, 66 individual organisations were represented at project events in some way throughout the two years.

"The Swedish Sports Federation and several Swedish football clubs were very interested in our work with the project. We have spread the knowledge among our members who in turn have taken it to their clubs... [including] new structures for meetings/conferences and ways of viewing sustainable finance and transparency."

SFSU

Evaluation

Sessions on the importance of evaluating work were held at every training event. The impact was notable:

- 9** out of **11** | organisations changed how they evaluate governance
- 8** out of **11** | organisations changed how they evaluate volunteer engagement
- 8** out of **11** | organisations change how they evaluate members engagement
- 4** out of **11** | organisations changed how they evaluate finance





What's needed now

The Clubs and Supporters for Better Governance in Football project set out with clear aims: to improve knowledge in the areas of good governance, finance and member and volunteer engagement, to build capacity through staff and volunteer development, to improve evaluation of clubs and NSOs and to further develop the growing network of supporter-owned clubs and supporter organisations in Europe.

To a great extent it achieved these aims, with partners reporting significant impact on their work. However, those involved also recognised that more needs to be done. In the evaluation survey and at project events, partners and others in attendance highlighted their priorities for future work. There are outline on the next page.

Whilst **SD Europe** will work to deliver these, it needs more resource to do so and will be exploring ways in which this can be done.

Recommendations



More practice focused learning / training

The project demonstrated a strong demand for tailored training and knowledge from the partners and additional organisations involved, and **SD Europe** needs to further develop practical learning and training tools by:

Facilitating exchange visits between clubs and supporters organisations

Clubs as well as supporters organisations need to have the opportunity to visit fellow clubs/ organisations in order to understand how they both manage different issues and develop their work in practice as well as share common experiences and differences in a consistent, impactful and coordinated manner.

Raising good governance standards

Further help is required on member engagement, volunteer management, stakeholder engagement and partnerships, community involvement as well as Supporter Liaison work. The project also highlighted a need for board and director training, financial best practices, income generation and the development of toolkits and standard tools is needed.

Developing tools

Clubs and supporters organisations need tools to help them improve governance, financial sustainability and member engagement. These need to include: case studies, good practice models, model management documents (HR, volunteer management, surveys etc). These should be produced as stand alone documents but made available in an SD Europe online resource.



More research

In order to provide the network with the required support, more research is needed to identify, improve and share best practice. This research should look beyond football and provide insight in how other relevant industries work and how their respective practices could be learned from and applied.



Expert get-together

SD Europe together with members of its network and representatives from other stakeholders (football authorities, Fifpro, EU institutions, representatives from other like-minded organisations etc.) should continue to raise standards in good governance by facilitating an exchange between experts in the field, and discussions around current and future relevant topics that may influence the movement's work.



More funds

SD Europe requires additional funds to provide the support requested by its network. The organisation is active in 38 countries across Europe and the funding support currently provided by Erasmus+ and Uefa has allowed partners dedicate specific resources (time, expertise and experience) to focus on issues that will help the long-term, sustainable development of their organisation. However, further funding and resources are needed to meet the development demands and continue the vital work this project started.



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Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union