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.
**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 on 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

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Additional information about the Clubs and Supporters for Better Governance in Football (CSBGf) 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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Executive Summary

"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.


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.
Added value from volunteers
The ‘human’ contribution from partners involved in the project included 302 volunteers, who contributed nearly 4,500 hours of their skills, expertise and experience to the activities. That ‘time’ accounted for over €10,000 in additional value to the project beyond what was funded - a leverage of 25%.

Views on the European Union
Nine of 11 project partners stated that the project had resulted in a more positive view of the EU within their organisation. In addition, over 70% of participants said they had much more appreciation of the importance of sustainability and transparency.

Dissemination
Over 1,600 items, from website articles to social media posts, were published about the project, while a total of 166 meetings with organisations outside of project partners and an additional 76 project-related events/initiatives were organised. An online training tool and support materials to spread the project’s learnings were also developed as part of project’s activities.

Peer network
With an emphasis on maintaining the project’s impact long into the future, a key element of the work was connecting participants across Europe and beyond. Over 90% of project partners said they were ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with the networking opportunities provided.

“It was interesting to see that clubs in different countries have similar problems and how we can look at solutions together. We had two very good visits at Malmö FF and Cork City, and they also visited our stadium and our city. That was the best part of the project for us, and we will stay in touch.”
Thomas Kirschner, Schalke 04

Evaluation
The project was evaluated by Adam Brown of Substance, a social research company. This included needs analysis research, individual workshop evaluations, and interim and final project evaluation surveys. In addition, evaluation sessions were held at each of the project workshops.
**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**Federacion de Accionistas y Socios del Futbol Espanol (Fasfe)**
Fasfe is a national organisation for democratic supporters groups and member-run clubs in Spain, founded in 2008. Its motto “Cambiemos El Fútbol” (“Let’s change football”) is central to activities.

**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.

**Svenska Fotbollssupporterunionen (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.

**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.

**Malmo FF**
Malmo 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.

**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.

**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)

Member & Volunteer engagement workshop: Manchester, UK (June 13-15, 2016)
The project’s second training event took place at the Swedbank Stadion, home of one of the biggest members-run clubs in the world, FC Schalke 04. It focused on two main areas: Good Governance and Member & Volunteer engagement.

Good Governance sessions
• The importance of evaluating your work (Dr. Adam Brown, Substance)
• Funding for community work (Andy Cheshire, Community and Education)
• Alternative sources of finance (Sefton Perry, Uefa)
• Evaluating Finance (Sefton Perry, Uefa)
• A discussion entitled ‘Not Selling Out’ and finding the right balance between commercial needs and the ethos of your membership (Dave Boyle, The Community Shares Company)
• Project evaluation – what’s required? (Dr. Adam Brown, Substance)

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)

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’ organisations 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)
• Fundraising for community work (Andy Cheshire, Community and Education Manager, FC United of Manchester, UK)
• The importance of evaluating your work (Dr. Adam Brown, Substance)

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)

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).
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.
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 Carlnén, 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.

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.

Exchange visits: most useful knowledge learned

- 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 Outcomes**

**Outputs & Outcomes**

**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.”

**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.

**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.

**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

"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*

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.”

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Foras
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 which this can be done.

What’s needed now

What’s needed now

Recommendations

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.

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.

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.

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.

More practice focused learning / training

More research

Expert get-together

More funds
CLUBS AND SUPPORTERS FOR BETTER GOVERNANCE IN FOOTBALL

SUPPORTED BY

RESPECT

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