

SUSTAINABILITY IN EUROPEAN SPORTS – RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND DECISION MAKERS

INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THE GREEN SPORTS HUB EUROPE

The Green Sports Hub Europe (GSHE) project was launched in February 2021 with an ambition to make the sport sector more sustainable and more green. The three-year project, funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union, sets four key pillars and a clear strategy. The project aims to test the potential of the sports sector as a high-profile and news agenda-driving industry and to be a channel for the societal behavioural change needed to make the European Green Deal a reality by focusing on good governance, so that leaders have the knowledge and skills to place environmental sustainability at the heart of their strategy.

GSHE will aim to be a support system for organisations to share knowledge and best practices, so that they can learn from each other and develop. By making use of experts, listening to the needs of the sector and equipping sports organisations and their events with the necessary tools, project partners will look to translate existing standards on environmental sustainability into concrete action, while aiming for the GSHE approach and tools to become a central component of sports organisation good governance.

The project is coordinated by Surfrider Foundation Europe (France), with project partners including:

- Association of Cities and Regions for the Sustainable Management of Resources (Belgium) ;
- Sports Confederation of Portugal (Portugal) ;
- ukactive (United Kingdom) ;
- Green Cycling Norway (Norway) ;
- The Olympic Committee of Slovenia (Slovenia) ;
- European Volleyball Confederation (Luxembourg) ;
- Rugby Europe (France) ;
- European Athletics Association (Switzerland) ;
- EUSA Institute (Slovenia).

OBJECTIVE:

Create an EU-level hub on sports and environment to help the sport sector identify its needs and potential actions for a greener and more sustainable future



ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report presents the results from the GSHE survey on sustainability carried out by ukactive. This project is one of the initial work streams that GSHE set out to complete over the three year period, with the outcomes and findings from this piece of work being used to inform and shape the direction of future work streams.

ABOUT THESE RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations for policy and decision-makers aim at contributing to and supporting the implementation of the EU's Green Deal. Based on the initial Green Sports Hub Europe (GSHE) review and mapping study as well as testing of the Toolkit, they were developed with the collaboration of a large ring of sports stakeholders.

The recommendations offer guidance and principles whose implementation should support the build-up of a more sustainable sport sector.

PREAMBLE

These recommendations for policy and decision-makers aim at contributing to and supporting the implementation of the EU's Green Deal. Sport is one of the largest economic hubs in the EU, with a vast array of global sporting events, the sector must monitor its impact to remain aware of global challenges and thus, aligned with environmental policies and strategies.

Across the EU, we are seeing many initiatives to promote participation in sport and physical activity, which play an often-underestimated role in an increasingly dynamic and demanding society. Being fit and healthy generates significant benefits for individuals, groups, and for the wider community. According to WHO resolutions, physical exercise is one of the most important activities for people to remain healthy, prevent diseases, and maintain an active lifestyle including the ability to work.

Whilst being aware of the various benefits of sport and regular physical activity on the daily life of European citizens, it is also paramount to aim at reducing its impact on nature and the environment and to show them opportunities to drive more sustainable practice. Therefore, an action plan on how to practice sport in a more sustainable way towards nature and environment needs to be accepted- but many sports organisations are not yet fully aware of the potential risks they face, and the necessity of action.

The recommendations in this document are suggested to support environmental sustainability in the sport sector, alignment with European guidance and best practice, including the European Commission's Common Framework for Green Sport and successful implementation of EU Green Deal recommendations within the sport sector.

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GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EUROPEAN, NATIONAL, REGIONAL, AND LOCAL POLITICAL ACTORS

Event management

1. Establish a single European tool to assess the environmental impact of events.
2. Encourage sports organisations and sport event attendees (e.g. athletes, event organisers, volunteers, and the public) to minimise their impact on the environment (e.g. travel to events, use short supply chains and prioritize local economy, eliminate disposable and single-use plastic etc).

Natural environment

1. Consult sports organisations in the development of public policy and regulation to prevent pollution (e.g. quality of water and outdoor and indoor air, climate change) affecting the practice of sports.
2. Explore ways to equip relevant national authorities with tools to observe and assess the impacts of climate change on sport to (a) inform public policy and regulation on climate change and (b) help the sports ecosystems most impacted by climate change in the long term to develop strategies that anticipate, adapt, and mitigate.
3. Observe protected area restrictions and promote environmental protection guidelines in natural areas. Highlight the need for a healthy environment as a support for a quality lifestyle through the sustainable practice of sports.

Governance

1. Align and coordinate public policies and national sports strategies with the European Common Framework for Green Sport, UN SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) and IOC sustainability strategy.
2. Engage and consult government procurement agencies and actors of the sport ecosystem to ensure that sports events follow environmental criteria and so that statutory consultees are appointed.
3. Incentivise national sports federations, sports organisations in general and educational institutions to integrate education and awareness programs related to sustainable development within their training programs.
4. Engage in a process of continuous innovation and investment to promote the environmental transition of the sport sector.
5. Using the profile of sport and communication platforms to benefit the ecological transition of society by cooperating with sports to invest in actions to raise citizens' awareness and seek behavioural change.

Resources management

1. Support the implementation of environmental and carbon impact calculations by all sports events and sports organisations.
2. Encourage sports organisations and event organisers to take special account of the issue of reducing resource consumption (especially water and energy), eliminating food, recycling waste, reusing sports equipment and event infrastructure.



Facilities

1. Strive to include environmental and social responsibility criteria of organisations in the assessment process for public funding and support, for the organisation of sports events at all levels, sports activities as well as construction, renovation, maintenance, and use of sports facilities.
2. Provide access for citizens to safe, inclusive, and sustainable sports facilities and events according to their needs.

Host/Venue selection

1. Work with sports events organisers to establish mitigation mechanisms for the environmental impact of their events.
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Recommendations for policy and decision makers in the sport sector

We strive to set some soft as well as concrete recommendations for policy and decision makers in the sport sector. The most important aspects are linked to awareness raising and promotion. However, there are options to support improvements with consultations and financial benefits for those who successfully implement recommendations into their programs, events, and operational work.

1 Awareness and promotion

Local, regional, and national government should organise regular events and courses for the sport sector on how to implement recommendations.

There are number of public agencies and bodies as well as financial organisations that could run awareness campaigns on an annual basis or time-limited projects to promote the implementation of recommendations within the sport sector.

Recommended options:

- Publish guidelines together with documents in national and local governmental level linked to sport legislation and other guidelines.
- Publish periodically news and info with guidelines, especially on occasion of public calls on national, regional, and local level for financing sports program and investments info sport infrastructure.
- Publish guidelines on national, regional, and local level in sector responsible for investments in sports infrastructure.
- Organise periodical awareness and promotional seminars and invite NOC, national sports federations, clubs to seminars / webinars on protecting nature and environment.
- Collaborate with universities and especially with the sport faculties to organise monthly sport events where students can learn about sustainable sport practices while actively participating (doing sports).

2 Technical support and education

Educational events, workshops, and on-line events for sport sector should be organised for the sport sector to learn how to implement recommendations in their organisations.

Local, regional, and national agencies as well as EU level agencies could provide specific support to sport sector by organising educational events.

With the support by local, national and EU programs there could be an option for environmental organisation to get financial support to organise awareness campaign, workshops, and educational courses for sport clubs and federations.

Recommended options:

- Motivate public and private agencies and organisations as well as NGOs from the environmental sector to organise workshops for the sport sector on national, regional, and local level.
- Motivate NOCs and national sports federations to pass the message to sport clubs at grassroots level.
- Collaborate with universities to introduce the GSHE guidelines, [Self-Assessment Tool](#) and [Playbook Library](#) during educational events.



3 Requirements for implementation of measures in the sport sector

We believe that motivation, education, and awareness raising will lead to continuous improvements on implementation of measures in the sport sector. However, the sport sector needs to have a positive impact - where conflicting objectives arise, it is important that sustainability remains a priority.

Recommended options:

- Require all organisations in the sport sector that receive public funds to participate to the workshops and to adopt guidelines into their operation and daily work.
- Require all organisations and institutions who plan to organise a sport event to accept recognized measures on lowering carbon impact, strict recycling of waste and use of recycled materials.
- Require all investors into sport infrastructure to follow sustainability guidelines.

4 Financial support

Financial support for the requirements outlined above is of vital importance, it should be focused on raising awareness and promoting the benefits of sustainability in the sports sector. Technical guidance and education through campaigns should also be a secondary objective of all funding opportunities.

However, financial support could be also offered as part of public call for those in the sport sector, who successfully implement guidelines. They could benefit from an extra direct financial benefit or being evaluated with extra points in the selection criteria.

Recommended options:

- Annual public funding schemes on local as well as national level for environmental organisations to receive public funds for organising workshops and awareness raising activities for sport sector.
- Include rules into public calls on national, regional, and local public calls where applicants can receive higher scores and in consequence higher financial support if their application refers to the Green Sports Hub recommendations.
- Public calls where applicants would be awarded bonus points in the selection process, if reaching minimum criteria for implementing environmental guidelines.





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