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“Empowering Your Sport Club, Children and Youth for the Environment in the Mediterranean Region”

## REPORT ON THE COLLECTION OF GOOD PRACTICES ON THE KNOWLEDGE, ASSUMPTION AND ADOPTION OF THE UN SDGs BY SPORT ORGANISATIONS

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SportEYE will continue with its work in the field by supporting the development of training materials for sport organisations, clubs and institutions and policy recommendations at the European and international level.

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## Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>2. Methodology of the preliminary research</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>3. Data analysis</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>4. Results</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>4.1 The meaning and practices of sustainability</b> .....	<b>15</b>
4.1.1 The meaning of being a sustainable organisation .....	15
4.1.2 Actions taken towards sustainability: objects, subjects, and modalities .....	16
4.1.3 Driving Sustainability: Key Actors and Stakeholders inside and outside sport organisations.....	19
<b>4.2 Sustainability practices</b> .....	<b>25</b>
4.2.1 Education (UN SDGs 4 and 13) .....	28
4.2.2 Accessibility and sustainable management (UN SDGs 11 and 12) .....	31
4.2.3 Water and earth (UN SDGs 14 and 15) .....	39
4.2.4 Peace and development (UN SDGs 16 and 17) .....	44
<b>5. Good Practices</b> .....	<b>47</b>
<b>6. Empowering sports organisations towards a more sustainable future</b> .....	<b>53</b>
<b>7. Conclusion</b> .....	<b>56</b>

Report on the collection of good practices regarding the knowledge and adoption of UN SDGs by sport organisations

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## Executive Summary

SportEYE is a transnational and multi-sectoral cooperation initiative co-funded by the European Union within the Erasmus+ programme, involving partners from the Olympic Movement, Sport for Development, Academia and civil society, working together to activate and mobilize the local communities in order to improve the good governance and impact the capacity of team sports clubs on SDGs indicators from a holistic perspective, through the incorporation of a comprehensive multilevel curriculum that reaches managing and training staff, and ultimately children and youth.

### Objectives

The main objectives of the project are:

- ✓ Research on the state-of-art and collect good practices which promote the knowledge and adoption of the UN SDGs by sport organizations.
- ✓ Produce and implement an innovative educational package on specific strategies and practical measures for improving the social and environmental impact of team sport clubs on their local communities.
- ✓ Test on the field and measure the social and environmental impacts reached on their local communities thanks to the training received.
- ✓ Design and launch an online collaborative platform for fostering the networking of organisations and stakeholders and individuals, all committed to the UN SDGs, for sharing ideas, experiences, knowledge, and new materials on this topic.
- ✓ Analyse existing normative and practical conditions and formulate policy recommendations to promote the effective adoption of the SDGs for achieving positive social and environmental impacts.

### Purpose of the research

One of the main objectives of the project is this document, which is the research report on the state-of-art and collect good practices on the existing policies, rules, strategies, experiences and initiatives which promote the knowledge, assumption and adoption of the SDGs by sport organizations in their daily work. The aim of this preliminary research is to indagate and understand the level of development regarding the policies, strategies, experiences and initiatives adopted by sport organisations as means to tackle climate crisis on a local level and educate youth towards environmental sustainability. The research method which will be used is a focus group, in which participants will be invited to discuss about different topics, linked to the main thematic, within a small group of people from different sport organisations, professions, and backgrounds in order to exchange ideas and further explore the topic.

### Methodology

The research employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. A qualitative approach was used to explore representation, perception, opinions, needs of contexts, participatory processes, learning processes, and evaluating the impact of services or projects. Data were gathered through individual interviews and focus groups involving 40 sports organizations from various countries. This included 6 online focus groups, 3 in-person interviews, and 22 online interviews. The focus groups were designed to explore

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perceptions of sustainability, identify best practices, and assess the organizations' commitments to UN SDGs. The addressed topics were Education (UN SDGs 4 and 13), Accessibility and Sustainable Management (UN SDGs 11 and 12), Water and Earth (UN SDGs 14 and 15), and Peace and Development (UN SDGs 16 and 17).

## Results of Data Research

The data revealed a growing awareness and commitment to sustainability among sports organizations. Many organizations are now integrating environmental protection, human rights, and inclusivity into their core operations. This commitment is evidenced by the strategic approaches being developed, with organizations setting long-term sustainability goals aligned with the SDGs.

Community engagement emerged as a significant theme, with many sports organizations actively involving their local communities in sustainability efforts to ensure a broad and lasting impact. Various environmental initiatives are being implemented, such as recycling programs, waste management systems, and eco-awareness campaigns aimed at reducing the ecological footprint and promoting environmental education among members.

Inclusivity and human rights are also prioritized, with organizations forming teams for marginalized groups, including Paralympic teams, to ensure equal access to sports facilities and programs. Collaborative projects with schools and other institutions are common, extending the reach of sustainability initiatives and focusing on educating the youth about environmental stewardship and sustainable practices.

## Identified Good Practices

Several good practices were identified during the research. Environmental education is a key area, with clubs conducting campaigns to raise awareness about environmental issues through workshops, seminars, and eco-events. These initiatives aim to educate both members and the broader community, with a particular focus on engaging youth in sustainability programs to foster a culture of environmental responsibility from an early age.

Effective waste management practices are another highlight. Many sports organizations have implemented robust recycling programs within their facilities, including separating recyclable materials and educating members on proper waste disposal methods. There are also efforts to upgrade facilities to be more eco-friendly, such as using energy-efficient lighting, reducing water usage, and minimizing plastic use.

Inclusivity initiatives are well-established, with clubs forming Paralympic teams to promote inclusivity and ensure sports opportunities are available to all, regardless of physical abilities. Additionally, sports organizations are integrating with local community projects, enhancing social cohesion and fostering a sense of belonging.

Strategically, organizations are establishing long-term sustainability goals and incorporating them into their strategic plans and actions. They are engaging multiple stakeholders, including local governments, NGOs, and community groups, to ensure a holistic approach to sustainability. Transparent reporting practices are being adopted to communicate sustainability efforts and progress to stakeholders, enhancing accountability and credibility.

## Conclusion

The SportEYE project highlights the critical role that sport organizations play in promoting sustainability. Through their various initiatives, these organizations, not only inspire their local communities, but also

[Report on the collection of good practices regarding the knowledge and adoption of UN SDGs by sport organisations](#)

provide practical examples of how to integrate sustainable practices into daily operations. The educational package which will be developed by the project aims to equip sports managers, staff, and coaches with the tools necessary to foster sustainability within their organizations. Despite the challenges encountered, the growing commitment to sustainability within the sports sector offers a promising outlook, demonstrating that collective efforts can significantly contribute to addressing the climate crisis and promoting a sustainable future.

### **Recommendations for Future Actions**

- Ongoing support for sports organizations in developing and implementing comprehensive sustainability strategies.
- Enhanced collaboration between sports entities and educational institutions to promote environmental awareness and sustainable practices.
- Establishment of a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to track progress and ensure accountability in sustainability efforts.

By focusing on these areas, the SportEYE project aims to create a lasting positive impact on both the environment and the communities engaged in the field of sport and sport for development. This approach not only addresses immediate environmental concerns but also fosters a culture of sustainability that can influence future generations.

## 1. Introduction

The UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, with its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provides a clear roadmap for a more sustainable future. While not explicitly mentioned in every SDG, sport is increasingly recognized as a powerful tool to achieve the SDGs. Participation in sport fosters essential skills like teamwork, leadership, and respect, directly contributing to social inclusion and the promotion of peaceful societies. Furthermore, sport can address broader challenges by promoting healthy lifestyles, and empowering youth. Team sports –and specifically, sport clubs are powerful tools, which contribute to ensure inclusive and quality education for all, as well as to promote lifelong learning. The popularity and outreach of team sports offer opportunities for awareness raising and information sharing, including sustainable development. Thus, sport can and should be a tool for social transformation and a channel for the transmission of values, as well as a framework for educating and promoting climate action. These factors make its management and promotion by public authorities one of the tools available to achieve the SDGs.

In this same way, as a role model for upcoming generations, children and youth can contribute to a better future. From citizenship and justice to climate change and the environment, there is a need to educate and inspire new generations to make a difference. It is crucial for them to learn how to use resources wisely and do their bit in the battle against climate change, to be good environmental citizens from an early age. Hence, it is essential to activate and raise awareness through education in environmental sustainability and highlighting the need to work as a team within our communities.

Equally important for the achievement of the goals is the role of young leaders, educators and coaches, as they are the great role models for the generations to come. It is essential to contribute to their mobilisation, training and education on climate action and the 2030 Agenda, and thus develop their leadership capacity and optimise their performance from a holistic perspective.

It is within this background that the “Empowering Your Sport Club, Children and Youth for the Environment in the Mediterranean Region” initiative was inspired and developed.

**Empowering Your Sport Club, Children and Youth for the Environment in the Mediterranean Region**, also known as "SportEYE," is an Erasmus+ funded initiative by the European Union, aimed at promoting transnational cooperation. The project involves partners from various sectors, including the Olympic Movement, Sport for Development, Academia, and civil society. Focused on the European Mediterranean region, which faces environmental challenges due to sustainability issues, SportEYE aims to engage local communities to enhance the governance and impact of team sports clubs on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This is accomplished through a multilevel curriculum targeting management, coaching staff, and young participants, fostering environmental awareness and sustainability. SportEYE seeks to further analyse and explore pathways to support an integrated approach for promoting and strengthening the adoption of some UN SDGs indicators by sports organisations. The ultimate goal is to enhance their positive social and environmental impact on local communities.

SportEYE has been designed under the horizontal priority “Environment and fight against climate change” of the Erasmus+ Programme, with a special focus in “Promoting education in and through sport” as it aims at supporting skills development in sport and environmental sustainability.

Report on the collection of good practices regarding the knowledge and adoption of UN SDGs by sport organisations

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More specifically, the project will be focusing on the following UN SDGs:



While embracing the whole international dimension of environmental sustainability, SportEYE addresses special attention to the Mediterranean Region, with a view of promoting the role of sport as a way to raise awareness regarding the alarming increase in the impact of the climate crisis in the Mediterranean Basin.

Specifically, the objectives of SportEYE are to:

- ✓ Research on the state-of-art and collect good practices on the existing policies, rules, strategies, experiences and initiatives which promote the knowledge, assumption and adoption of the SDGs by sport organizations in their daily work.
- ✓ Produce and implement an innovative educational package on specific strategies and practical measures for improving the social and environmental impact of team sport clubs on their local communities.
- ✓ Test on the field and check the progresses made by participants and measure the social and environmental impacts reached on their local communities thanks to the training received.
- ✓ Design and launch an online collaborative platform for fostering the networking among people, organisations and experts from different countries and backgrounds, all of them committed with the SDGs, for sharing ideas, experiences, knowledge, and new materials on this topic.
- ✓ Analyse existing normative and practical conditions and formulate policy recommendations to promote the effective adoption of the SDGs for achieving positive social and environmental impacts on local communities at the international, regional and national levels.

To achieve its first objective, the research on the-state-of-the-art, the consortium conducted an international preliminary research initiative involving sports organisations and institutions across Europe, with a specific focus on the Mediterranean Region. The research was carried out by each partner through focus groups and individual interviews, either in person or online. Preliminary desk research was undertaken to identify sports organisations and institutions in each partner country, while ensuring that the members of the organisations who participated in the research were knowledgeable about their organisation's efforts (or lack thereof) in promoting environmental sustainability.

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Project partners:

PARTNER NAME	COUNTRY	INFO
<b>EFDN</b>	Netherlands	The European Football for Development Network (EFDN) consists of professional football clubs, leagues, and FAs who are committed to their communities and social responsibilities with a passion to cooperate and engage on a European level.
<b>Fútbol Más</b>	Spain	Fútbol Más is an international NGO with the aim of promoting the physical and emotional well-being, education and inclusion of children, young people and their families.
<b>IOTC</b>	Greece	The International Olympic Truce Centre's mission is to promote the Olympic Truce notion, to serve peace and friendship, and to cultivate international understanding through the power of sport.
<b>Play International</b>	France	Play International conviction is that sport is a tool and a solution to societal challenges. Their mission is to design and implement education and inclusion projects for vulnerable children and youth, using sports games as a pedagogical tool.
<b>ICSS EUROPE</b>	Portugal	ICSS EUROPE is part of the International Centre for Sport Security (ICSS) group and develops programmes and activities within the scope of ICSS's global activity.
<b>UCSC</b>	Italy	Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore has 4 campuses in Milan, Brescia, Piacenza-Cremona and Rome and it can count on 12 faculties, more than 44.000 students and 1300 teaching staff members. UCSC developed several academic programmes concerning integrity in sport and sport as a tool for social inclusion.

For more info about the partners, click [here](#).

The purpose of this preliminary research was to collect and analyse data on the state of the art in the field, including existing policies, rules, strategies, measures, experiences, and initiatives aimed at promoting the knowledge, assumption, and adoption of the SDGs by sports organisations as a means to address the climate crisis at a local level and educate youth about environmental sustainability.

Specifically, two main topics have been addressed. The first is the perception and knowledge about the UN SDGs and the concept of sustainability. The second focused on the collection of good practices, aiming to identify approximately 20 successful initiatives supported or adopted by the sports organisations participating in the research. These good practices are linked to the practical adoption of the UN SDGs indicators, inspiring and guiding their daily work towards a more positive social and environmental impact on local communities. Participants were asked to share their existing good practices, as well as those that could be initiated in the short or long term.

[Report on the collection of good practices regarding the knowledge and adoption of UN SDGs by sport organisations](#)

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## 2. Methodology of the preliminary research

Each partner of the SportEYE project was actively involved in the data collection process. Individual interviews and focus groups, conducted both in person and online, were utilised. A qualitative approach was chosen to thoroughly investigate and:

- To explore representation, perception, and opinions on topic of interest.
- To analyse the needs of a context, an organisation, or an institution.
- To activate participatory processes.
- To facilitate learning processes.
- To evaluate the impact of a service or project.

Focus groups typically involve 8 to 12 participants, with discussions led by a moderator, sometimes assisted by another individual, and lasting between two to three hours when conducted in person. In online focus groups, it is advisable to limit the number of participants to a maximum of 4 and to shorten the duration to a maximum of two hours.

However, due to logistical and time management reasons, focus groups were conducted in smaller groups consisting of 2-3 participants. It was found that heterogeneous group compositions were not necessary as important results were obtained from dialogue among similar organisations. Additionally, some partners opted for single interviews instead of focus groups.

During the focus groups, quantitative data was also collected. In fact, while the first session of the meeting centered around narratives regarding sustainability within sports organisations, the second part was divided into four sub-sessions, each of which began with a scale survey. The addressed topics were Education (SDGs 4 and 13), Accessibility and Sustainable Management (SDGs 11 and 12), Water and Earth (SDGs 14 and 15), and Peace and Development (SDGs 16 and 17). Participants in each group of SDGs answered, expressing their evaluation of their organisation's commitment to that specific aspect. Through answering the questionnaire and discussing it together, good practices, policies, strategies, measures, experiences, and initiatives employed by sports organisations were identified.

In the following tables, the number of organisations reached and the number of interviews and focus groups conducted by each partner are shown.

Table 1

SportEYE Partners	FG O	Interviews P	Interviews O	FG Participants
EFDN			3	3 High level organisations
Fútbol Más	1	1	1	3 High level and 1 Grassroot organisations; 2 Institutions
IOTC			7	2 High level and 3 Grassroot organisations; 2 Institutions
Play International			9	8 High level and 1 Grassroot organisations
ICSS		2	2	3 High level and 1 Grassroot organisations; 2 Institutions
UCSC	5			6 High level and 2 Grassroot organisations; 1 Institution
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>22</b>	

\*FG O = Online Focus Groups  
Interview P = interviews conducted in person  
Interviews O = interviews conducted online

Table 2

	High level	Grassroot level	Institution	TOTAL
Football	13	2		15
Multi-sport	1	3	6	10
Rugby	8			8
Basket	1	2		3
Volleyball	2			2
Handball		1		1
Canoe and Kayak			1	1
	<b>25</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>40</b>

The choice among the sport disciplines was related to the impact that specific activities have on a national, regional, or local level. Therefore, it was necessary to select from the most popular and widely practiced sports.

In the end, information was collected from 40 sports organisations (25 professional, 8 grassroots, and 7 public institutions) through 6 online focus groups, 3 in-person interviews, and 22 online interviews.

It is evident from the numbers that reaching grassroots sports organisations and institutions was quite challenging. This could be due to various reasons, such as lack of availability of time or political factors.

Report on the collection of good practices regarding the knowledge and adoption of UN SDGs by sport organisations

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Participants selected were members of the organisations and were consciously aware of their organisation's efforts (or lack thereof) in promoting environmental sustainability, in accordance with the SDGs of the project. In two cases, they were accompanied by two external consultants who are assisting the sports organisation in working towards more sustainable management.

The following table displays the roles of the participants within their organisations:

*Table 3*

CSR DEPARTMENT	7	
MARKETING and COMUNICATION	6	
CLUB MANAGER	12	
SUSTAINABILITY MANAGER	2	
PRESIDENT	4	
VICE PRESIDENT	1	
PSYCHOLOGY	2	
CHILD PROTECTION	1	
EDUCATION/TRAINING	5	
	40	+ 2 external consultants

Throughout all meetings, privacy and confidentiality have been guaranteed. Recording and transcribing meetings are crucial for ensuring clarity of results; therefore, participants were always asked for permission to record before beginning. GDPR-related regulations in force in each country have been followed.

### 3. Data analysis

In an effort to collect all the data comprehensively, each partner drafted a national report. Guidelines for conducting focus groups and creating the national report were provided to the partners. This not only aimed to offer appropriate support during the research phase but also to ensure the greatest possible uniformity in the collected data.

The specific questions about the narrative regarding environmental sustainability (the first phase of the meeting) were as follows:

- What does it mean for you to be a sustainable sport organisation?
- When do you discuss about sustainability in your organisation?
- Under which circumstances?
- With which stakeholders inside and outside of your organisation?

As mentioned earlier, the second part was divided into 4 sub-sessions, each focusing on one group of SDGs. At the beginning of each session, participants answered a scaled survey and provided comments, adding information about activities, experiences, etc. They discussed what they are currently doing, what they are willing to undertake in the short term, and what they plan for the long term.

#### EDU: Education (UN SDGs 4 and 13)

**4** QUALITY  
EDUCATION



**13** CLIMATE  
ACTION



How your organisations are trying to:

QUESTIONS	NOTHING	PARTIALLY	A LOT
<b>EDU 1. Promotion of educational action on: sustainable development, human rights, gender equality, culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity, sustainable development</b>	1	2	3
<b>EDU 2. Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning</b>	1	2	3
<b>EDU 3. Sensitise fans and stakeholders to sustainable behaviour through commercial advantages and/or regulations</b>	1	2	3

Report on the collection of good practices regarding the knowledge and adoption of UN SDGs by sport organisations

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<b>EDU 4. Raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalised communities</b>	1	2	3
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**ACC/MAN: Accessibility and sustainable management (UN SDGs 11 and 12)**



How your organisations are trying to:

QUESTIONS	NOTHING	PARTIALLY	A LOT
<b>ACC/MAN 1. Provide access safely and sustainably to sport facilities (including by public transport for example) with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older person.</b>	1	2	3
<b>ACC/MAN 2. Promote sustainable means of transport for supporters such as public transport, bicycles and electric cars. Providing, e.g., parking spaces for bicycles, or bike sharing, charging devices for electric vehicles and agreements with public transport companies</b>	1	2	3
<b>ACC/MAN 3. Analyse the impact of athletes' journeys and comparing them with other, more sustainable means of transport (e.g. train)</b>	1	2	3
<b>ACC/MAN 4. Provide universal access to safe, inclusive, and accessible, green and public spaces for everyone</b>	1	2	3
<b>ACC/MAN 5. Adopt a sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources.</b>	1	2	3
<b>ACC/MAN 6. Establish the same teleworking days for everyone, so that the office is closed and electricity, air conditioning, heating, etc. are not wasted.</b>	1	2	3
<b>ACC/MAN 7. Reduce the food waste</b>	1	2	3
<b>ACC/MAN 8. Reduce the release to air, water, and soil of chemical pollution</b>	1	2	3
<b>ACC/MAN 9. Reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse. Separate and recycle organic waste to produce compost to be used as fertiliser for grass.</b>	1	2	3

Report on the collection of good practices regarding the knowledge and adoption of UN SDGs by sport organisations

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## WAT/EAR: Water and earth (UN SDGs 14 and 15)



How your organisations are trying to:

QUESTIONS	NOTHING	PARTIALLY	A LOT
<b>WAT/EAR 1. Prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds</b>	1	2	3
<b>WAT/EAR 2. Combat desertification and deforestation; increase afforestation and reforestation</b>	1	2	3
<b>WAT/EAR 3. Ensure the conservation of biodiversity terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems (like forests, wetlands, mountains, and drylands)</b>	1	2	3

## PEA/DEV: Peace and development (UN SDGs 16 and 17)



How your organisation is trying to:

QUESTIONS	NOTHING	PARTIALLY	A LOT
<b>PEA/DEV 1. Reduce all forms of violence</b>	1	2	3
<b>PEA/DEV 2. Reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms</b>	1	2	3
<b>PEA/DEV 3. Develop effective, accountable, and transparent institutions at all levels</b>	1	2	3
<b>PEA/DEV 4. Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making at all levels</b>	1	2	3

Report on the collection of good practices regarding the knowledge and adoption of UN SDGs by sport organisations

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## 4. Results

### 4.1 The meaning and practices of sustainability

#### In a nutshell

Sustainability encompasses environmental, economic, and social aspects. It entails safeguarding human rights, environmental rights, and promoting inclusivity and diversity (including gender, disability, interculturality, etc.).

Being sustainable involves implementing tangible actions and creating meaningful projects that benefit athletes, families, fans, and the local community, taking into account the context, such as disadvantaged areas. Actions can be conscious or unconscious; mostly are Top-Down initiatives.

Sustainability is frequently discussed, sometimes on a daily basis, through various channels such as marketing initiatives, company benchmarking, social responsibility actions, sustainability reports, and lifestyle and management culture.

The management's sensitivity towards environmental concerns and ecology enables sustainable behaviours. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon to encounter internal resistance to change among employees.

Related issues include the costs associated with sustainability initiatives, the challenge of not owning the facilities where operations are conducted, and managing the legal aspects related to sports and sustainability within the context.

The first part of presenting the results refers to the data collected in the initial phase of the focus groups, where we asked participants what it means for them to be a sustainable sports organisation. Because the research aims to create the knowledge base that can enable the subsequent development of targeted and effective training actions, the first step was to gain a deeper understanding of the representations of "sustainability" held by sports clubs and the institutions revolving around them. Subsequently, we sought to understand, at the organisational level, the nature of the dynamics of organisational involvement in implementing actions related to sustainability by asking: When do you talk about sustainability in your organisation? In what circumstances? With which stakeholders within and outside your organisation? This second part allowed us to explore the actors involved, the motivations underlying the construction of environmental sustainability policies and practices, and finally to understand the type of dialogue activated with the actors revolving around the sports world.

#### 4.1.1 The meaning of being a sustainable organisation

A first element to emphasise is that behind the word and the concept of sustainability for the actors we have heard from, there are both environmental, economic, and social issues.

[Report on the collection of good practices regarding the knowledge and adoption of UN SDGs by sport organisations](#)

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*“We talk about 360° sustainability, so social, environmental, and economic sustainability, and therefore, the goal we set is to have an approach and all of us have a vision that has this unique objective. We know very well, among other things, that football is a fundamental tool; so, an important vehicle for also activating the cultural processes related to sustainability and therefore, in parallel, in addition to corporate governance that has an approach to sustainability more internally. We carry out projects externally that involve all our stakeholders, from partners, fans, athletes, and therefore, we say sustainability in the broadest sense”.*

*“First of all, sustainability must be economic. Because if there is no economic basis, you cannot implement a whole series of procedures, and the environmental and social aspects are connected because, in any case, now the Federation to implement a whole series of initiatives, we have now made a young [...] final where we bought trees to offset CO2, beautiful, but how much does it cost? I mean, because it is not conceivable to, as they say, not consider all aspects. Also, at the social level, however, if you want to carry out the activity, now another project has started on women operated on for breast cancer, so beautiful, how much does it cost, however, to involve the companies?”*

Economic sustainability therefore seems to represent the "base" of the conditions that actually allow us to talk about sustainability; also because activating actions that promote environmental sustainability by clubs also requires economic investments.

*“And however, they are very interconnected [...] also adopting a whole series of environmental sustainability procedures unfortunately is expensive; so, it is a burden at this time also for the economic part, so a Federation, an organisation, an organisation must certainly be very willing to get involved and say a gadget of a certain type costs me zero, 20 sustainable gadgets of another type cost me €2, what do we do? So, I believe there is also this type of approach and aspect that it's fine to talk about sustainability but then it's difficult”.*

The participants in the research also emphasized the importance of developing an internal organisational culture of sustainability.

*“And now, also, we have been recently both in London at the slalom world championships and in Germany at the world championships. And actually, there is very little, at least in [our] context. So, what a reality, a sustainable organisation must be an organisation that has, first of all, a culture and a mindset that looks in that direction. Then, there are still no procedures, there are no, how to say, guidelines, at least we don't have them yet, we are building them with this project, that can allow a small company or an Italian Federation or a Federation, an international organisation to declare itself sustainable. So, it is a question that will need to be answered, but in a few years”.*

#### 4.1.2 Actions taken towards sustainability: objects, subjects, and modalities

In narrating some examples of actions developed within their own organisations in the field of sustainability, participants have recounted actions directed towards:

- **Protection of Human Rights**

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*“For me, but also, however, I don't know, I think for everyone, on two fronts, that of protecting human rights, protecting environmental rights, so working on these two fronts”.*

- **Protection of environmental rights**

*“Environmental protection, we are starting, taking the first steps because we are a bit behind and we are doing it with daily practices and with projects, as I said before in the introduction, macro in perspective on the future that concern both the stadium and the sports centre”.*

- **Inclusiveness and protection of diversity (gender, disability, intercultural, etc.)**

*“We have a team; we have a Paralympic football team that almost all Italian professional clubs have now. We were probably one of the first club to adopt a team, now it has become an obligation, in quotes, all professional Serie A clubs. We started with this Paralympic football team, then all the other activities on disability are added”.*

*“Gender, we are working a lot on this, also with adhesions to territorial initiatives that are not only sports. But we are giving, for example, to women's football, to girls and girls in the area all the opportunities that are given. It is a will of our President, both at the level of structure and technical closeness and technical support normally given to males”.*

*“Sustainable is something that is accessible to everyone, so let's say that it can be inclusive, it can be, it can beat a little the distances from those that are the gender differences, equality, so economic sustainability as well”.*

In addition to this subdivision of themes regarding the objects addressed by sustainability actions promoted by sports organisations, other clusters emerged from the analysis of the collected data:

- a) Actors involved in sustainability actions (as protagonists and beneficiaries)**
- b) Motivations (behind the actions developed)**
- c) Dialogues with the outside world**

Regarding the actors involved, being sustainable means taking real actions and developing real projects from everyday life towards different kinds of actors: athletes, families, supporters and territory.

*“Our idea of sustainability, given that it is not yet so concrete, we try to start from all the daily actions that are ours, but above all, precisely, from those of our athletes and also consequently from our fans. And those who come to the stadium during the day of the game, which is obviously the day when people gather, so starting from the most trivial things, from a simple separate collection or mainly things, perhaps also the use of water dispensers”.*

*“Both towards the outside, but also towards the inside, because they have so many activities, for example, all the youth part, they have an Academy activity with which they collaborate with various partners to build a training path for youth athletes, for example, or for the minor teams that they host in T, they help these athletes grow also to make you understand a little the level of correlation with all the projects they have in the field. Athletes are involved in social activities, then they collaborate with institutions in the territory as well and they are involved in everything. So, sustainability is both social”.*

From the narratives of the focus group participants, there is a prevalence of extrinsic motivations.

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*“The Football Social Responsible Person is in fact a new figure in football clubs since April this year, compulsory for professional football clubs that obtain a UEFA license. Many clubs, however, already had it in-house. I already played such a role to some extent before. Not all of them, but now they will all have to have it”.*

*“I have companies that are benefit societies, so they already state in their articles of association that they want to carry out activities that they do for social issues”.*

*“But at the end of the day, for a partner to associate with you and to see that you do certain activities or that you also raise its reputation in terms of sustainability is another reason why partners come to you”.*

*“Since our partner is XXX energy, we have done so many initiatives on the subject that we are recognised not only internally but externally on the local and national territory”.*

Regarding the dialogue with external actors, the importance of involving local communities emerges.

*“Because we tend to work a lot on this aspect. We are in a peripheral area and therefore we have a lot of social issues. Most of our focus is on this type of activity. On the economic side, it's the same because obviously, being in a rather disadvantaged area, we have to pay a lot of attention from this point of view as well. The environmental aspect is not addressed in a very direct way, but it is part of the overall discourse, as E probably also intended. There is something not specific, but that pervades a bit all our company's operations”.*

Actions can be conscious or unconscious: being sustainable also means bringing about awareness of the sustainability of actions and activities that one already does.

The main critical elements regarding the investment of sports organisations in sustainability actions can be summarised as follows:

- Costs.
- Not owning the facility where you work.
- Managing the legislation related to sport context and sustainability.

Promoting sustainability means fostering culture and education through a managerial culture attentive to sustainability. In general, management sensitivity towards green and ecology facilitates sustainable behaviours. It is not uncommon to encounter internal resistance to change among employees.

*So, sustainable sports organisations, in my opinion, do not yet exist. We are realizing that this European project is something new and already far ahead compared to an international federation, the ICF, which is the body that gathers all the world's sports federations. It's really something innovative. At the sports level, interesting projects have been carried out by major federations, such as UEFA or the Italian Football Federation, where there is a bit more attention. But then the real issue is understanding in practice what is being done because the possibility of falling into a facade, greenwashing, is real. With projects that have envisaged initial monitoring audits, we have seen everything. So, this morning I returned from a small reality in Piedmont that wanted to be involved, where there is really substance, to much larger realities, from which one might expect more, but where in reality there is nothing sustainable.*

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In summary, the analysis of the testimonies of the research participants regarding representations of sustainability reflects a growing awareness of the importance of sustainability in sports. There is a need to consider sustainability in all its dimensions, not just environmental aspects. The main challenge seems to lie in implementing concrete procedures and guidelines to make sustainable practices effective, with a focus on both external and internal initiatives. The project approach emerges as a key tool for achieving concrete and multidimensional sustainability in the field of sports.

#### 4.1.3 Driving Sustainability: Key Actors and Stakeholders inside and outside sport organisations

From the analysis of the actions described by the research participants, it was possible to identify a plurality of actors/organisational areas under whose auspices these actions fall.

- Sales department
- Social responsibility department
- Social media and communication department
- Marketing department
- Sponsor relations figures.
- Community managers
- Project manager (public and private fundings)
- External consultants

Some examples are provided below.

Sales department:

*“Inside the club, I omitted one thing, I am the commercial and marketing director, so it is clearly my task to seek resources and also to look for marketing projects that can more easily attract companies. So, I’ll be very frank, in some cases, we succeed for various reasons, in other cases, we tie the commercial part to Volleyball very well, clearly declining it to business activity, so this facilitates us; in other cases, partnerships arise for various reasons; and in others, you have to work on it, so you have to create projects that can be interesting. So, bluntly, the better we are at creating interesting projects, the more we have the opportunity to engage and make the partner fall in love”.*

Marketing:

*“Then, I’ll be very frank, in some cases, we succeed for various reasons, in other cases, we tie the commercial part very well to the sports activity, clearly aligning it with business activity, so this facilitates us; in other cases, partnerships arise for various reasons; and in others, you have to work on it, so you have to create projects that can be interesting. So, bluntly, the better we are at creating interesting projects, the more we have the opportunity to engage and make the partner fall in love”.*

*“In hindsight, we say that it started as a marketing initiative. However, it has a significant impact from an environmental perspective, not so much in terms of the number of plants that were planted, but*

Report on the collection of good practices regarding the knowledge and adoption of UN SDGs by sport organisations

*rather because it is a very strong action of communication and education, as they are working extensively with the schools in the area”.*

*“They are also working through their match events, communicating an important message to the fans; so, we highlighted in the initial analysis phase that their strength, at least in the local area to date, is the strong ability to influence both the political and community parts, it's all about the sports aspect”.*

#### Communication department:

*“I mainly handle communication, so all the social media, website management, and everything else, and for a few years now, also all the project management, both projects related to social schools and youth activity development, as well as recently European project management. So, I'm kind of the reference point for the secretariat to support all these projects, and of course, from the conception to the writing, and then to the final project management”.*

#### Company benchmarking:

*“We started with this document, which I can send you digitally if you want. It's called ... [...]. So, from here, we hooked onto the agenda, we started with our values, which are respect, family, humility, fun, trust, honesty, and we hooked onto the UN 2030 agenda for sustainable development. So, we started following everything that was required. So, a sustainable sports organisation. Okay, it's not sustainable just environmentally obviously. But it also supports, for example, gender differences, difficulties, disabilities, inclusion, providing scholarships. We have a psychologist who welcomes them”.*

#### Sustainability reports:

*“And so, we started this journey; therefore, for us, talking about sustainability, as you say, is a topic that is on everyone's lips, but concretely defining it or describing it, giving a definition of sustainability, well, it's a bit subjective, and so XXX, which is one of our partners, is guiding us through R on this journey. So, this morning, in fact, just a few hours ago, we had one of the meetings that will lead us to draw up the first balance sheet. Sustainability. We asked ourselves a perfect question, but how do we certify it? I mean, what we do, how do we put the numbers together, do we give it a definition? And so all this culminates in this, that is, it has its natural outlet in the sustainability balance sheet”.*

#### Social responsibility department:

*“The fruits of what is being harvested now are actually activities carried out even at the level of corporate social responsibility several years ago. In short, when we considered, for example, Finnish models, because the Finnish Federation was one of the first to work on social responsibility activities; so, in the end, what emerges is a bit the result of activities or thoughts that have been carried out or even benchmarking activities that we used to do. In short, we had benchmarking activities in the four most important reference leagues, which were the German, English, French, and Spanish leagues, precisely due to a configuration also based on the number of clubs”.*

#### Political actions connected to the territories:

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*“They are also working through their match events, communicating an important message to the fans. So, their strength today lies in their strong ability to influence both the political and community aspects, as well as the entire sports sector”.*

*“As for social sustainability, it's what we do where we are deeply rooted in the territory. Therefore, the need to give back to the community all the privileges that a Serie A club, or one participating in the Eurocup, might have. So, everything we do in terms of school projects involves about fifteen non-profit organisations, and there is a whole range of activities through which we engage the community. We give back what we do with real projects, so it's not just about writing a check and being done with it. It's more about involvement and what we try to do for families, providing various services, whether it's on match days, during the year, or in the summer”.*

The ownership of the club:

*“The interlocutors are mainly the ownership, our top management, which is the corporate director, but also the sports management because the input comes from the ownership and the corporate management, but then you have to drop it. [...] And here it's a bit more difficult. [...] but we are getting to the involvement of the technical component, of the technical staff, which means management, technical area, technical staff to get down to the players themselves and the female footballers, so we get to women's football”.*

High motivation and identification of the staff with the organisation's values facilitate the transition towards sustainability and green practices; however, many internal resistances to change within the organisation (such as tradition, trophies, office organisation - paper-based approach and bureaucracy) become barriers to the green evolution of a sports organisation.

*“So, we are starting with recycling and the use of paper, these are small battles that we are beginning. And of course, it also involves changing deeply rooted ways of working, so maybe we, the younger generations, are more inclined towards these issues and this management style. The part that worked in a certain way is a bit more reluctant, and it's not easy at all. We don't have standardised protocols yet, but the goal is to get there”.*

In general data confirm this trend of Top-Down action and we are working to making visible the hierarchy.

*“If you ask me about a sustainable organisation, I can tell you that out of the 4 or 5 projects we approached this year, they helped us become more sustainable. However, this happened because there was a clear directive from the top, telling us that we needed to pursue this path, somewhat like the Agenda 2030 telling us we need to pursue those goals in the next so many years. So yes, we're moving in that direction because the world is pushing us there”.*

*“There's also a need for these organisations to receive guidance from the IOC, so the IOC tells you that as an international federation, you need to act, but it's probably not that straightforward. Okay, so these large entities probably find themselves, so to speak, having to invent, because it's not quite like that anyway. Everyone has put something in motion, but they find themselves having to implement things to the various federations from the top, and it's a process that generally never quite works out completely. So, starting from the bottom, we've already created a tool that will go well beyond the guidelines because the guideline is something you read. So, you say, 'They're telling me I should do it”.*

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*like this instead,' but the project, which will conclude in 2025, the ultimate final goal is to provide a tool to evaluate how good or bad you are. So, it's a kind of stamp, but then what's it for?"*

*"Today, I was talking to the Canoe Club of XXX, for example, they have a very strong connection with local administrations. So, they need this quality stamp that isn't an ISO stamp. But it's a policy that looks in that direction, so it's a kind of certification or testimony. More than a certification".*

*"So consider that now we have what is a UEFA strategic plan and also a Serie A League strategic plan that is somewhat based on the Agenda 2030, but with obviously more specific criteria than the 17 goals of Agenda 2030, UEFA, let's say, gives you guidelines and criteria on 11, more or less, areas where they ask you to intervene, and based on that, we actually started a little earlier because we created our ethical manifesto three years ago, even before there was the UEFA, FIGC, and Serie A League strategic plan. We started through our 'Be as One' manifesto, to define three subcategories: fighting against all forms of discrimination, inclusion, and then respect, environmental sustainability that run in parallel. So, where everyone talks to each other, there shouldn't be one that prevails over the other because there are three, let's call them subcategories, within one hat that run in parallel with all the work areas".*

*"For example, specifically, there's an FIGC card that we joined to try to reduce the impact of a sports event, such as a Serie A or Serie B football match, which definitely has an impact. What have we done? Obviously, taking into account the challenges of a temporary stadium like ours. We have a bicycle parking lot, completely free, available to our fans, so we've tried to encourage sustainable mobility through the use of bicycles or electric scooters, since both the city and the climate allow it every day, in every season, and two years ago, now we're trying to renew it, we made an agreement with the public transport company in such a way that it also tries to raise awareness among fans to use the tram".*

*"The Football Social Responsibility, which is effectively a new figure in football clubs mandatory for professional football clubs obtaining the UEFA license from this year, from April of last year. Many clubs, however, already had it internally. I partially performed such a role previously. Not all, but from April of this year, all professional clubs applying for and obtaining the UEFA license to obtain the UEFA license must have this role. The Football Social Responsibility deals with the social responsibility of the club as a whole. So, summarizing, both on the front of protecting human rights and environmental rights".*

Thanks to the data collected during the research, it was also possible to identify external partners to the organisation that are frequently mentioned in the narratives of the interviewees. These can be summarised in the following categories:

- Partner companies
- Sponsors
- Public Institutions
- External consulting companies

*"We have within our context, let's say, two municipal companies. [...] So let's say that the type of partner companies also influences the social activities we do in the area. So, it occurred to me to contact the municipal company XXX, who is in charge of the environment in our province, to ask him for some advice and we managed to come up with this idea!"*

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*“Our role today is to also work with companies that request this. That is, companies that have, I'll give you a silly example because I like to speak through examples that may be more fitting for both us and your studio. I have companies that are benefit corporations. Okay, so already in their statute, they have the goal of creating and declaring activities that they carry out for social issues; so, we're not just talking about sustainability”.*

*“No, this is crucial precisely because we can say that the soul of our club has always been focused on a good series of activities and attention directed towards the social sphere, the community, and obviously towards sustainability in the environmental sense, given that our partner is XXX energy and therefore it's a topic very close to us, and we've done many initiatives that are recognised not only internally but also externally in the local and national territory”.*

*“We have an agreement with XXX [Ambiental association] and we try to carry out environmental education and awareness activities every year for all the young people in the youth sector. So, we organise environmental education and cleanup days with XXX, so materially we also take the kids to collect waste in certain areas of the city, and at the same time, there's all the training from XXX volunteers.”*

The possibility of creating networks among different sports associations, especially between less structured associations (grassroots sports) and more structured ones (professional and high-level clubs), is an important element for the development of a sustainable approach even within the less structured ones.

*“It's a company, I call it a company, but it's a club, a reality, a club of 10 years (this year it turns 10), but clearly it has strong connections with the business world because the owner is an entrepreneur named ...; so, luxury villas with pools and therefore certain activities that we carry out, we must carry them out in line with what the company also does; so, what does it communicate to the company? What does it do? How does it communicate it? Who are its stakeholders? And clearly this affects both partnerships and activities and obviously also what we do at the sports level. So, it's about mine, but then for everything that sport represents and also for what are the predictive surveys, let's say, corporate social responsibility activities are much more important today and so sport is definitely a fundamental vehicle because it appeals to young people, it appeals to families, it appeals to many stakeholders”.*

*“It's a solution we hadn't encountered yet, so it's interesting because this means that, if I understand correctly, the issue for you is so important that you even entrust it to a more competent company that can help you further develop the path. This is indeed very interesting”.*

We also seek contacts with the local press.

*“We try to do it because today it has to be done through communication on social media, from Instagram, obviously Facebook, to the website, we're even on LinkedIn for reasons of a different nature. We try to give visibility. What about the other circle? It's the newspapers, the local newspapers, and the national newspapers, but do you think that on a national newspaper like Gazzetta dello Sport the Italian national women's team is not mentioned? I mean, it is nonsense, if the media doesn't talk about it, it means it's not interesting, it means it doesn't exist. They came, they saw everything we do, we were interviewed and everything, but beyond that, no one is interested in what we're doing, I mean, everyone says nice, fantastic, but how good you are, congratulations.”*

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Even municipalities and local authorities can be important supporting partners.

*“So, we try to stay, as I said before, with good satisfaction in the territory, with, in recent times, definitely attention, in some cases collaboration from the Municipality of XXX. Regarding the province and the region, I believe they don't even know we exist, but for reasons, if we want to put it this way, of understanding the complexity of relationships”.*

*“But in the end, representatives of the institutions came, I can't remember the name right now, he's always part of the new government, but I can't remember the name. And then, the XXX Region arrived, the person in charge of equal opportunities of the XXX Region arrived. In the end, what do they tell you? Well, congratulations, indeed, they listened. They went on stage and were self-referential. They complimented the fact that structures like these exist in Italy. But then, have you seen them again? Have you heard from them again?”*

And then there are the schools in the area.

*“But it's very difficult. Schools can be managed by municipalities or by the superintendent's office. Keep in mind that, as a general rule, school principals, when you explain that you want to go and do sports activities when they're not using the gym basically after 5 p.m., if you had declared that you wanted to go and rob their houses, you would have bothered them less. Because the concession of gyms that they don't use after 5 p.m. is a problem. It seems like you asked for something huge, but this is still a strange country that makes things up”.*

*“The concession, the sharing of gyms among sports clubs is a kind of invasion of their territory, I mean, you're going to put your hands and feet in a place that isn't yours, even though they don't use it, it's irrelevant, but it's really irrelevant”.*

*“Unfortunately for us, however, we don't own a single centimetre of the facilities we use, so it's clear that everything that can be done.”*

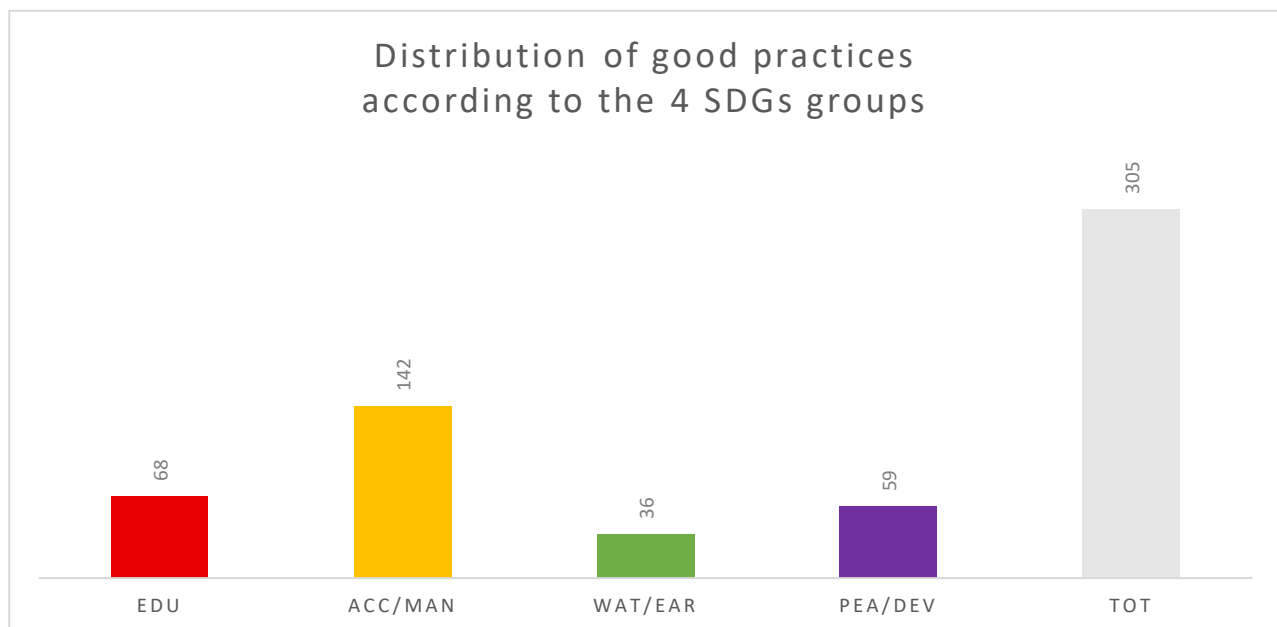
## 4.2 Sustainability practices

As mentioned above, the present section focuses on the second phase of the focus groups investigation. The purpose of this part was the identification of specific actions, projects, and policies that sport organisations are implementing according to a sustainable vision.

Quantitative data was useful to better understand the actual commitment of each organisation to that specific group of SDGs. What is important to keep in mind for further investigation is the significant difference in the number of ongoing projects compared with a more long-term perspective. It emerges that sports organisations lack a vision that extends into the future. These limitations could be linked to the instability of the sports sector, stemming from uncertainties regarding the availability of human resources, economic funding, and accessibility to facilities.

This trend it can be recognised in the following tables.

Table 4



\*EDU: Education (SDGs 4 and 13)  
ACC/MAN: Accessibility and Management (SDGs 11 and 12)  
WAT/EAR: Water and Earth (SDGs 14 and 15)  
PEA/DEV: Peace and Development (SDGs 16 and 17)

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Table 5

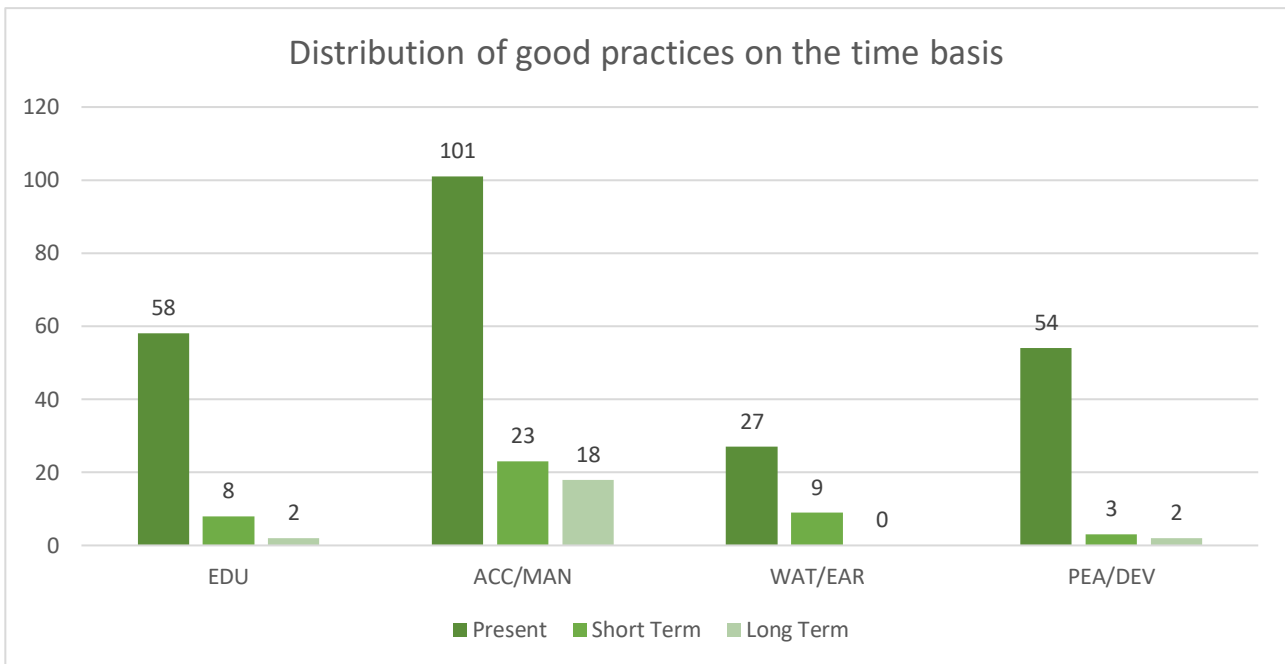
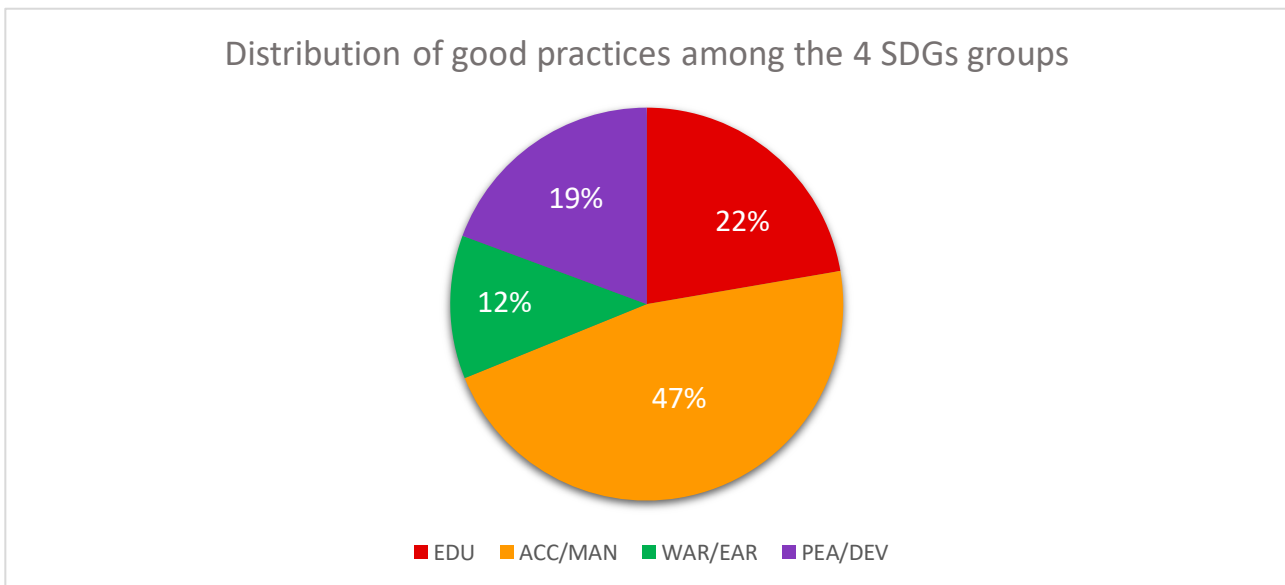


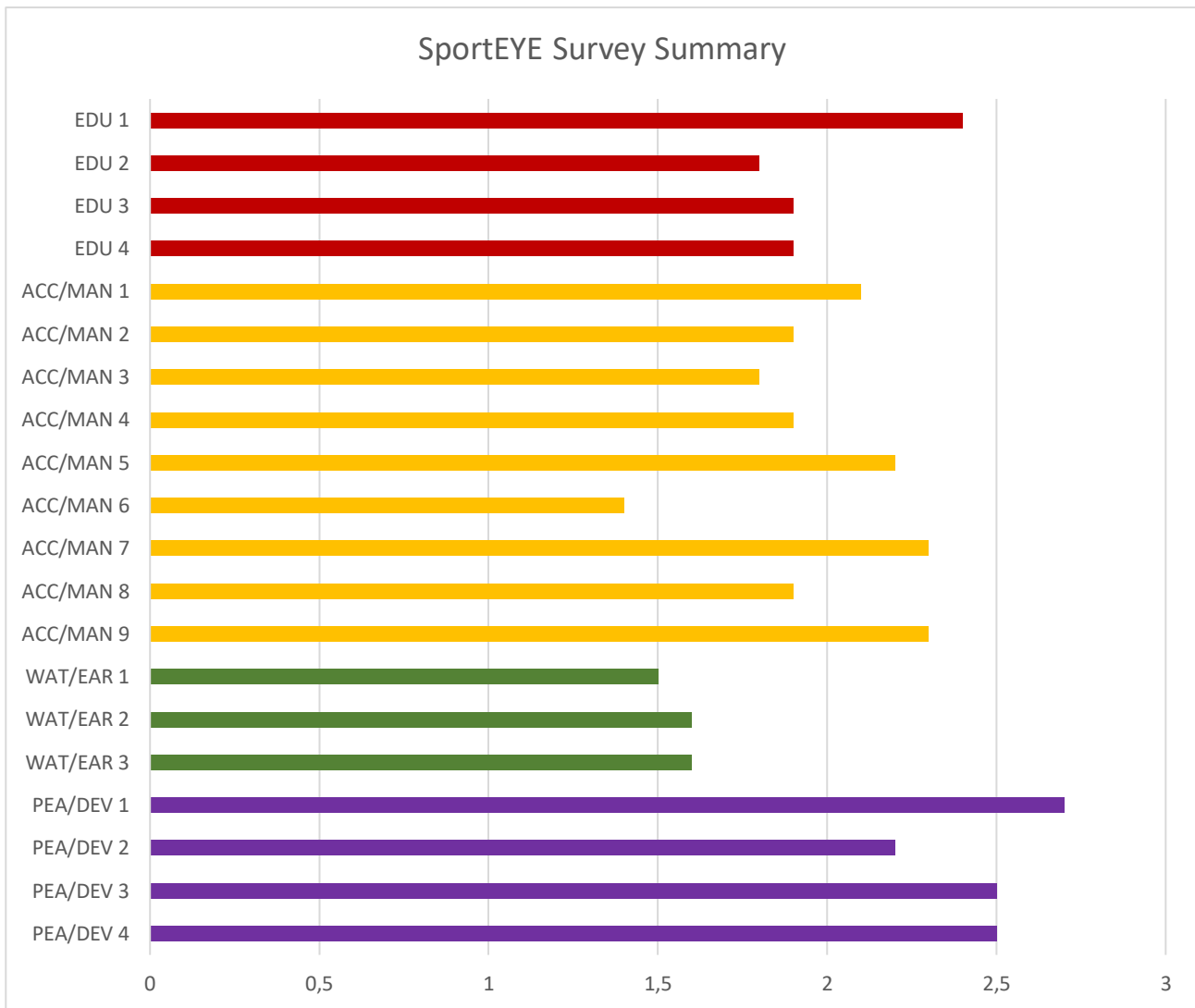
Table 6



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Table 7



\*EDU 1 correspond to the question number one of the FG questionnaire, education section.  
EDU 2 to the second one, and so forth.

Analysing the tables above, another noteworthy aspect emerges: the distribution of actions among the four groups of SDGs. Specifically, accessibility and sustainable management register the highest rates, with a significant 101 initiatives ongoing or concluded recently. However, it is concerning that there is a total absence of long-term measures in the water and earth group, which, in general, has fewer scores among the SDGs groups. Clearly, it is important to assist organisations in finding ways to contribute to this aspect as well. In the following paragraphs, we will delve deeper into these dynamics.

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### 4.1.1 Education (UN SDGs 4 and 13)

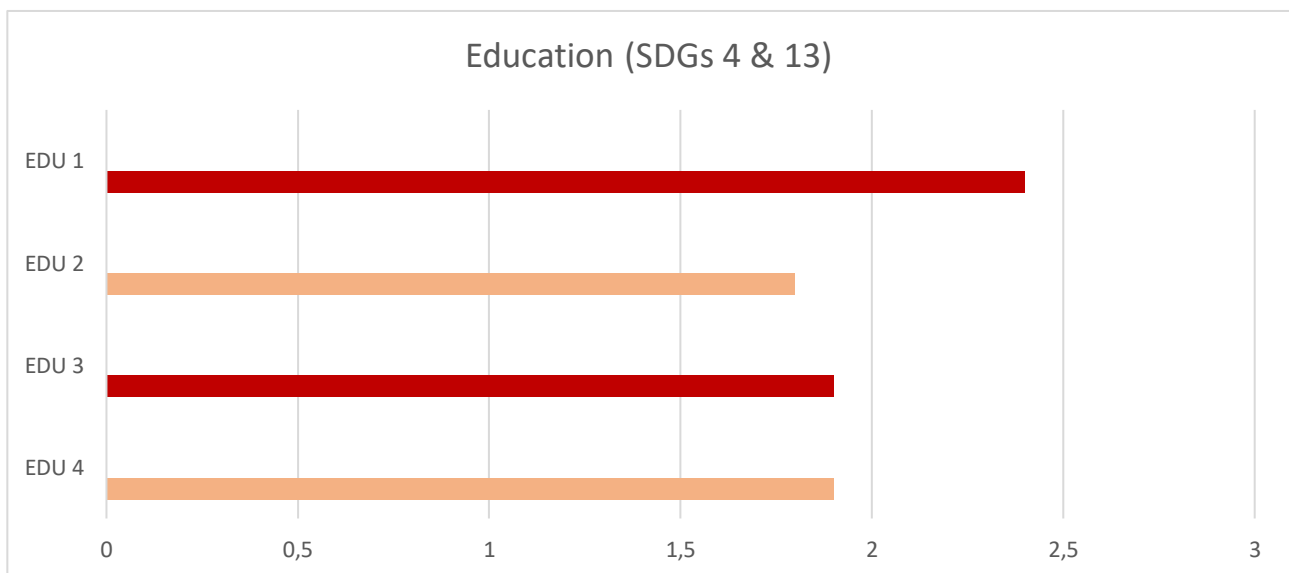
**In a nutshell:**

Sports organisations demonstrate a strong commitment to educational initiatives, as indicated by survey results. These initiatives cover various topics, i.e. **environmental education**.

Some organisations focus internally, engaging athletes in **eco-awareness activities**, while others extend their reach externally, involving the wider **community** in **sustainability projects**. Noteworthy examples include immersive experiences in natural environments and regular awareness campaigns. **Collaborations with competent bodies and schools** play a crucial role in promoting education, especially regarding environmental issues.

Additionally, **initiatives targeting disabilities and social inclusion** are prevalent, ranging from specialised sports teams to educational programmes. Overall, sports organisations strive to **educate and engage both their members and the broader community** in sustainable practices and social issues.

Table 8



According to the survey numbers, it is evident that sports organisations take their educational role seriously. Numerous projects are implemented covering various topics. Particularly, the first question received the highest score, which is reflected in the number of initiatives collected that are correlated with it. Whether it's a high-level organisation, a grassroots sports group, or a sports institution, there are no substantial differences in implementing educational initiatives, though differences may arise due to their varied nature.

Regarding environmental education, different approaches are considered. Some organisations focus internally, directing initiatives towards their athletes. They promote eco-awareness through full immersion experiences in particular natural environments.

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*“We got into the habit of taking the first team and three days in September, we take them to a little village called M. [...] And there you learn; you learn again about sustainability and compatibility. Because there they live on the lagoon, with the products of the lagoon, so whether it is the products of the catch, whether it is the wine that is made there, it grows on brackish water, brackish water is used for the wine. The crops are also grown locally, so as a small community, we are talking about 1700 people live on a lagoon and live with the lagoon, not against the lagoon. It lives with the lagoon, right now they are busy defending it because it seems that the region, the Friuli-Venezia Giulia Region wants to build a beautiful steelwork at the mouth of the lagoon just outside the town, opposite to L, which would mean killing the ecosystem”.*

*“We're organising a holiday in July for around fifteen children in the Alps, to introduce them to the mountains. As part of the trip, we take the opportunity to teach them about life in the mountains, waterways, etc”.*

On the other hand, some clubs extend their focus externally, engaging with the wider community in addition to their club members. They conduct awareness projects centered around sustainability.

*“[We promote] regular awareness raising campaigns to educate the fans, employees, and the wider community about climate change and the importance of sustainable practices. [...] A community garden project promoting environmental education could serve as a great example, fostering sustainability awareness and local engagement while addressing climate action and education goals”.*

*“[Our project: Community Based Climate Adaptation Projects] empower local communities to adapt to climate change. This includes initiatives such as sustainable agriculture practices, water management projects, and community led reforestation efforts to enhance resilience against the impacts of climate change”.*

Consistently maintaining an outward focus, it is noteworthy the example of one of these organisations that regularly distributes a sustainability handbook.

*“Each year, the club releases a sustainable manual in English, Catalan and Spanish in order to educate both internally and externally around sustainability. A lot more documents around this are being published. The sustainability department has also done a materiality assessment”.*

In general, sports organisations, with the intent of promoting such initiatives, seek the support of competent bodies and associations in the sector, thereby activating a network within the community that benefits its future. Furthermore, schools are recognised as having a significant opportunity to be a privileged place for promoting education, particularly environmental education. An example of this is a sports organisation that, through collaboration with a sponsor, aims to extend an existing project on environmental education. In partnership with local schools, they will combine sports activities and environmental education by organizing a sports tournament.

*“T, I was telling you before, it's a company, it's a partner that I guess you know, it joined us after we had extras. [...] They do a very nice activity within schools, which is to go and involve an educational programme on climate change and how do they do that? Through let's say a Meteorologist, so there's this bus with a meteorologist who goes into schools and clearly explains, in a very playful way, so it's a game that's played, goes to explain what climate change might be. [...] One of the points we have set ourselves is to organise an activity of this kind in [our region], in a school there, where at the end*

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*there is a sort of Olympics of these schools and then the four best schools are then awarded in M for activities that they always do on the part of climate change”.*

For the future, in addition to continuing with their current initiatives, some participants are convinced that there is a need to expand their targets as much as possible.

*“There is an aim to provide more opportunities for adults around sustainability as the focus is currently mostly a lot on children. Moreover, the aim is to be able to create more awareness for the SDGs by including them more regularly in the communication about the various initiatives”.*

Directly related to the environmental education, it is possible to find the topic of agricultural education. This kind of activity has a positive impact on the local communities.

*“We fund 100% of the access to our educational garden for the entire surrounding area, including schools, social centres, care homes, etc. For example, some classes come to the stadium specifically for the educational garden”.*

*“Urban farming actions and environmental education workshops aim to develop skills through experiential learning in the urban organic educational vegetable garden at the Centre for vulnerable social groups (refugees, people with intellectual disabilities, elderly etc.). These include organic agriculture and cultivation practices, planting, composting and harvesting of fruits, vegetables and herbs. The actions help participants to understand the principles of urban organic agriculture, balance of ecosystems, the importance of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature, seasonality of food, responsible consumption, and food waste avoidance”.*

Addressing the topic of human rights education, remarkable is the project of one sport organisation, which intelligently utilizes the image of its high-profile athletes to raise awareness among students in schools.

*“Every week the club send two players from the first team to a local school. Every week they visit a different school. On the school visits they discuss different topics with the kids. Topics such as human rights, non-violence, online abuse, gender equality, domestic violence, and gender-based violence is being discussed with the kids. In 2021 the club arranged a whole programme against gender-based violence. They also focus a lot on anti-bullying and are informing the kids what to do and how to act as a victim of bullying. Since 2019 the club has done different actions against discrimination each year”.*

When considering disabilities, lots of initiative aimed to promote social inclusion are implemented. Apart from involving people with disabilities in activities joint with others member of the club, so as to tackle marginalisation as much as possible, they also create specialised teams for them promoting physical activity.

*“We have a flagship project on disability at the club through the development of wheelchair handball. For more than 15 years, we have been raising awareness about disability in schools”.*

*“We are creating an association, a parallel association [ours] combined with our Academy that makes them practice multisport, different sports disciplines as part of their growth, their autonomy. Because autism is a disorder that they will carry with them for the rest of their lives, that cannot be cured, that can be improved but not cured definitively. And it has become to all intents and purposes a section of, like we have the Paralympic football team, it has become a section of [our organisation]”.*

Report on the collection of good practices regarding the knowledge and adoption of UN SDGs by sport organisations

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Jointly with the inclusion topic, notable is the initiative directed to women operated on breast cancer which through research demonstrate the importance of a sport activity as part of the post operation recovery.

*“With research and where through years we have come to support, obviously studies that is the movement of canoeing helps post-operative recovery, so we have formed a series of teams of crews, women operated on breast cancer and obviously even there we have fully supported the activity and equipment and this always thanks to this project referring to the fragile classes”.*

#### 4.2.2 Accessibility and sustainable management (UN SDGs 11 and 12)

##### In a nutshell:

This section focus is on sustainability efforts within sports organisations, particularly regarding managerial practices. The key areas of focus are the following:

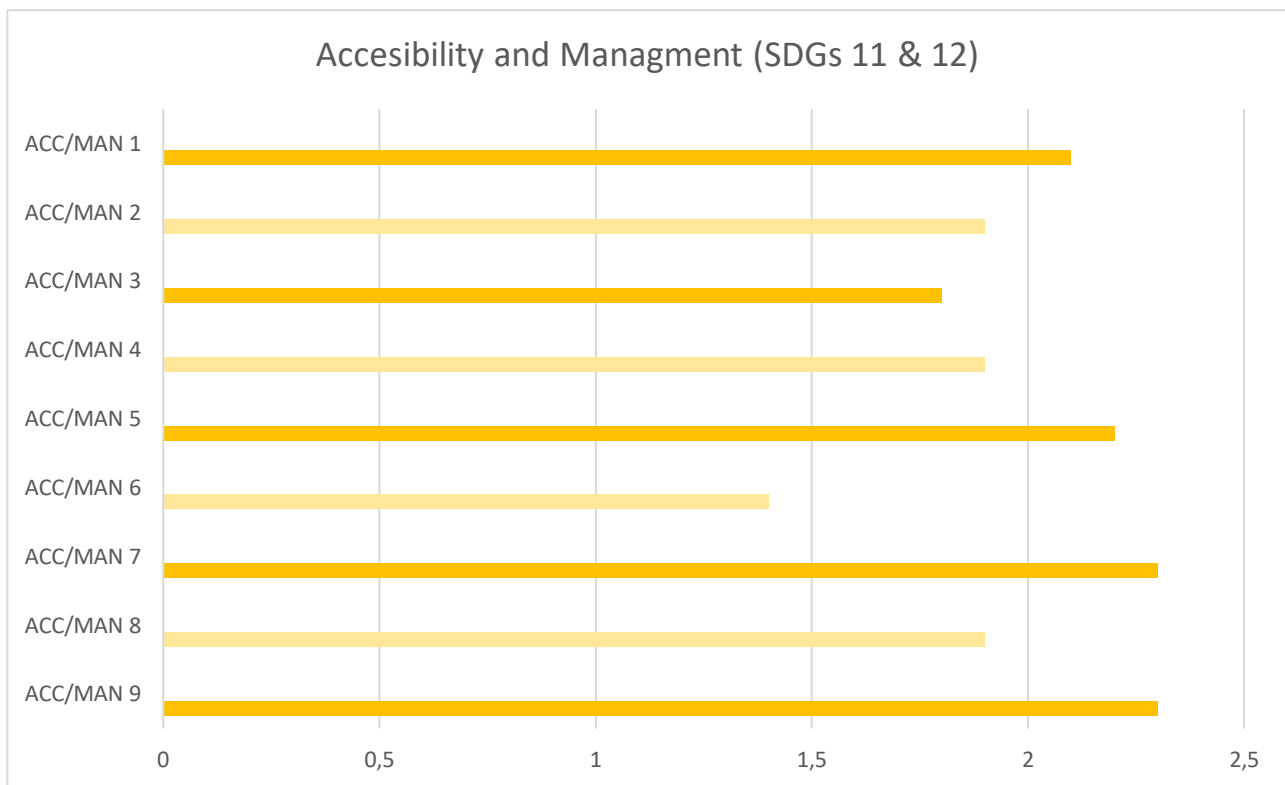
1. **Plastic Reduction:** many clubs have banned single-use plastic bottles and implemented initiatives to promote reusable alternatives.
2. **Sustainable Management:** clubs are adopting renewable energy sources, energy-efficient lighting, and other measures to reduce their environmental impact.
3. **Transportation:** efforts include minimizing air travel, promoting bus and train travel, and transitioning to electric vehicles.
4. **Waste Disposal and Recycling:** clubs are implementing recycling programmes, waste sorting facilities, and initiatives to reuse materials, such as recycling bottle caps and converting jerseys to recycled materials.
5. **Accessibility:** measures include improving access for people with disabilities, providing special seating and commentary, and promoting inclusion for vulnerable groups.
6. **Food Waste Reduction:** initiatives include redistributing leftover food to those in need and composting organic waste.
7. **Teleworking:** some clubs offer teleworking options for employees to reduce commuting and energy consumption.
8. **Event Sustainability:** efforts involve creating tools for assessing sustainability practices and implementing measures to reduce environmental impact during events.

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Table 9



Through the analysis of the data gathered in this section, it has been possible to collect the most important information regarding sustainability on a managerial level. Differently from the first one, in this case it is easy to identify notable differences among typology of institutions. Obviously, it is attributable to the substantial diversity in the assets and in dimensions of the sport organisations. Grass-root level clubs have clearly less resources than high-level ones or the institutions.

Firstly, it is not possible to ignore the great importance that every single organisation gave to the reduction of the use of not reusable plastic. Most of them strongly affirmed their position against plastic bottles.

*“It is forbidden, but it is literally forbidden for us to turn up with a plastic bottle in order to do this the club has made water bottles available and we have water dispensers and in places on the pitch, so this becomes difficult especially for team managers who have to fill up a lot of water bottles before a game even when they go away from home and it has made them very angry, but to turn up with this is really forbidden”.*

*“[We introduced] reusable plastic cups that can be purchased by fans and be reused during stadium visits to reduce the environmental impact and to raise awareness about waste. We try to encourage the fans to keep it clean and reduce waste”.*

*“We have tried, where possible, to eliminate more and more plastic inside the stadium, obviously bearing in mind that a stadium with sixteen people in it plus all the people who work in it; therefore, it obviously creates an impact at an environmental level because we would be hypocritical to say*

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*otherwise, but trying to make our fans as aware as possible and trying to how to say find solutions to reduce this impact is our duty”.*

A second aspect that need to be consider, is the sustainable management. Before bringing up some examples, it holds significance the aspect that very often sport clubs are not the owner of their venues, which generally are given to them for a short period of time (generally the contract is renewable roughly every 5 years) from the local municipality. The present situation it is a firm impairment towards substantial changes within the infrastructures. Anyways, small acts can be done like the substitution of lights:

*“We have adopted the replacement for LED of all the lighting of our sports complexes”.*

However, it has been feasible to document interesting and remarkably actions that sport organisation are implementing.

*“Already 100% of the club’s electricity comes from renewable sources through contacts with suppliers”.*

*“In terms of energy efficiency, we’ve installed air fresheners in the lounges to circulate the air and avoid having the air conditioning or heating on all the time. We have also installed photovoltaic panels in all the stadium car parks”.*

*“We have installed LED lighting, which is crucial for energy savings, and we have also renovated the synthetic [surface], following regulations. [...] We also collect rainwater [...] for irrigation on the fields”.*

*“The energy-saving plan proposed by the government and the federation aims to control heating and air-conditioning temperatures, reduce the amount of water used for flushing toilets, and be vigilant about shop-front lighting”.*

Some of the sports club that recently renovated their infrastructures, managed this transition with a special eye on the environmental sustainability respect.

*“The football pitch [...] has incorporated construction principles such as the use of renewable energy sources, energy efficient building materials, energy consumption lighting and led screens and reducing water consumption. The club has partnered with the Ministry of Culture to plant trees in and around its stadium. It has also installed rainwater harvesting systems to collect and reuse rainwater for irrigation and flushing toilets. [Other initiatives like:] water saving, cooling and heating efficiency measures, recycling and waste management [has been taken into account]”.*

*“The investment was to arrive at an exclusive electrical operation of all energy sources, they are renewable, they were and are affected especially in the kitchen, the restaurant, the lounge, where we replaced all of them. A major investment, replacing all energy-intensive machinery. The new ones are the latest generation of above class, class A+. Our chefs, who are of a high standard, have also been trained in the use and operation of this equipment, and this has simultaneously resulted in a 30% saving in energy consumption, which has even increased by a further 5%, using the automated and programmable processes that this equipment provide. With this equipment we have simultaneously, in addition to saving energy, optimised food preparation times by decreasing them by 2/3, improving organoleptic characteristics. In full compliance with HCCP regulations. At the same time this has also, and this is the most important note, we have also substantially reduced food waste. By now our food*

Report on the collection of good practices regarding the knowledge and adoption of UN SDGs by sport organisations

*waste is reduced to 3% thanks to the use of these tools and the techniques of cooking, cooling and even storage using natural food gas”.*

Notable is the introduction of a department fully devoted to the sustainability.

*“When the sustainability department was introduced in 2021, a key focus was also on creating a green office guide in order to inform employees about how to be sustainable within the office, for example to generate awareness and provide training course around equity and diversity. Moreover, all club stakeholders are being evaluated and documents such as a code of ethics are compulsory”.*

Third key topic has been the sustainability of transportation. Depending on the typology of sport and on the level of the clubs are playing, the impact of athletes transporting it can be different. Especially to those who are involved in international competition, or are located in particular geographical regions, it is often required to travel by plane. In addition, the rituality of the away trip it appears sometimes to overcome the willing to find a different solution. However, some step forwards have been made.

*“We try to avoid using the planes as much as possible and instead we encourage travel with bus and train. Comparing to the general average of European top clubs (55% plane, 25% bus, 20% train), we have significantly lower percentages for flying”.*

*“It's clear that most of our away trips are either by bus or by plane, especially when we're playing in European Cup matches where we travel by plane. However, whenever possible [...] we opt for train travel”.*

*“Now we are trying with this partner who provides us with the charter plane with which we have the agreement for the team's charter flights to offset what we consume environmentally with these air trips of ours, which are not many, because they are four trips per year, but still, we are not sending a good message by not offsetting it with an environmental project funded by this sponsor”.*

*“For training sessions, we've introduced minibuses so that the players don't all have to take their own cars, as we have two separate training sites. [...] We're aiming for 100% electric travel for our players within the city: to get to the gym, to go shopping, etc.)”.*

Interesting is the approach of minor clubs. While apparently the athletes' transportation for the competition games seems to be not noteworthy, some grass-root sport organisations are trying to do their best to reduce their impact on the planet.

*“For our away trips, we primarily use private transportation. We advocate for using the minimum number of vehicles necessary based on the number of people participating in the trip. Moreover, we incentivise this approach by only providing travel reimbursement for the minimum number of cars needed, thereby encouraging the use of only those vehicles. Anyone using additional vehicles knows they'll have to cover the cost themselves, thus incentivizing against unnecessary vehicle use. Essentially, we use economic incentives to promote minimal use of private transportation”.*

Additionally, to what has been previously mentioned, the issue of green transportation reach the supporters as well. Clubs implement different strategies to encourage a more sustainable way of moving.

*“We have a bicycle parking facility, completely free of charge, available to our fans. So, we've tried to encourage sustainable mobility by promoting the use of bicycles or electric scooters, especially since both the city and the climate allow it every day, in all seasons. Two years ago, and now we're trying*

Report on the collection of good practices regarding the knowledge and adoption of UN SDGs by sport organisations

*to renew it, we made an agreement with the public transportation company to encourage fans to use the tram as well”.*

*“What we are trying to do this year, especially for midweek matches, considering that for years we've clashed with the public administration, even though our stadium is located outside the city and has been poorly served or almost not served at all, is to organise, at our own expense, a shuttle service from the city centre for the convenience of people, especially university students, during the midweek Cup matches”.*

*“The club finances all the costs involved in providing frequent shuttle services: spectators book a public transport ticket at the ticket office, which costs €0.00. We also have a car-pooling incentive scheme, which allows us to offer between 20 and 30 free parking spaces on match days for people who car-pool, whereas it normally costs €15 per space. We sometimes offer free servicing of spectators' bikes during the match, in partnership with a social integration association”.*

Adopting an internal point of view, mobility is also an important issue for the club members.

*“We are gradually introducing the use of company vehicles that are electric powered for our transportation needs. While not all vehicles have made the transition yet, we are slowly replacing them until we reach our goal. This is part of our future projects”.*

*“The club takes action on travel: we offer a green mobility bonus to employees who cycle 200 days a year. You have to cycle a minimum distance to qualify for this bonus”.*

*“We have company vehicles used by staff, all of which are electric cars, naturally adorned with sponsor logos. So, our coaches travel with all the sponsor branding on the cars. Thanks to another sponsor, we've provided bicycles to all the Under-18 players and anyone else who wants them, especially since some of them come from out of town. [...] Thanks to a sponsor, which is also part of our sustainability efforts, everyone arrives on bicycles. We've created a place where they can park their bikes. The cars, as mentioned, are all electric”.*

However, it is always important to consider the role of the context. There are regions that unfortunately are not covered by a good service of public transport. On the contrary, other areas are more likely to be served by busses, tram, etc.

*“[Public transport] There's hardly any need for us to promote this ourselves, as the local municipality and public authorities are already very active in this regard. We have bike lanes everywhere now, and the players often come by bike or electric scooter. Those who are a bit further away use buses. So, private vehicle use is really minimized to what's necessary. We're fortunate that we're in this situation, from our perspective. We don't need to exert additional pressure on public authorities or other entities to increase the accessibility of more eco-friendly modes of transportation”.*

To conclude the mobility matter, it is appreciable the effort that sport organisation are willing to take. For the purpose of answering to their supporters needs, it is feasible to report an interesting example.

*“We're soon going to call in a business school to carry out a survey of supporters and car-pooling. Given the number of fans and the capacity of the venue, it could start to get interesting, but we need a starting point to find out how people currently come”.*

Report on the collection of good practices regarding the knowledge and adoption of UN SDGs by sport organisations

The fourth aspect of this section is the waste disposal, recycling and reuse approach. As first fundamental point, every club are trying their best to implement recycling in their facilities. Some among them are doing special effort within the waste management.

*“There is an eco-centre at the stadium that has the capacity to divide all the rubbish and machines to treat residue. After matchdays, the match residue and waste are treated immediately”.*

*“We have a sorting area in the basement of the stadium to separate waste streams at source. We also have compactors to reduce the frequency of waste collection. For organic waste (grass cuttings), we have a composting facility nearby, run by a service provider”.*

*“[The club] made a campaign before this season where the fans could recycle their bottle caps in three different bins to vote for the colour of this season’s third kit, with each bin representing a different colour. The club went to a company to then recycle these bottle caps and was then rewarded with a wheelchair that they could give away”.*

*“As a strong reminder of the importance of recycling, [our] jerseys have the colours of recycling bins and the design of the materials that should be placed in each of the containers - yellow/plastic, blue/paper, green/glass. In addition, the jerseys used in competition are made of 92% recycled materials”.*

*“During our school holiday courses, we get the children to weigh up their perishable and non-perishable waste. The funny thing is that we can see that habits are changing, because they’re the ones who bring their meals: they come with less useless packaging than the day before or the week before. The policy of reducing waste is important to us, particularly in the sporting arena: today our players play with aircasts, which are small inflatable splints that help to keep their feet in place and avoid the need for five straps, which is more sustainable”.*

*“We encourage families to donate sports equipment to us at the end of the season (e.g. a pair of cleats), for use by families in need. Alternatively, we are in contact with a specialised “ressourcerie” that reconverts or repairs sports equipment”.*

*“[In the future we want to reduce] the use of paper in bathrooms and restaurant/bar”.*

Related to these two latter examples, there is another relevant issue, i.e. the sustainability of the materials. In fact, there is a growing knowledge of the importance of use of renewable components in the sport equipment as an answer to the climate crisis.

*“We created a [...] recycled jersey. We used it for three consecutive championships, now we have a new one. This will become the second jersey. It represents many colours. There are these welcoming hands and it’s made from 16 recycled plastic bottles. We were really the first to do this with M”.*

*“The textile industry is knowingly one of the most pollutants (and professional football contributes greatly to this problem). In order to raise awareness to the ‘fast fashion’ problem, [we have] reused [ours] jerseys used in competition from last year to the current, by not presenting a new kit and incentivising our fans to reduce consumption”.*

*“We make sure we buy new equipment only if we don’t have a choice. In general, we manage to have only donated equipment, clothes and material. We also, as an organisation, refrain for traveling by plane when it is possible”.*

Report on the collection of good practices regarding the knowledge and adoption of UN SDGs by sport organisations

*“And then there is also an action of its own with the design of a canoe with partial recycled material from urban waste post-production”.*

The sixth relevant issue emerging from the research is the theme of the accessibility. Accessible facilities may assume several meanings. Nevertheless, the first one that immediately sparks is the structural barriers that people with disabilities can find.

*“There is currently the plan to try and also adapt the access from the subway to the stadium as it is a long and steep staircase, meaning it is difficult to use for wheelchair users. For indoor matches, previously wheelchair users had to stay on the ground floor, but now it is possible to get to the 1st floor where they can have a much better viewing experience”.*

*“We've established a human connection not only with our own fans with disabilities, whom we now know one by one, but also with the visiting supporters, whom we try to ensure maximum accessibility for at all times. [...] On Autism Awareness Day [...] we provided the experience of the stadium, not in a dedicated section, but among the other fans, in a high-profile match [...] with 15,000 spectators. [...] We brought 38 of them onto the pitch, and with their challenges, it wasn't easy; it was a unique challenge that went well. We were all very afraid, but it went well, and it was a unique experience. We brought them onto the pitch with all the reactions they could have alongside the players, involving them in the ceremonial entrance of the teams onto the pitch, amidst the chaos of a stadium, and also inviting fans from both sides to lower their voices as the teams entered the field. [...] This was the beginning of a journey we're undertaking with them. It's not just a project; it's a path we're on with them that's leading to their inclusion, both through engaging in sports activities. But not just football; in fact, football isn't perfectly suited for them, but rather in multisport activities. We've created several, partly funded through charity activities and partly created by us. From April until now, we've been continuing with these autistic children in various situations, both inside the stadium and beyond, including another initiative involving multisport activities”.*

*“We have set up a ticket office and dedicated contacts for people with disabilities. We also have special seats in the stadium for people in wheelchairs, people who can't walk, the blind and partially sighted. There are also dedicated commentators in the stadium to provide audio description for blind and partially sighted spectators”.*

Still, inclusion is also related to other vulnerable classes. It is a specific sensibility of the sport organisation to promote this other kind of inclusion.

*“For the foundation and the social projects and partners specifically, there are some slots at the facilities reserved for those that cannot afford it (the club does not charge for social organisation), which shows that the club is more deeply engaging with social responsibility”.*

Associated with the theme of accessibility, another chapter can be opened concerning the accessibility to open green spaces. It is quite clear that it is not a direct purpose of a sport organisation provide to this kind of access, anyway, the impact that it may have on the community cannot be ignored.

*“What we do is a project accessible to all neighbourhoods of the city, all schools in the city, primarily targeting middle schools. It's called the "neighbourhoods Cup," where we promote non-competitive sports, focusing on sports activity. It's an extremely inclusive project that has truly opened up to everyone. This year, we had 700 participants where students from schools compete for their*

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*neighbourhoods, for their school, in 5 disciplines: badminton, volleyball, relay races, basketball, and football. Then, there's the final event at the stadium; so, we open the stadium to everyone. However, we're talking about dedicated projects here; in daily life, the stadium or sports centre isn't open to everyone, except those involved in the field. By involved, we mean staff, employees, and athletes. [...] We're talking about practically all middle schools in the city of C, including the surrounding areas. [...] The beautiful thing about the "neighbourhood Cup" project is that by involving all schools from all neighbourhood's, even the most peripheral ones in the city, we truly include everyone, especially in neighbourhoods where there may be multicultural classes. This gives them the opportunity to engage in sports together and compete for their class. And then it's wonderful to come together for the final event at the stadium, which is open to all these young kids".*

*"Engagement activities: this project is implemented in partnership with local Municipalities and supported by the private sector through CSR initiatives. A key design element of the parks is the co-creation of spaces that can be part of the daily life of residents. The parks are accessible to all and act as spaces for educational, collective community activities addressing climate change issues. In 2022 we created 5 new pocket parks in 5 municipalities".*

*"One idea we're considering is just outside the gym, there's a green area with a small football pitch and another facility. We've been persistently discussing with the municipality for some time now because we would like to greenify it, in the sense of making it greener than it currently is and use the facility to further engage more people in basketball activities. So, a part of it would be green space, and another part - let's call it marketing for lack of a better term, but it conveys the idea - would be an improved structure that incorporates a nice green area".*

*"Our stadium remains open during the day. It's for local children if they want to play in green spaces, and at the same time they know that there's a rugby club there. It's clearly self-interested".*

The seventh aspect analysed is the huge problematic regarding food waste that concern sport organisation as well as the rest of the world. The way they try to avoid it is a clear desire to give a contribution not only for the preservation of the planet, but also for the local community benefit.

*"Until two years ago, we ourselves relied on an organisation [...] which essentially collected leftover food from our events and hospitality during matches and then redistributed it to those in need. However, starting from last year, it's the same catering association we use that automatically promotes this initiative. It's no longer directly managed by us, but I would emphasise that we intentionally chose to partner with them to ensure that this practice continues".*

*"The meal is prepared by our volunteers and not much goes to waste. It goes back into the club's fridges and there's always someone to grab it. When we use service providers, we reduce the amount we order so we don't have any leftovers".*

*"For the last 7 years, we've been redistributing food left over from matches to the departmental food bank. They come and collect the sandwiches and unsold food from the previous day on the day after the match. It's redistributed the same day to social welfare organisations".*

*"At the club's restaurant, all our food waste is collected by a specialist company, which processes it, recycles it and turns it into fertiliser. The fertiliser is then used to supply local producers".*

Report on the collection of good practices regarding the knowledge and adoption of UN SDGs by sport organisations

One of the less treated topics has been the teleworking. Due to the nature of the sport activity, this kind of practice it seems to be far from the possibility to be seriously considered. However, some clubs (only those with an organised structure in departments, etc.) are giving this option to their employees.

*“The company has given the possibility [...] to all employees contracted by P, the freedom without any obligation to contract, to make a private contract with the company for at least two days of telework, of teleworking, which is an initiative to which they have adhered, now I do not have the right percentage, but I think that 70% of employees are talking about two days a week, but it is already a first step”.*

*“In the offices, B also employs a policy of allowing two voluntary days (teleworking) – while Monday and Friday are compulsory attendance in the office, employees can select 2 of the other days for working from home. However, the office is always open, meaning that there may not necessarily be any impact on electricity, air conditioning, heating, etc”.*

Lastly it has been quite a few treated the thematic of events sustainability. Probably, for the clubs this is related directly to their way of managing their organisation. Yet is remarkably the effort of an ongoing European project centred on the creation of a sustainability tool.

*“We have already created a tool that will go well beyond the guidelines because guidelines are something you read. You might say they tell you to do it this way, but the project, which will conclude in 2025, the ultimate final goal is to provide an assessment tool of how good or not good you are; so, it's a kind of seal, but what's it for? Today I was talking with the canoe club in I; for example, they have a very strong interlocutor with the municipal administrations. Therefore, they need this quality seal, which is not an ISO seal. However, it's a policy that looks in that direction, so it's a sort of certification or testimonial. Yes, more than certification. [...] A kind of scoring grid that tells us how responsible we are. [...] How good are we? We are very good at waste management, but we are not very good at transportation management. Then, it's logical that it's up to the individual behind it to decide whether to act or not. But I believe that from small clubs to federations, those who will be able to adapt to the demands coming from the world will prevail. [...] The European project's governance matter: [...] to provide federations with the tools, even at the governance level, to make themselves as sustainable as possible”.*

### 4.2.3 Water and earth (UN SDGs 14 and 15)

**In a nutshell:**

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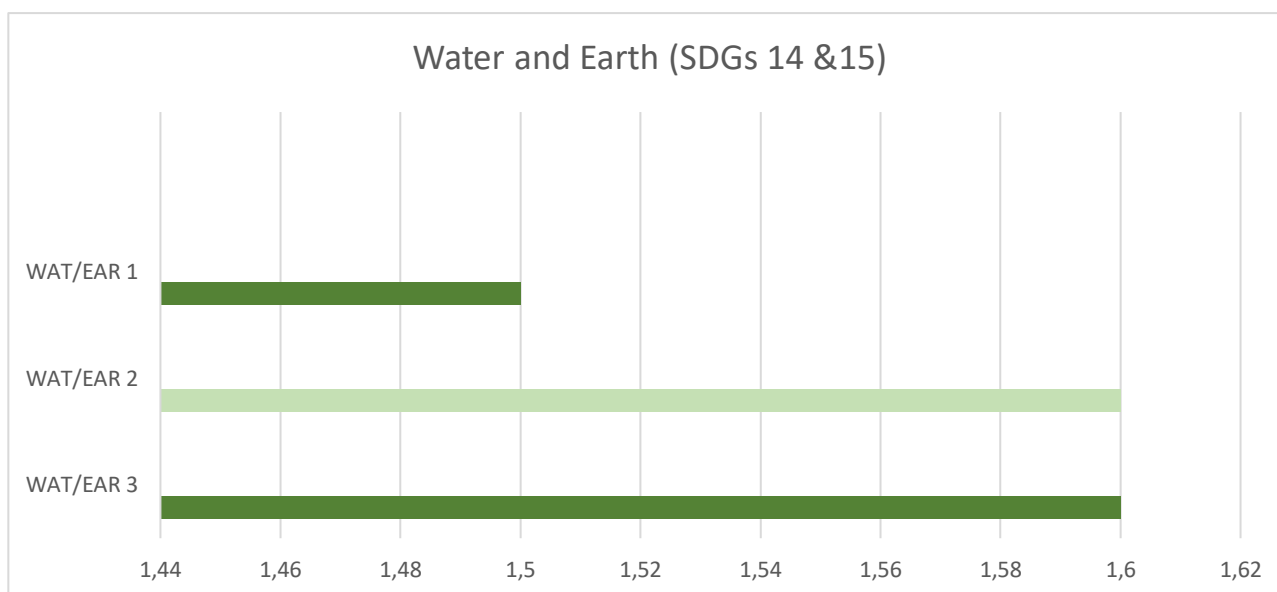


The present segment delves into the efforts of sports organisations in addressing environmental issues such as marine pollution, deforestation, and desertification. While awareness and action in these areas may be limited, several noteworthy initiatives have been undertaken:

1. **Reforestation Initiatives:** Sports organisations have engaged in tree-planting initiatives to offset carbon emissions and promote reforestation.
2. **Educational Actions:** Some organisations emphasize the educational aspect of their environmental initiatives. They engage with local schools, involving students in reforestation efforts, and promoting awareness about environmental protection.
3. **Partnerships with Environmental Associations:** Sports organisations collaborate with environmental associations to promote ecological actions.
4. **Biodiversity Protection:** Sports organisations contribute to biodiversity protection through educational materials like biodiversity guides and participation in EU projects aimed at conserving terrestrial ecosystems and freshwater areas.

Overall, while sports organisations may face limitations in addressing environmental challenges, their efforts in areas such as reforestation, pollution prevention, and biodiversity protection demonstrate a commitment to environmental sustainability and community engagement.

Table 10



In relation to the session on the prevention of marine pollution and the desire to address deforestation and desertification issues, the awareness of what a sports organisation can do is limited. However, some initiatives are noteworthy. Particularly notable are the actions aimed at promoting reforestation through the planting of new trees, both in local areas and in forests around the world.

*“We won the marketing award for an initiative where, through a series of fundraisers, we went on to plant trees that had been destroyed by the Vaia storm a few years ago”.*

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*“For every child born within the club, we plant a tree dedicated to the child. Each tree bears the child's name, and this is an idea that doesn't cost much. If it's feasible, it's very beautiful and also very educational because each tree has a tag with the child's name on it”.*

*“We entered into a partnership with the A company for the professional team: for every point scored by the team, a tree was planted, giving a total of almost 600 trees over the past season”.*

According to some of them, this kind of practice is fundamental not only for helping the planet but also for maintaining credibility in society, given their declared commitment to environmental sustainability.

*“We had this insight to offset CO2 emissions with trees; therefore, we bought trees from T and created the Federation's Forest. It's an action of coherence. There's an underlying theme of coherence that cannot be overlooked in such a context. Because when you expose yourself to these trendy topics, they're all very nice, but you become very vulnerable [...] because it's a truly new topic and there's still a lot of ignorance, so people might say, "Yeah, whatever, it's all just talk." So, you have to keep going confidently in what you're doing; to those who say, "Yes, it's all nonsense, what good does it do?" Well, regardless, I've offset my 7 tons of CO2, what have you done? Nothing. And so, there's also this aspect to consider, that there's a big chunk pushing back. But just because of their stance, or perhaps due to politics. We're very proud of our trees [...] that we've planted instead of trophies. [...] The Federation's Forest is in Kenya; we have some bananas. In short, we have a few avocados”.*

It is worth mentioning an interesting point of view that underscores once more the educational aspect of sports organisations.

*“For deforestation, there is a huge focus on introducing nature, such as planting trees and green spaces, to the campus. Moreover, a yearly initiative is to plant 10 000 trees a year. However, there is no focus on green roofs or about biodiversity, but there is a reforestation (“Reflorestacao”) kit. This is a pedagogical resource used around the initiative with the planting of trees. Specifically, it engages local schools at the centre of the country (the most affected area from wildfires). Moreover, there exists a partnership with a small agency around sustainability and environmental protection as they are the experts – essentially, [we] have the expertise for inclusion through sport, but the partners are the experts for the environment. The kit is used to interact with the children as it includes seeds, earth, and all other necessary items to plant trees. [We are] proud of the initiative [...] [as it is our] way of trying to prevent [wildfire] in the future. Moreover, this initiative allows the local communities to really get together as it involves schools, firefighters, scouts, municipalities, and many other local groups that join to plant trees in an organised way and it is an honour for the club to have representatives present at this initiative. [...] The initiative to plant trees, [...] not only helps the environment, but also leads to community cohesion as everyone is collaborating with one another for the success of this as it impacts everyone”.*

The second aspect related to this topic, which has been addressed by most of the participants, is the ecological actions that sports organisations promote, typically in partnership with environmental associations. As mentioned earlier, sports entities often lack expertise in this area, thus requiring collaboration with others. However, they possess valuable relational capabilities, providing an opportunity to reach a wide audience. Apart from athletes and their families, they can also engage the local community, supporters, etc.).

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*“Through the agreement with L, we aim to prevent and significantly reduce pollution through environmental stewardship. In specific instances, for example, we have organised environmental cleanup days, mostly on the beach”.*

*“We have a dedicated action programme aimed at raising young people's awareness of the need to protect the Mediterranean. Every month, we'll be doing beach clean-ups, awareness-raising workshops and finding”.*

*“In April they are planning to do an initiative where they take the clubs players to different beaches on the island to clean the beaches”.*

*“Develop with the sports community, awareness actions with field trips, eco-trekking, plogging, in places of proximity that integrate forests, wetlands, mountains”.*

*“Develop more actions with the sports community, related to the circular economy and waste management and also include actions to raise awareness and collect marine litter on cliffs and beaches and along rivers (and other water lines”.*

In addition to these sporadic initiatives, some sports organisations are promoters of long-term projects and initiatives aimed at prevention and mitigation of pollution, especially in water bodies.

*“We're working on the issue of marine pollution over the long term and by raising awareness. It's our hobbyhorse, with the club investing heavily in this area. We support operations to clean up pollution on beaches and in ports, including underwater clean-up”.*

*“All our green spaces are managed using zero phytosanitary products”.*

*“We'd like to set up magnet fishing in the Seine to raise awareness among young people in a fun way”.*

*“We work a lot on water pollution. Regarding soil pollution, through our projects, we are promoting positive attitudes towards this issue, especially in organizing competitions. Water is crucial for us because without water, we cannot practice our sport. Therefore, water management is of utmost importance to us. We have groups that go out canoeing on Saturday or Sunday mornings to collect plastic, clean rivers, lakes, and coasts. This movement started before Covid but intensified during the post-Covid period because we were a green sport, and when we couldn't play in the stadiums, we could go canoeing. We experienced a peak in sporting activities, which led to various good practices concerning environmental cleanliness of water bodies. We have pre-scheduled days when we go out with nets to collect plastic from the water. [Apart from that] I am part of a WhatsApp group called "Sentinels" – they are called "Sea Sentinels in Kayaks." It's a group of amateurs who report issues to the Coast Guard. They are operational at sea, and although it's not an official project of the Federation, it's somehow related. The Italian Federation also grants recognition as environmental sentinels for marine and lacustrine waters”.*

When discussing water pollution, it is advisable to address water waste and promote responsible water consumption. Nevertheless, some clubs are implementing simple yet highly effective actions.

*“Changing faucets to faucets with reducers and flow control lowered drastically the water consumption”.*

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*“For watering the pitches, bathing and washing a water hole was made ensuring the minimization of the use of drinking water”.*

*“In the showers we put faucets with timer”.*

*“We are currently working with our environmental partner to ensure that the lawns are watered with water that is as unobtrusive as possible (i.e. not drinking water)”.*

Lastly, participants have shown how sports organisations are involved in the protection of biodiversity on various levels. Some are more instructional, while others are more practical.

*“[We created and published] a biodiversity guide. This is a booklet that has a lot of information around different species, and it is scientifically based. It is already published and available in Catalan and Spanish”.*

*“It will start in February [a EU project with the purpose of ensuring the conservation of biodiversity in terrestrial ecosystems and inland freshwater areas such as forests, wetlands, mountains, and arid zones]. [...] The European project will include these training sessions, some of which we have already conducted this summer with ads on sports fields and health. So, I mean, things don't change unless you make them change, so to speak. It's not like one day someone wakes up and says, "Now I will save the world”.*

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#### 4.2.4 Peace and development (UN SDGs 16 and 17)

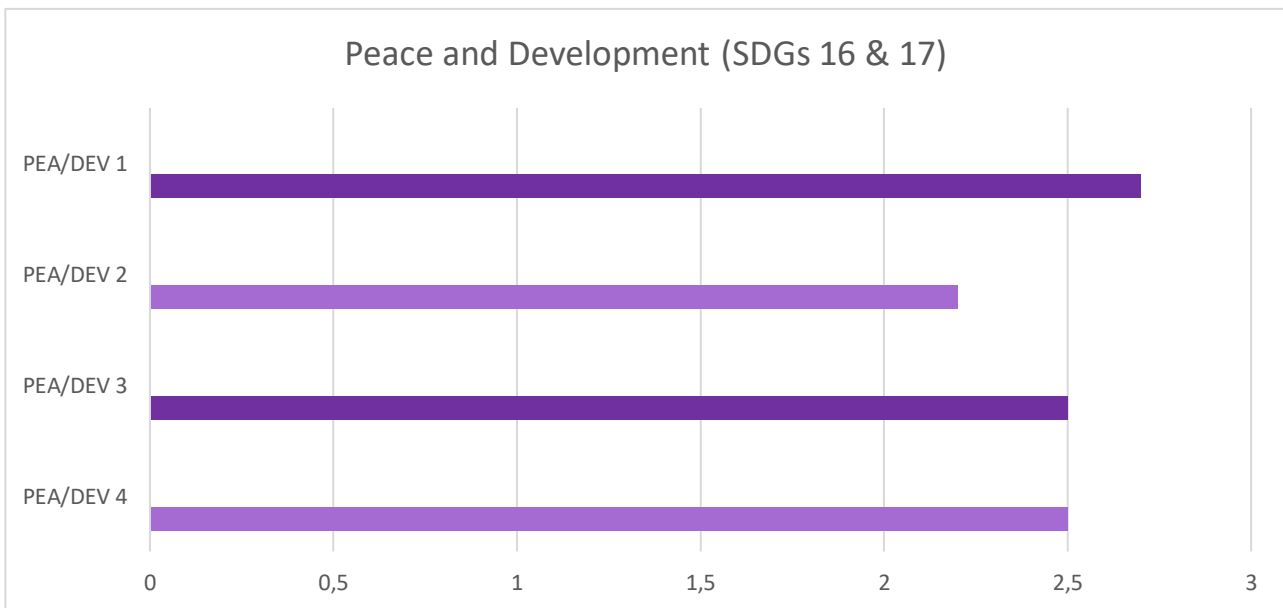
**In a nutshell:**

The section discusses the significant attention given to **combating corruption, violence, bribery, and promoting peace and development**, particularly at the institutional level on national and international fronts.

It highlights various initiatives undertaken by sports clubs and institutions to promote **non-violence**, including **educational programmes** in schools, workshops on internet safety, and campaigns against bullying and discrimination. Additionally, efforts to **address gender-based violence** and **support vulnerable women** are emphasized. Measures such as implementing **codes of conduct** and promoting inclusivity through awareness activities are also mentioned. Furthermore, workshops on the importance of **promoting peace** through community-led conflict resolution have been conducted.

Overall, these initiatives demonstrate a commitment to promoting non-violence, respect, and inclusivity within sports organisations and their communities, aligning with the broader goals of peace and development outlined in the SDGs.

Table 11



The present section was, on average, the one with the highest values. Indeed, the theme of this group of SDGs is strongly addressed at the institutional level on both national and international fronts. Over the past years, national, European, and international policies have increasingly focused on combating corruption, violence, bribery, abuses, etc. Today, transparency, especially for major clubs or institutions, is imperative, as is the promotion of peace and development.

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Specifically, concerning non-violence sensitization/education, there are several noteworthy examples.

*“[We have a project] in primary schools where we go to teach proper cheering and respect for others. And then those classes are stimulated and they are invited to the matches, they are stimulated to make banners, last year I had to smile because during the matches these classes of primary schools children were more involved in cheering than the organised fans themselves it was a bit paradoxical, but it was nice, so I think this is the first step because you start with 6, 7 year olds”.*

*“Last year, we carried out a project in collaboration with T within the sports hall involving 100 young athletes from our youth sector. The project focused on educating young people aged 12 to 14 who were accessing social media platforms for the first time, moving beyond just WhatsApp. Within this framework, we implemented a project called "Do You Know?" where we explored the dangers of the internet, particularly web-based violence, with the help of a psychologist and a lawyer. This initiative was aimed at the youngsters rather than their parents. We strongly advocated for this project within our sports facility and tailored it to address behaviours related to sports activities, such as taking photos in the locker rooms or shower areas. These activities had a clear sports-related context but also had broader implications”.*

*“All the players are going to take an awareness-raising workshop on discrimination set up by the federation. The coaches are very open to this: they're the first to ask for it”.*

*“We will shortly be rolling out workshops to combat bullying at our training centre. We're getting data from the field and we're finding that there are young people in certain age groups who can be either harassers or harassed”.*

In response to violence, some clubs address gender-based violence through collaborations with experts in the field.

*“On the topic of violence against women, we are directly affiliated with an association in P [...] which addresses this issue. Particularly with us, they always want to promote the idea of the rugby player, often seen as a masculine figure, who actually has a kind and gentle soul towards women. So, the theme we tackle and develop with them revolves around this. [...] In general, the association addresses all types of violence, not just physical but also verbal or through social media, which is now somewhat taken for granted but is perhaps the most prevalent form of violence. Often, people who may not physically attack you may do so through social media or other means; therefore, they directly address all these issues through their work”.*

*“We have a major project on vulnerable women: we approach establishments where women who have suffered violence are housed and we help to reintegrate them”.*

*“Together with the club psychologist and other associations, we provide training on human rights. We also took a stand during LGBTQ+ rights month, customising jerseys and conducting awareness activities not only with our athletes but also with our fans. [...] Our promotion activities with the LGBTQ+ community, as mentioned earlier, may have possibly influenced the decision of the only athlete who came out, making them feel comfortable choosing [our club] as it is an inclusive club in every aspect”.*

To truly establish a non-violent environment where everyone can participate in the organisation, some implement internal regulations that support all members.

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*“Code of Conduct, Whistleblowing: policy, and Rules of the Gym (currently being updated) are also actions taken by [us] to promote anti-discrimination, diversity and inclusivity. In addition to this, all employees, volunteers and interns are offered a variety of external training, including The Prevention and Response to Workplace Harassment and Discrimination”.*

To prevent violence, it is essential to promote peace as well. One project stands out for its successful approach to the issue.

*“Community Led Conflict Resolution Workshops: [we] facilitates workshops on conflict resolution and peacebuilding within communities. By promoting dialogue and understanding, the organisation contributes to the creation of peaceful and inclusive societies”.*

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## 5. Good Practices

One of the objectives of this study was to collect 20 good practices regarding sustainable behaviours of sports organisations. As indicated in Table 4, it has been possible to identify a total of 305 examples of positive and sustainable behaviours adopted by sports bodies. The selection among all of these has been made based on the most significant ones as good practices that can be implemented by other organisations. The aim of this initiative is to provide concrete suggestions to sports entities, aiding them in transitioning towards a more sustainable management of their organisations.

Table 12

### Education (UN SDGs 4 & 13)



Key word	Activity	Verbatim
<b>Environmental Education</b>	Thanks to the collaboration with an Ambiental association, the club promote environmental education activities for the youth sector.	<i>We have an agreement with XXX [Ambiental association] and every year we try to make all the boys in the youth sector environmentally aware and trained. So, we organise environmental education and environmental clean-up days with XXX, so materially we also take the boys to do waste collection at certain sites in the city and in parallel there is all the training by XXX volunteers.</i>
<b>Agricultural education</b>	Within the club's facilities, there is a vegetable garden tended to by members of the sports club.	<i>[Our garden] is 800 square metres of vegetable garden that is cultivated by volunteers and pensioners, players. It's a vegetable garden with the ultimate goal is to be used in the clubhouse; so, everything we grow is taken to the clubhouse. But of course, you might see athletes in need, especially in the summer, when there are lots of courgettes and whatnot, they ask our cook: "listen, if I go and steal you two courgettes, is there any problem?" [This is a] zero-kilometre education.</i>
<b>Inclusion disabled</b>	The Mix Ability Rugby team promotes social inclusion for people with learning disabilities.	<i>[We have] boys who play integrated rugby with various disabilities. We have a psychologist who welcomes them, there is a dedicated team, psychologist on the field every day we have two coaches because what we are trying to do with other national clubs, and we hope to succeed this year, is to create a calendar as if it were a championship. Every month we get together, we are about 8 bar 10 integrated rugby clubs, and we try to get our boys to play matches with facilitators on the field. [...] Slowly we are introducing them to all the teams. [...] The</i>

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		<i>intention is to expand in the area, to make ourselves known because families with disabilities are really isolated. So, the project was born for young people from 18 years of age upwards. [...] What we want to do is to expand as much as possible with two coaches just to take care of them.</i>
<b>Inclusion – Interculture</b>	A successful project aimed at promoting the social inclusion of asylum seekers has been expanded over the years to include other vulnerable populations.	<i>We used to coach a team of asylum seekers who then, let's say with the cooperation of the FIP regional committee and the other clubs, we played games that unfortunately could not be official because the boys could not be registered because they did not have a residence permit. But we were playing against the various other local teams in the amateur leagues. From there, eh, seeing that it was something we liked a lot, we started to expand this training group, so much so that today this project continues to go on and in the training group there are asylum seekers, there are boys with disabilities, with various disabilities, let's say, there are boys who are in a rehabilitation centre for various addictions and there are volunteers, that is, volunteers who work with associations. So, there's this group of people who train once a week, there's a couple of our coaches who go, and they make them do some basketball and I think that's something that goes, that educates in a very direct way, let's say from this point of view.</i>
<b>Inclusion – Vulnerable classes</b>	Federal funding helps promote sports participation in the most vulnerable classes.	<i>[We want to provide] vouchers and contributions, but also equipment, support for clubs to be able to allow more than 3,000 members to do activities free of charge for six months. So, we gave a contribution both in equipment and obviously economically to support the coaches and clubs to carry out these projects because remember, we are all non-profits anyway. [...] [Aimed] so [at] people with low income, children have obesity issues and a whole range of disabilities.</i>

### Accessibility and Management (UN SDGs 11 & 12)



Key word	Activity	Verbatim
<b>Water bottles/Plastic free</b>	An example of reducing the use of plastic during a sports tournament is through	<i>Last May I personally organised a tournament, [...] So we invited [clubs] from all over Italy. [...] I asked myself, now how do I get them water? Because he's</i>

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	collaboration with an external organisation.	<i>going to need it for the whole day and I can't and I absolutely don't want to go and get kilos and kilos, mountains of water bottles to supply all day, so I thought of contacting XXX [Italian water company]. [...] They have a very large water dispenser, it's a kind of cylinder to make you understand, with several taps around it, I think it's about 20 taps to be connected to the waterworks, then to the field, so I also organised this thing to totally cut down on the use of plastic on that day because there were 20 teams coming to play, so we were talking about more than 300 members, just the members, plus the people who would then maybe come.</i>
<b>Facilities</b>	Having sustainable facilities, it is linked to use of the energy as well. Where it is not possible to make sensible change into the facility structure, use of resources is a key.	<i>We always strive, in agreement with gym management, to maintain a temperature level that is not excessive because that would mean wastage and pollution. We have a dialogue in this regard, so we try to find compromises that work well for the athletes, ensuring they don't harm themselves. We can't have a temperature that is too low, for example, but on the other hand, we can't expect excessive conditions either, as that would obviously have environmental implications.</i>
<b>Sustainable management</b>	Implementation of sustainable and innovative systems in the management of a sports organisation.	<i>We are implementing [...] two innovative systems: one for ionising water, and other to wash clothes with ECOS laundry systems without detergents and using oxygen and ozone. And, of course, implementing recycling systems in all our facilities.</i>
<b>Sustainable mobility</b>	Collaboration with mobility agencies, both public and private, to ensure sustainable transportation options accessible to supporters and athletes.	<i>We have established agreements with XXX, which manages public transportation here. [...] In addition [...] we also have arrangements with XXX, another mobility agency, for car-sharing and bike-sharing services. This is not only for our fans but especially for our athletes. Since we are an international organisation, many of our athletes come from abroad. Instead of providing them with cars, we arrange accommodation near the stadium and offer them the option to commute using scooters, bikes, or these methods.</i>
<b>Event Sustainability</b>	A European project, promoted by several federations, with the purpose of producing support to realise sustainable sports events and sports organisations.	<i>Creation [...] of the sustainability tool. And this will have a significant impact, probably not only on [our specific sport world], because it's a tool that can then be transferred to other topics as well.</i>

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<b>Accessibility - green and open spaces</b>	Good example of sport promotion by using open urban spaces in collaboration with other sport clubs.	<p><i>During the summer months, when our regular activities are typically on hold, we have a small field outside where, in rotation, one of our coaches is available to play, teach, and engage with anyone who comes to the field. We provide balls and make it an activity that's open to all, and we promote it on our social media platforms. Those who want to come, come; there's no obligation, and it's all completely free because we don't charge anything for this type of activity. Additionally, starting this year, we initiated a joint venture with two other clubs in our city where, in three different gyms, we allocate a portion of time during the week – around two hours each – for each club. During this time, there's one of our instructors along with an instructor from the other clubs, essentially turning it into a similar setup as the small field. Anyone who wants to come, especially kids aged 11 to 13, can participate in activities. We call it a "basketball spot," a place for kids who enjoy basketball but might not feel ready to join a team yet or are apprehensive about facing the challenges that come with it. Here, they can gain confidence and eventually, if they want, they can join our regular teams. This initiative is important because it provides opportunities for families with financial constraints. Joining one of our regular teams can be costly due to annual membership fees. Some families can't afford it, so providing these spaces allows their children to engage in activities because they are free of charge. From a social standpoint, it's something significant. Therefore, I would say it's a positive endeavour, and we hope to expand it further. Currently, we've only utilised what we have, but we hope to develop something broader in the future.</i></p>
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### Water and Earth (UN SDGs 14 & 15)



Key word	Activity	Verbatim
<b>Reforestation/Planting</b>	One example, among several of reforestation initiatives with benefit	<p><i>We have several ongoing projects with some public-private initiatives initiated two years ago by some prominent entrepreneurs in XXX. As a club and as the club's ownership group, we are</i></p>

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	towards the local community.	<i>engaging in these projects, such as the "Green Kilometre in XXX" project. [...] For example, I can mention some rather trivial ideas, but if we score 50 goals in the league, we'll plant 50 trees in a specific location in the province or city of XXX. YYY has done something similar, but we are structuring our project differently; we would like to give it our own distinctive imprint.</i>
<b>Ecological action</b>	A simple project involving the cleaning of green spaces, in collaboration with other local sports clubs and the municipality.	<i>The Green Project. We joined with other sports clubs to clean up the surrounding parks. The idea was ours, entirely ours, and the municipality supported us. We came up with criteria even to dedicate time. I'll mention it briefly, just for the record: each basketball team participating in the championships donated 10 minutes of effort for every free throw they scored during the season. So, adding up, each team contributed their time to clean up the city parks.</i>
<b>Water and land pollution</b>	Combating marine pollution through the use of non-polluting chemical products.	<i>We Stopped using chlorine in the swimming pool.</i>
<b>Biodiversity</b>	Taking care biodiversity by supporting beekeepers of crucial areas.	<i>Regarding biodiversity, what we did two years ago was to raise funds for the purchase of beehives, which are essential for biodiversity. Specifically, we aimed to support beekeepers in a particularly affected area in XXX, which had been hit by wildfires. Through the provision of beehives, we sought to support the farmers in a severely affected and disadvantaged area. Additionally, we aimed to incentivise and support bees, which are crucial for biodiversity and the ecosystem as a whole.</i>

## Peace and Development (UN SDGs 16 & 17)



Key word	Activity	Verbatim
<b>Anti-violence awareness</b>	Creation of a mediation unit to combat all forms of violences.	<i>We co-finance the prevention, listening and mediation unit of a partner club. They have set up a social and psychological support system to combat</i>

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		<i>all forms of violence in the XXX district, particularly among their members.</i>
<b>Match fixing</b>	European project finalised to raising awareness about match fixing	<i>[We are] partner in a project co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the EU, created with the aim of building innovative tools for the exchange of information and awareness raising against match-fixing in sport.</i>
<b>Transparency/Ethics</b>	Open access document which is connected to the UN SDGs of the 2030 Agenda.	<i>We have this document called .... So, from here, we connected to our agenda, starting with our values, which are respect, family, humility, fun, trust, honesty, and we connected it to the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. So, we started following everything that was required. [...] To comply with the sports reform, given the many contracts we have with players and coaches, we had to hire a lawyer as a consultant who has always worked in sports to get through it, but above all, with a lot of patience, they are educating all the people because they are trying to make it clear that no one is losing, that the organisation is protecting people, but with an effort that you can't even imagine.</i>
<b>Sustainability reporting</b>	A sustainability report is not yet mandatory for professional organisations. Nevertheless, some are already voluntarily producing them to showcase their actions and increase visibility.	<i>Impact assessment is crucial to understand the effectiveness of our actions. Otherwise, they become mere activities without purpose. The one from two years ago allowed us to be recognized, identifiable, and credible in the environment. We will do it again this year, especially because of the CSR directives at the European level (which have not yet been implemented by the Italian government) [...] moving towards the direction of obliging companies with a certain turnover and number of employees to make a sustainability report mandatory. So, I believe it will start from 2025, and from our side, we will most likely do it again this year to prepare and ensure we are ready for what will become a mandatory requirement for companies.</i>

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## 6. Empowering sports organisations towards a more sustainable future

The primary focus of this document was to conduct an analysis of the level of commitment demonstrated by sports organisations towards sustainability, particularly regarding environmental considerations. By delving into this topic, the aim was to not only identify the extent of current efforts but also to uncover exemplary practices that have already been implemented. Through this examination, the overarching goal was to shed light on patterns and strategies that could serve as valuable models for other sports organisations looking to enhance their sustainability initiatives.

Furthermore, in an effort to provide comprehensive assistance to future readers and stakeholders in the sports industry, this study has gone beyond mere observation and identification. It has endeavoured to distil the findings into a set of indicators that can serve as guiding principles for evaluating and managing sustainability efforts within sports organisations, focusing on the environmental sustainability. These indicators are intended to serve as practical tools for assessing current performance, identifying areas for improvement, and ultimately steering organizations towards more sustainable practices. Thus, this document not only presents an analysis of the current landscape but also provides a roadmap for fostering ongoing progress and innovation in the realm of sustainability within the sports sector.

The identified indicators represent 5 major areas of intervention for sports organisations at any level. In order to validate the quality of implementation, each indicator has a specific evaluation scale from 0 to 2. Table 13 specifies the criteria they must meet.

The first indicator assesses the strategic approach, which aims to evaluate the practical actions implemented by sports entities. This indicator is further broken down into types of interventions linked to organisation management.

The second indicator pertains to the commitment towards the community and the organisation itself, with a long-term vision and continuity of interventions in various areas, as specified in the table below.

As clearly stated by several participants during the research phase, the effectiveness of sports entities in the impact of their actions is closely related to their ability to develop a multi-stakeholder approach. Therefore, the evaluation of this indicator is essential.

As a result, the capability of efficient communication is a key indicator that allows visibility of the engagement of sports organizations towards sustainable practices.

Lastly, to avoid a false image of greenwashing, the ability to report what has been done on the matter is a crucial point that enhances sports organisations' credibility.



Table 13

**INDICATORS AND SUB-LEVELS OF CLASSIFICATION**

<b>STRATEGIC APPROACH</b>		
<b>TYPES</b>		
Sustainable management		
Mobility		
Events		
Sports equipment		
Facilities		
Waste management (recycling/reuse)		
Internal and external sustainability policies		
Resource management (food, water)		
Reduction of carbon footprint		
0 - Absence of a dedicated department/area or personnel within the Company	1 - Presence of a department/area or personnel, but lack of a strategic approach	2 - Presence of a department/area or personnel with a clear strategy and definition of intervention areas

<b>CONTINUITY OF INTERVENTION</b>		
<b>TYPES</b>		
Educational programs (internal/external target)		
Environmental education		
Peace and non-violence education		
Inclusion		
Accessibility		
Community service		
Ecological initiatives		
Rehabilitation of polluted areas		
Biodiversity conservation		
Reforestation/planting		
0 - Absence of continuity sustainable user involvement in structured projects	1 - Ongoing initiatives but with short-lived user involvement sustainable user involvement in structured projects	2 - Ongoing initiatives with sustainable user involvement in structured projects

<b>MULTI-STAKEHOLDER APPROACH</b>		
<b>TYPES</b>		
Collaboration with supporters		
Fans		
Sponsors		
Local associations (competent in the sector)		
Public institutions		

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0 - Lack of differentiation in the involved users and partnerships developed	1 - Differentiation of the types of users involved, but single partnerships (private sector)	2 - Differentiation of the types of users involved and partnerships (e.g., private sector, third sector, schools, etc.)
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<b>ATTENTION TO COMMUNICATION</b>		
0 - Absence of communication on environmental sustainability initiatives	1 - Moderate communication strategies (dedicated website sections for projects, social media pages, updated news, etc.) but limited depth of content	2 - Good communication strategies (specific news and tags, website sections dedicated to commitment, social media pages, etc.) + clarity and depth of content

<b>REPORTING</b>		
<b>TYPES</b>		
Sustainability reports		
0 - Absence of reporting on activities and their impact	1 - Descriptive reporting of activities (e.g., number of participants, areas involved)	2 - Reporting of activities with specific attention to the impact of interventions

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## 7. Conclusion

The present work has been the result of the analysis of the data on the state of the art in the field, including existing policies, rules, strategies, measures, experiences, and initiatives aimed at promoting the knowledge, assumption, and adoption of the SDGs by sports organisations in the Mediterranean Region as a means to address the climate crisis at a local level and educate youth about environmental sustainability.

What becomes evident from this thorough analysis is the profound social and educational impact that sports entities wield within their communities and society at large. Their dedication to cultivating a more sustainable organizational framework not only serves as a beacon of inspiration but also sets a tangible example for the wider community to follow.

This work seeks to provide key elements necessary for the development of an educational package within the SportEYE project. This package is specifically designed to target sport managers, staff, and coaches, equipping them with the knowledge and tools needed to integrate sustainable practices into their organisations.

Despite the daunting challenges we face and the dire state of our world, there remains a glimmer of hope. While it may feel like "the world is on fire," we must cling to the belief that through collective action and unwavering commitment, we can still make a difference and work towards saving our planet.

Report on the collection of good practices regarding the knowledge and adoption of UN SDGs by sport organisations

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