



PlanetGoals

*Capacity Building Course
for Professionals*

PlanetGoals

MODULE 1: INTRODUCTION TO SUSTAINABILITY IN FOOTBALL-RELATED ENTITIES - PLANET GOALS

The PlanetGoals project is an ambitious initiative aimed at transforming the football sector across six European countries—Greece, Spain, the UK, the Netherlands, Croatia, and Italy—by integrating environmental and social sustainability into football related entities’ operations and governance. The project seeks to foster a holistic transformation that promotes climate neutrality, social inclusion, and healthy lifestyles within football-related entities. Through targeted capacity-building efforts, the initiative aims to equip professionals working within football organizations with the necessary tools, knowledge, and skills to implement sustainable practices that address both environmental and social challenges.

PURPOSE

At its core, PlanetGoals focuses on two main priorities identified by the Erasmus+ Programme: environmental sustainability and inclusion. The project aligns with the EU’s goal of achieving climate neutrality by 2050, as outlined in the European Green Deal, by encouraging football entities to adopt climate-friendly practices. This includes reducing carbon emissions, improving waste management, and promoting energy efficiency in stadiums, travels, and operations. By educating football professionals on these matters, the project aims to make the sector more sustainable and set an example for other industries to follow.

The football sector has a significant environmental footprint, with the organization of matches, stadium operations, and travels generating substantial carbon emissions. For instance, the European football industry produces approximately three million tons of carbon emissions annually, driven by factors such as player travels, stadium maintenance, and energy consumption. Despite this impact, few football-related entities report on their environmental performance, particularly at the grassroots level. This project seeks to fill that gap by offering tailored educational programs and best practices to help football

organizations reduce their carbon footprint and operate in a more environmentally conscious manner.

In addition to addressing environmental concerns, PlanetGoals places a strong emphasis on social sustainability. Football, as a global sport, serves as a platform for promoting inclusion and diversity. The project aims to make football entities more socially inclusive by encouraging the participation of individuals from all socioeconomic backgrounds, including vulnerable and marginalized groups such as people with disabilities, older adults, refugees, and ethnic minorities. By creating more equitable opportunities for participation in football and other physical activities, the project supports the EU's priorities regarding social inclusion, diversity, and health promotion.

To achieve its objectives, PlanetGoals will implement a range of activities designed to raise awareness and build capacity among professionals working within football-related entities. These activities include the creation of a comprehensive handbook of best practices, a capacity-building course, an e-learning hub, and a self-assessment tool. These tools will enable distance learning and provide professionals with the resources they need to integrate sustainability into their organizations' operations and governance. In addition to educational resources, the project will host community engagement events and organize climate-friendly football activities, helping to foster a more sustainable and socially inclusive football culture at the local, regional, and European levels.

STRENGTH POINTS

One of the project's strengths is its focus on collaboration and knowledge exchange between partners and stakeholders. By involving a diverse consortium of organizations—including grassroots sports clubs, NGOs, professional football clubs, and academic institutions—the project ensures that a wide range of expertise is brought to the table. This collaborative approach will not only enhance the quality and relevance of the project's outputs but also help to ensure that its impact is felt across the participating countries and beyond. Furthermore, the involvement of a variety of organizations ensures that the project's activities are inclusive and tailored to the needs of different communities.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The expected outcomes of PlanetGoals are significant, both in terms of the number of reached people and the depth of the transformation within the football sector. The project is set to directly benefit approximately 60,000 people, including football professionals, fans, and community members. It will also contribute to the creation of twenty-one best practices for sustainable football governance, the delivery of 10 training sessions with 100 participants, and the assessment of sustainability levels within 50 football-related entities. Additionally, the project will organize fifteen community engagement events, produce six educational videos on sustainability, and conduct an online awareness-raising campaign.

By the end of the project, it is anticipated that football-related entities across Europe will be better equipped to address the environmental and social challenges they face, contributing to the EU's broader goals of creating a climate-neutral, more inclusive, and healthier society. Through the promotion of sustainable practices in football, the project will not only help reduce the sector's environmental impact but also foster a culture of social responsibility and healthy living within the communities it serves.

PlanetGoals represents a forward-thinking approach to sustainability in sport, recognizing the potential of football to drive positive change both within and beyond the sport itself. Through its comprehensive and collaborative strategy, the project aims to create a more sustainable future for football entities and the communities they serve.

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability, at its core, refers to the ability to meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. It is a concept deeply intertwined with environmental, social, and economic factors, requiring a holistic approach to managing resources, operations, and impacts. For football-related entities—whether clubs, leagues, associations, or governing bodies—sustainability is not merely an abstract ideal; it is a practical, strategic imperative that can profoundly affect their long-term success, reputation, and operational efficiency.

In a football context, sustainability can be broken down into three key pillars: environmental, social, and economic. The environmental pillar focuses on minimizing the negative impacts of operations on the planet, such as reducing carbon emissions, waste, and water consumption. The social pillar concerns the well-being of stakeholders, including employees, players, fans, and communities.

This can include promoting diversity and inclusion, ensuring fair wages, and giving back to local communities. The economic pillar emphasizes the need for financial viability and responsible management, ensuring that football organizations can continue to operate effectively and grow in the long term.

Implementing sustainability in football-related entities is crucial for several reasons. First, it is becoming an expectation from stakeholders, including fans, sponsors, governments, and even players. In recent years, there has been a global shift towards sustainability, with increasing awareness about climate change, social justice, and economic inequality. Football, being one of the most visible and influential sports worldwide, is expected to set as an example. Fans, especially younger generations, are more environmentally and socially conscious than ever before. They want to support organizations that align with their values. Thus, football entities that fail to prioritize sustainability may face reputational risks, potentially losing fans, sponsorships, and partnerships.

Second, sustainability can lead to significant cost savings and operational efficiencies. For instance, by adopting energy-efficient technologies, such as LED lighting in stadiums or solar panels, football clubs can reduce their energy consumption and lower their utility bills. Similarly, implementing waste reduction and recycling programs can cut down on disposal costs. Sustainable resource management is not just about saving the planet; it's also about optimizing resources, cutting unnecessary expenses, and making the organization more resilient to fluctuations in resource availability and cost. Additionally, sustainable practices can help football organizations comply with increasingly stringent regulations regarding environmental and social responsibility, avoiding fines and other legal consequences.

Moreover, sustainability is tied to risk management. Football entities operate in a dynamic and often unpredictable environment. Climate change, for example, can directly impact the operations of clubs and events. Extreme weather conditions, such as floods or heatwaves, can disrupt matches, damage infrastructure, and create unsafe conditions for players and fans. By embracing sustainability, football organizations can mitigate these risks by investing in resilient infrastructure, developing contingency plans, and reducing their overall environmental footprint.

The social aspect of sustainability is particularly critical in football. As a sport that reaches billions of people globally, football has the power to influence societal norms and behaviours. By promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion within their organizations, football entities can become leaders in advancing social justice. Ensuring that football is accessible and welcoming to all, regardless of race, gender, or socioeconomic background, strengthens the sport's universal appeal. Additionally, football clubs and organizations have a responsibility to their local communities. Many fans view their local club as a pillar of the community, and clubs that engage in community outreach, support

local initiatives, and promote social causes are more likely to foster strong, loyal fan bases. This social responsibility can also enhance the mental and physical well-being of fans and the wider community, making football more than just a sport but a force for good.

From an economic perspective, sustainability is not only about being financially responsible but also about ensuring long-term viability. Football organizations that invest in sustainable practices are better positioned to thrive in an evolving global economy. Sponsors and investors are increasingly prioritizing sustainability in their partnerships. Companies are looking to associate themselves with organizations that share their values and commitment to environmental and social causes. As a result, football clubs that embrace sustainability may find it easier to attract high-profile sponsorship deals and investment opportunities, providing them with additional revenue streams and competitive advantages.

In conclusion, sustainability is not just a trend but a fundamental shift in how football-related entities must operate. By embedding sustainability into their strategies, football organizations can not only contribute to a more sustainable world but also enhance their reputation, reduce costs, mitigate risks, and secure long-term success. The sport's unique global influence means that football can serve as a powerful platform for promoting sustainable practices and inspiring change both within the industry and beyond. In an era where environmental, social, and economic challenges are becoming more pressing, football must rise to the occasion and lead by example.

SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Social sustainability refers to the ability of an organization or community to support and promote the well-being of its stakeholders while fostering inclusivity, equity, and justice. In the context of football-related entities, social sustainability encompasses a broad range of initiatives and policies that ensure the sport serves as a positive force in society. It involves creating environments where players, fans, employees, and local communities can thrive while addressing issues such as diversity, inclusion, human rights, and fair treatment. Social sustainability requires football organizations to balance the demands of their business and performance objectives with their responsibility to contribute to social progress.

Football entities play a crucial role in promoting social sustainability due to their broad influence across different societal strata. For instance, a key aspect of social sustainability is ensuring equal opportunities within the sport, both on and off the field. This includes breaking down barriers for marginalized groups,

whether they represent women, racial and ethnic minorities, or individuals from lower-income backgrounds. Football clubs, associations, and governing bodies have the power to challenge systemic inequalities by creating pathways for underrepresented groups to participate in the sport, from grassroots to professional levels. This could take the form of programs that promote youth development in disadvantaged areas, scholarships for aspiring players from underprivileged backgrounds, or policies that ensure diverse hiring practices across coaching, management, and executive roles.

Beyond promoting diversity and inclusion, social sustainability also encompasses the health and well-being of all those involved in football. For players, this involves creating safe working conditions, offering adequate health and safety measures, and ensuring their physical and mental well-being. For example, clubs should be vigilant about addressing mental health issues, providing counselling services, and fostering a culture where players feel supported both on and off the field. The importance of player welfare became especially evident during the COVID-19 pandemic when issues such as burnout, mental health struggles, and the pressures of performing in empty stadiums came to the forefront.

Social sustainability also extends to how football-related entities engage with their surrounding communities. Football clubs, especially local ones, often serve as social hubs for their communities, and their success is closely intertwined with the well-being of the local population. A socially sustainable football club actively engages with its community through outreach programs, charity work, and local partnerships. These initiatives can include providing free or discounted access to matches for disadvantaged groups, using stadiums for community events, or promoting social causes such as anti-racism campaigns, anti-bullying programs, and mental health awareness. Furthermore, clubs can support education by establishing partnerships with schools or offering training programs in management, sports science, and coaching for young people. When clubs positively contribute to their communities, they foster loyalty and a stronger sense of belonging among their fans, leading to more meaningful and lasting relationships between the sport and its supporters.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Environmental sustainability in football-related entities refers to minimizing the sport's ecological footprint by adopting practices that reduce resource

consumption, decrease pollution, and mitigate climate change. With millions of fans attending matches, consuming merchandise, and engaging in football-related activities, the sport's environmental impact is significant. For football organizations, environmental sustainability involves implementing policies and procedures that not only reduce their immediate environmental impact but also contribute to broader global efforts to combat climate change and protect natural ecosystems.

One of the key areas where football-related entities can make a significant environmental difference is in stadium operations. Stadiums are energy-intensive facilities that consume copious amounts of electricity, water, and materials during construction and operation. By investing in energy-efficient technologies, football clubs can drastically reduce their carbon emissions. This could include installing solar panels or wind turbines to power stadiums, using LED lighting to reduce electricity usage, and upgrading heating and cooling systems to be more energy efficient. Furthermore, clubs can implement water-saving measures, such as rainwater harvesting systems or water recycling programs, to reduce their reliance on fresh water, which is particularly important in regions facing water scarcity.

Waste management is another critical aspect of environmental sustainability. Football matches generate substantial amounts of waste, from food packaging to discarded promotional materials. To address this, clubs can adopt waste reduction and recycling initiatives. This could involve collaborating with vendors to eliminate single-use plastics, promoting the use of reusable or biodegradable packaging, and setting up comprehensive recycling programs within stadiums. In some cases, clubs have even taken steps to achieve zero-waste matches, where nearly all waste is recycled, composted, or repurposed. Additionally, clubs can encourage fans to adopt sustainable behaviors, such as using public transportation or carpooling to matches, by providing incentives or making eco-friendly travel options more accessible.

Beyond operational changes, football organizations can also contribute to environmental sustainability by raising awareness and leveraging their platform to promote environmental causes. Given the sport's global reach and the passion of its fan base, football has a unique ability to influence attitudes and behaviors related to environmental issues. Clubs can partner with environmental organizations to launch awareness campaigns about climate change, conservation, or sustainable living. For instance, campaigns could encourage fans to reduce their carbon footprints or participate in community-led environmental initiatives. By using their influence to promote environmental responsibility, football organizations can help foster a culture of sustainability that extends beyond the sport.

Lastly, environmental sustainability is increasingly becoming a financial consideration for football entities. As environmental regulations become stricter,

clubs that fail to adopt sustainable practices may face fines or penalties. Moreover, investors and sponsors are increasingly aligning their portfolios with environmentally conscious organizations, meaning that clubs with strong sustainability credentials may have a competitive edge in securing lucrative deals. By embracing environmental sustainability, football-related entities not only contribute to the global fight against climate change but also ensure their own long-term financial viability and operational resilience in an evolving world where sustainability is becoming a necessity rather than an option.

EXAMPLES

AC Milan is the first elite European football club to introduce a formal maternity policy for female players, addressing gender equality and well-being. **Key Features:**

Contract Renewal: Automatic one-year contract extension with the same terms during pregnancy.

Childcare and Travel Support: Assistance with childcare during training/matches; travel costs covered for the player's children and a companion.

Holistic Support: Access to in-house specialists (psychologists, nutritionists, physiotherapists) and external experts if needed.

Inclusive Policy Development: Players were consulted through surveys and discussions.

Additional Well-being Initiatives: Work-life balance programs, digital welfare platforms, and employee wellness activities (e.g., dedicated gym).

Takeaway:

A forward-thinking policy that sets a new standard for gender equality, player welfare, and family support in football organizations.

<https://www.acmilan.com/en/news/articles/club/2024-08-02/ac-milan-introduces-maternity-policy-for-female-players-and-staff>