



PlanetGoals

*Capacity Building Course
for Professionals*

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MODULE 2: SUSTAINABILITY IN FOOTBALL-RELATED ENTITIES' GOVERNANCE

Football-related entities and sports entities in general, along with their values, are an inherent part of the social aspect of the human being. This means that sport and related entities are commonly related to topics such as politics or economics, for example. Aspects such as the one to be discussed below are also related to sport: Sustainability. From the perspective of sustainability, the activity of organizations is evaluated for their environmental and social impact, according to good governance patterns, which entities have the option of bringing to the sports world. This module provides brief notions about the role of leaders and boards in promoting sustainability; the necessary support and infrastructure required to develop a strong sustainability program; Developing a sustainability strategy and action plan and Implementing sustainability practices in decision-making processes.

1. THE ROLE OF LEADERS AND BOARDS IN PROMOTING SUSTAINABILITY; THE NECESSARY SUPPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE REQUIRED TO DEVELOP A STRONG SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAM

1.1. EU regulations and the role of Leaders and Boards

Although there is a general consensus on the need for companies to pursue sustainable value creation and there exist regulations by the European Union regarding the presentation of sustainability information by companies, in practice, companies face a number of challenges with this approach. **Leaders and boards play a crucial role in setting the vision for sustainability within football-related entities.** They must advocate for sustainable practices and ensure that there is adequate support and infrastructure for these initiatives.

The **Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD)** is a significant piece of legislation adopted by the **European Union** aimed at enhancing and standardizing sustainability reporting among companies. This directive builds upon the existing Non-Financial Reporting Directive (NFRD) and is designed to improve transparency regarding environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors, thereby promoting accountability and sustainable business practices across the EU.

Company leaders play a crucial role in the successful implementation of the CSRD. They are expected to **actively promote a culture of sustainability within their organizations**. This involves integrating sustainability into the company's core values and strategic objectives, ensuring that all employees understand its importance. Moreover, they must **ensure that their organizations comply with these regulations**. This includes understanding the data needed for reporting and establishing processes to gather and verify this information.

Leaders also must **incorporate sustainability considerations into strategic decision-making**. This means evaluating the long-term impacts of business operations on environmental and social factors and making informed choices that align with sustainability goals. To meet CSRD requirements, leaders should **allocate resources to develop the necessary infrastructure for sustainability reporting**. This may involve investing in technology, training programs, and dedicated teams focused on sustainability initiatives. Everything together supposes that leaders are responsible for fostering an environment of accountability, where sustainability performance is regularly communicated to stakeholders and integrated into business operations.

The EU **CSRD** represents a **significant shift toward enhanced transparency in corporate sustainability practices**. The active involvement of company leaders is crucial for meeting the directive's requirements and driving meaningful change within organizations. By championing sustainability, ensuring compliance, and fostering stakeholder engagement, leaders can position their companies for success in an increasingly sustainability-focused business landscape.

Sustainability reporting is essential for companies as it enhances transparency about their environmental and social impacts. Key benefits include:

1. **Building Trust:** It helps avoid accusations of greenwashing by providing evidence of genuine sustainability efforts, fostering trust among stakeholders.
2. **Regulatory Compliance:** Many industries now mandate sustainability reporting, ensuring companies meet legal requirements.
3. **Identifying Improvements:** Reports allow companies to pinpoint areas for enhancement and set measurable sustainability goals.
4. **Performance Enhancement:** Commitment to sustainability can lead to operational efficiencies and cost savings.

EXAMPLES

Real Betis Balompié launched its first Sustainability Action Plan in 2020. This plan is part of its commitment to environmental, social and economic sustainability, and seeks to promote responsible practices in all its activities. It includes initiatives related to waste management, energy efficiency and the promotion of sustainable mobility, among other aspects. Since 2020 they have been developing a sustainability platform called Forever Green with which they have carried out a large number of actions to help the environment. This effort also reflects the growing importance of sustainability in sport and the need to align with regulations such as the CSRD.



1.2. The necessary support and infrastructure required to develop a strong sustainability program

Developing a robust sustainability program requires a comprehensive support system and infrastructure within an organization. This entails not only the commitment of leadership but also the establishment of frameworks, resources, and practices that enable effective implementation and continuous improvement. A successful sustainability program can enhance a company's reputation, drive efficiency, and contribute to long-term viability, aligning with both regulatory requirements and stakeholder expectations.

It is important to set roles and, if necessary, incorporate more talent into the workforce of the sports - entity so that the company will meet the sustainable goals through the following key points:

- 1. Leadership Commitment and Vision:** leaders and boards must champion sustainability initiatives to create a culture that prioritizes sustainable practices. They need to set clear sustainability goals aligned with the organization's mission and help in communicating the importance of sustainability to all employees.
- 2. Dedicated Sustainability Team:** A specialized team is essential for coordinating sustainability efforts and ensuring accountability. This team should include experts from various departments (e.g., operations, finance, marketing) to integrate sustainability across the organization.
- 3. Training and Capacity Building:** Training staff at all levels is essential to raise awareness and develop skills related to sustainability practices.

Regular workshops, online courses, and hands-on training sessions can help employees understand their roles in achieving sustainability goals.

4. **Robust Data Management Systems:** Effective sustainability programs rely on accurate data collection and analysis to measure performance and track progress. Implementing advanced data management systems enables sports entities to monitor key sustainability metrics, such as energy consumption, waste management, and carbon emissions.
5. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Engaging stakeholders (including employees, customers, suppliers, and the community) is essential for aligning sustainability goals with stakeholder expectations. Regular feedback mechanisms and dialogue can foster a collaborative approach to sustainability challenges.
6. **Financial Resources and Investment:** Adequate funding is crucial for implementing sustainability initiatives and ensuring their success. Entities should allocate budgetary resources specifically for sustainability projects and explore external funding opportunities.
7. **Continuous Improvement Framework:** A framework for continuous improvement enables organizations to adapt and enhance their sustainability practices over time. Regular assessments and updates to sustainability strategies should be conducted to incorporate new technologies and practices.

EXAMPLES

An example of the importance of finding allies and companies that can help a sports entity to be more sustainable:

Real Betis Balompié measures its carbon footprint annually through a detailed analysis of its emissions in areas such as energy consumption, waste management and fan travel. To do so, an external company audits it, Ecoterrae. Through this annual audit, the club offsets its carbon footprint and invests in reforestation and renewable energy projects, which allows them to neutralize their emissions. This strategy not only contributes to environmental sustainability, but also reinforces the club's commitment to social and ecological responsibility.



2. DEVELOPING A SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Before starting to develop your entity's sustainability strategy, it is important to conduct a **sustainability assessment**. This process involves evaluating current practices across various operational areas, including resource consumption, waste management, and social responsibility initiatives. By systematically analyzing existing practices, organizations can identify key areas for improvement and establish a baseline for future efforts.

A useful tool in this phase is the SWOT analysis, which examines the organization's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats related to sustainability. This framework helps organizations leverage their strengths, such as existing green initiatives or engaged employees, while addressing weaknesses, such as inadequate resource management or lack of awareness among staff. Additionally, understanding stakeholder expectations (ranging from customers and employees to local communities and investors) provides valuable insights that can shape the sustainability agenda.

Another key point has to do with **stakeholder engagement**. Engaging stakeholders throughout the sustainability strategy development process is vital for ensuring that diverse perspectives are considered. This involvement fosters a sense of ownership among stakeholders, which can lead to increased buy-in and support for the initiatives. Various methods can be employed to engage stakeholders, such as surveys, alliances, workshops, and focus groups.

For example, a workshop might bring together employees from different departments to discuss sustainability challenges and brainstorm solutions. Similarly, alliances with sustainability related companies can be used to reduce the organization's environmental impact. By incorporating feedback from a wide range of stakeholders, organizations can create a more inclusive and effective sustainability strategy.

The last step in developing a sustainability strategy is **crafting** a comprehensive **action plan**. This plan should outline specific initiatives, timelines, and responsible parties for each sustainability goal. For instance, initiatives could include reducing carbon footprints through energy efficiency measures, enhancing community engagement via outreach programs, or promoting diversity and inclusion within the workforce.

Each initiative should be supported by clear actions and defined metrics for success. For example, if the goal is to reduce carbon emissions, the action plan might specify the implementation of energy-efficient technologies, staff training

sessions on sustainable practices, and the establishment of partnerships with renewable energy providers.

Additionally, the action plan should include a timeline that outlines when each initiative will be implemented and who will be accountable for its success. Regular reviews of the action plan are essential to assess progress and adjust as needed.

2.1. DEVELOPING A SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLAN FOR FOOTBALL ENTITIES: STEP BY STEP

The parts mentioned before (sustainability assessment, setting measures and engaging stakeholders) are the first and crucial steps before taking any action.

From now on, we are introducing the necessary steps a football entity needs to take from the moment that actions are implemented.

Step 1: The actions

This comprehends the specific actions the entity is going to take, things that have been targeted to change and improve. This means outlining initiatives for each target. For example:

- **Carbon Emissions Reduction:**
 - Implement energy-efficient lighting in the stadium.
 - Transition to renewable energy sources for club facilities.
- **Waste Management:**
 - Introduce a comprehensive recycling program at the stadium.
 - Partner with local organizations for composting organic waste.
- **Community Outreach:**
 - Launch youth engagement programs focusing on sustainability education.
 - Organize community clean-up events in collaboration with local NGOs.

Each action needs to be found in a detailed action plan with initiatives, timelines, responsible parties, and required resources.

Step 2: Implementation

Assign responsibilities to specific teams or individuals within the organization for each action. Schedule the implementation of initiatives with clear deadlines and milestones. It is crucial to have a project timeline and assigned roles for effective execution.

Step 3: Monitoring and Measuring progress

Key performance indicators (KPIs) need to be established for each target (e.g., energy consumption data, waste diversion rates). And there have to exist regular progress reviews (e.g., quarterly) to evaluate effectiveness and make adjustments as needed. As a result, the entity can obtain periodic sustainability reports that track progress against established targets.

Step 4: Reviewing and Adjusting

Analyzing and monitoring data and stakeholder feedback to assess the impact of initiatives and identifying any barriers to success and adjust strategies accordingly is necessary. This step results in an updated action plan that reflects lessons learned and adjusts targets or initiatives based on performance.

Step 5: Communicating Results and Achievements

Nowadays, if we do not communicate what we are doing it is like it hasn't existed. As being sustainable is good for our club reputation, sharing sustainability progress and achievements with stakeholders through newsletters, social media, and press releases is necessary. The entity should celebrate milestones with events or recognition programs for employees and fans as well. It will result in more awareness and engagement around the club's sustainability efforts, fostering a culture of sustainability among stakeholders.

IMPLEMENTING SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

In recent years, the importance of sustainability has permeated various sectors, with sports (particularly football) emerging as a key player in the global push toward environmentally and socially responsible practices. Implementing sustainability practices in decision-making processes within football-related entities is not just an ethical imperative; it is increasingly seen as a strategic advantage. This chapter explores how football organizations can integrate sustainability into their decision-making frameworks, the benefits of doing so, and practical steps for implementation.

Integrating sustainability into decision-making processes allows football entities to align their operational goals with broader societal values. This

alignment can enhance brand reputation, attract sponsorships, and foster loyalty among fans. Moreover, the shift towards sustainable practices can mitigate risks associated with regulatory changes and environmental challenges, such as climate change.

EXAMPLES

The UEFA and FIFA have set precedents by emphasizing sustainability in their operations, from waste management to energy efficiency. As these organizations lead by example, clubs at all levels can leverage their frameworks to develop their sustainability strategies



Framework for Implementing Sustainability Practices:

A successful sustainability initiative begins with a clear vision and policy that outlines the organization's commitment to sustainable practices. This policy should articulate the importance of sustainability in the club's identity and operations, including specific goals related to environmental impact, community engagement, and social equity.

For instance, a club may adopt a policy that commits to reducing its carbon footprint by 50% over the next decade. This policy can serve as a guiding principle in all decision-making processes, ensuring that sustainability is not an afterthought but a foundational element of the club's strategy.

Stakeholder engagement is critical for effective sustainability integration. Football entities must involve a diverse range of stakeholders, including players, fans, staff, local communities, and sponsors. This engagement can be achieved through surveys, focus groups, and collaborative workshops.

By incorporating feedback from stakeholders, clubs can develop initiatives that resonate with their community and enhance support for sustainability efforts. For example, fans may express interest in recycling programs or sustainable transportation options for match days, which can be integrated into the club's broader sustainability strategy.

To implement sustainability practices effectively, football organizations must rely on data. This includes assessing current environmental impacts, setting measurable targets, and tracking progress over time. Clubs should invest in data

management systems that can collect and analyze information related to energy consumption, waste generation, and carbon emissions.

For example, a football club might track its energy use in the stadium and training facilities and compare it against industry benchmarks. By understanding their current footprint, organizations can make informed decisions about where to invest in improvements, such as energy-efficient lighting or renewable energy sources.

Establishing key performance indicators (KPIs) specific to sustainability allows football entities to measure their success and make adjustments as necessary.

By regularly reviewing these metrics, decision-makers can assess the effectiveness of their sustainability initiatives and adapt their strategies accordingly.

For sustainability practices to thrive, they must be ingrained in the club's culture. This involves training staff at all levels to recognize their role in promoting sustainability. Football clubs can conduct workshops and training sessions focused on sustainability practices, providing employees with the knowledge and tools to make informed decisions.

Additionally, clubs can celebrate sustainability achievements, such as reaching waste reduction targets or successfully launching a community program. Recognizing and rewarding sustainability efforts fosters a culture of responsibility and encourages continued commitment to sustainable practices.

Case Study: The Real Betis Balompié Approach

Real Betis Balompié serves as an exemplary case of integrating sustainability into decision-making. The club has established a comprehensive sustainability policy that emphasizes environmental responsibility, social engagement, and economic viability.

Through partnerships with organizations Real Betis has developed a detailed sustainability action plan that includes, for example, measuring its carbon or water footprint and implementing initiatives to offset emissions. By engaging stakeholders (ranging from fans to local communities) the club has created a sense of ownership and support for its sustainability efforts.

Moreover, Real Betis has committed to regular reporting on its sustainability performance, allowing for transparency and accountability. This approach not only enhances the club's reputation but also sets a benchmark for other football entities aiming to incorporate sustainability into their governance frameworks.

CONCLUSIONS

Sustainability in football-related entities requires a comprehensive governance approach that encompasses leadership, infrastructure, strategy, and decision-making. Leaders and boards play a pivotal role in championing sustainability, setting a vision that aligns with the organization's core values and ensuring the necessary support and resources are in place. This includes establishing dedicated teams and robust data management systems to monitor sustainability metrics.

Developing a sustainability strategy involves conducting assessments to identify areas for improvement, setting measurable targets aligned with frameworks like the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and engaging stakeholders to foster ownership and collaboration.

Finally, integrating sustainability into decision-making processes is essential for aligning operational goals with broader societal values. By embedding sustainability into their governance frameworks, football entities can enhance their reputation, mitigate risks, and contribute positively to their communities while achieving long-term viability in a competitive landscape.