



**A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR  
SMALL SPORT ORGANISATION'S  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY  
SYSTEM PREPARATION**

**Sustainability - goal for small sport organisations (GOAL2S)**

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## TABLE OF CONTENT

### Table of Contents

OVERVIEW .....	3
INTRODUCTION .....	5
HOW SPORT CONTRIBUTES TO CLIMATE CHANGE .....	6
ADDRESSING SUSTAINABILITY OVER SPORT .....	6
What should be important in the sector.....	7
Recognizing the emergency .....	7
Accelerating action.....	7
Moving away from fossil fuels.....	7
Delivering on climate finance .....	7
Stepping up support for adaptation.....	7
Completing the Paris rulebook .....	8
Focusing on loss & damage.....	8
WHAT IS NEEDED TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABILITY .....	8
BARRIERS TO CHANGE.....	9
NON-GOVERNMENTAL INITIATIVES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL .....	10
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	13
REFERENCES .....	14

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## OVERVIEW

For quite some time sustainability was a foreign concept in the world of sport and just a decade ago it was still considered rather exotic by many in the industry. That is thankfully no longer the case today. The European Union is a leader in tackling climate change and in promoting the circular economy. Sport certainly has a part to play in this. Sport is an integral part in the lives of millions of Europeans and that, at its best, sport promotes physical and mental well-being, is educational and promotes key social values, brings communities together, is a large, fast-growing economic sector, and contributes to growth and jobs. As sport's social and economic influence rapidly increases and spreads across Europe, it is important for federations, leagues, clubs and grassroots programmes to evaluate and understand the impact that they have, looking at three key pillars: governance, social and environment.

Climate change and environmental challenges are at the centre of public attention and at the top of policy makers' agendas across the world. Sport is not only an activity, nor simply entertainment; it is also an industry that is substantial and growing – as is its environmental footprint. When it comes to sustainability, we should live by the Olympic ideal of Pierre de Coubertin that participating is everything. And if sport contributes to strengthening this sustainability, we can all be winners.

The Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth includes a focus on climate change and social inclusion. With more information available about climate change and major sports events' impact on the environment, it is increasingly clear that sport must take a proactive role in addressing its environmental impact and footprint.

In its most recent EU Work Plan for Sport, the European Commission, together with Member States and stakeholders, has developed recommendations on major sport events, focusing on legacy aspects and social, economic and environmental sustainability. Fans traveling to one European Cup match can generate almost 5,600 tons of carbon dioxide, according to the World Economic Forum. But now, many sports are taking a closer look at how to be more responsible. Tokyo's 2021 Olympic Games are a leading example of organizers prioritizing sustainability in their planning. For example, builders will use locally sourced wood to construct the athletes' village, and hydrogen fuel cells will power the event vehicles. Organizers plan to generate solar power onsite and recycle 99 percent of everything used during the event. With the exception of drinking water, they'll use recycled rainwater for all Olympic water needs. Paris is

hoping to be even more sustainable during its turn to host the 2024 Olympic Games. All these great examples rally shows that sport is really moving in the right direction towards sustainability - environmental, economic and social prosperity. Nonetheless it's also true to say that all these examples have a level of expertise and resource in the field of sustainability that makes such a coherent tactic possible – a rarity in the sports sector.

Without that level of expertise, it's easy for sports organisations to make the mistake of devising general goals and ambitions, like 'the aim of becoming more environmentally aware' or 'committing to taking a stand on gender equality', without deciding and articulating the necessary action steps needed to achieve those targets. What is more, sports sector manages a vast number of sport events which is organized in the small scale done by relatively small organizations ranging from professional that attract large numbers (to particular area and population) of participants and spectators in regional or village sports halls, local playing fields, neighbourhood swimming pools, and everything in between. In addition, many sports arrange events which use non-specific local facilities, green spaces, roads, and the urban environment on an occasional basis (e.g. triathlon, cycling road races).

Thus, the intention of the proposed project: Sustainability - goal for small sport organisations (hereinafter – GOAL2S) is through the networking and identification and sharing of good practices to create the foundation of the Small Sport organisation's Sustainable development advisory System (hereinafter - 4S) in Lithuania and Latvia, where sustainability in sport subject has only now started to develop.

The created framework overlook sport governing bodies, educational institutions and other interested stakeholders which create the right understanding about sustainability in sport sector in general and sustainability for small sport organisations in particular, including an appropriate legal and financial framework and a tailor-made approach respecting differences between sports.

## INTRODUCTION

Global warming is placing our planet and future generations at risk. Meeting the scale of the challenge requires action by all sectors, including the sport sector to achieve the goals of the Paris Climate Change Agreement. Around the world, governments, cities and businesses are taking bold climate action, leading the way towards a healthier and more sustainable future. By employing solutions to global warming each of us will be improving and contributing to public health, promoting social justice, preserving natural resources, creating reliable sources of energy and contributing to the society and economy as a whole.

Sports organisations can display climate leadership by engaging actively and collectively in the climate neutrality journey, in turn helping to differentiate from competitors, build brand reputation and engage their sports personnel, employees and members on environmental issues.

Sport organizations are initiating environmental sustainability efforts in their everyday business operations. For example, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) provides documentation with required environmental initiatives to countries and cities that bid to host the Olympic and Paralympic Games. For instance, Agenda 2020 is a policy document that contains guidelines and procedures on how sports organizations that host the Olympic Games can reduce their impact on the natural environment. In addition, environmental efforts constitute practices that aim to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions generated by any activity associated with them. In an effort to be more environmentally sustainable, sports organizations are constantly looking for ways to reduce energy, water and paper consumption and promote practices that have an environmentally friendlier outcome, such as recycling, the construction of green buildings, and the use of sustainable modes of transport.

Nevertheless, sports organizations have activities that are related to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions which include the function of sports facilities, water and solid waste management plants, electricity and water consumption, transportation of sports teams, and the distribution of sport manufactured products and services. Therefore, at a time when the EU is raising its climate ambitions and promising to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 55% by 2030, sport must also jump on the bandwagon and accelerate its ecological transition, new bottom-up approach is needed, to use innovative solutions which be integrated into small sports organisation management in order to mitigate CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and become more sustainable.

## **HOW SPORT CONTRIBUTES TO CLIMATE CHANGE**

To what extent are global sports responsible for the climate predicament they find themselves in? To answer definitively, we would need to know their exact carbon footprint – and, right now, we don't.

However, we can make a reasonable estimate. If the global sports industry is turning over around \$500 billion to \$700 billion annually – not including the sportswear and gambling industries, which exist in symbiosis – then sports account for about 0.8 percent of global output. If we also assume that sports have an average carbon intensity per **dollar** (say, less than the concrete industry but greater than recreational singing), then they likely account for about 0.8 percent of global emissions. For example each sporting event attended by 5,000 people generates 2.5 tonnes of waste, including 500 kg of paper.

So where is all this carbon coming from? For the most part, it's coming from us: the fans going to the games. Researchers have found that international air travel for spectators accounts for nearly 70 percent of the emissions generated by World Cups and Olympic Games. In the world of well-attended professional sports leagues, transport probably accounts for half of emissions, with the rest coming from energy use for sports equipment, lighting and heating, food consumption and waste disposal, construction and infrastructure, and all sorts of plastics used in facilities. To reduce the industry's carbon emissions to zero, all of this will have to change.

## **ADDRESSING SUSTAINABILITY OVER SPORT**

In November 2021, the United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP26, gathered world leaders in an attempt to propel climate action beyond the historic commitments and timetables of the Paris Accord of 2015. With little time left to prevent or limit catastrophic climate change, there is an urgent need to move from words to actions and ultimately, results. Sport can play a key role in this process raising awareness, influencing behaviors, and shrinking its carbon footprint. With its broad reach spanning diverse human interests, social backgrounds and geographical contexts, sport can contribute to creative, low-cost, high-impact solutions. Its potential as a paradigm of sustainable development has been recognized by both the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in UN General Assembly resolution A/RES/73/24. Given the dire situation engulfing our planet, the time to act is now.

## What should be important in the sector

### *Recognizing the emergency*

Countries reaffirmed the Paris Agreement goal of limiting the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5 °C. And they went further, expressing “alarm and utmost concern that human activities have caused around 1.1 °C of warming to date, that impacts are already being felt in every region, and that carbon budgets consistent with achieving the Paris Agreement temperature goal are now small and being rapidly depleted.” They recognized that the impacts of climate change will be much lower at a temperature increase of 1.5 °C compared with 2 °C.

### *Accelerating action*

Countries stressed the urgency of action “in this critical decade,” when carbon dioxide emissions must be reduced by 45 per cent to reach net zero around mid-century. But with present climate plans – the Nationally determined Contributions — falling far short on ambition, the Glasgow Climate Pact calls on all countries to present stronger national action plans next year, instead of in 2025, which was the original timeline. Countries also called on UNFCCC to do an annual NDC Synthesis Report to gauge the present level of ambition.

### *Moving away from fossil fuels*

In perhaps the most contested decision in Glasgow, countries ultimately agreed to a provision calling for a phase-down of coal power and a phase-out of “inefficient” fossil fuel subsidies – two key issues that had never been explicitly mentioned in decisions of UN climate talks before, despite coal, oil and gas being the main drivers of global warming. Many countries, and NGOs, expressed dissatisfaction that the language on coal was significantly weakened (from phase-out to phase-down) and consequently, was not as ambitious as it needs to be.

### *Delivering on climate finance*

Developed countries came to Glasgow falling short on their promise to deliver US\$100 billion a year for developing countries. Voicing “regret,” the Glasgow outcome reaffirms the pledge and urges developed countries to fully deliver on the US\$100 billion goal urgently. Developed countries, in a report, expressed confidence that the target would be met in 2023.

### *Stepping up support for adaptation*

The Glasgow Pact calls for a doubling of finance to support developing countries in adapting to the impacts of climate change and building resilience. This won't provide all the funding that

poorer countries need, but it would significantly increase finance for protecting lives and livelihoods, which so far made up only about 25 per cent of all climate finance (with 75 per cent going towards green technologies to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions). Glasgow also established a work programme to define a global goal on adaptation, which will identify collective needs and solutions to the climate crisis already affecting many countries.

### *Completing the Paris rulebook*

Countries reached agreement on the remaining issues of the so-called Paris rulebook, the operational details for the practical implementation of the Paris Agreement. Among them are the norms related to carbon markets, which will allow countries struggling to meet their emissions targets to purchase emissions reductions from other nations that have already exceeded their targets. Negotiations were also concluded on an Enhanced Transparency Framework, providing for common timeframes and agreed formats for countries to regularly report on progress, designed to build trust and confidence that all countries are contributing their share to the global effort.

### *Focusing on loss & damage*

Acknowledging that climate change is having increasing impacts on people especially in the developing world, countries agreed to strengthen a network— known as the Santiago Network – that connects vulnerable countries with providers of technical assistance, knowledge and resources to address climate risks. They also launched a new “Glasgow dialogue” to discuss arrangements for the funding of activities to avert, minimize and address loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change.

## **WHAT IS NEEDED TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABILITY**

Climate change is a global problem that requires the whole of society to collaborate and coordinate to find solutions. Similarly, sport necessitates collaboration between its participants, whether teams or individual athletes, and more broadly collaboration is paramount in the organisation of sport locally, regionally, and globally. Sport is therefore a prime example of successful global collaboration, that can be leveraged to address urgent societal issues. Sport has many of the characteristics required to achieve sustainability:



*Reach:* Sport has a global reach and can engage all of society with its unique ability to influence change through championing causes via global, wide-spread attention.

*Finance:* Investment in physical infrastructure – typically venues and stadia – can be used to help deliver reduced emissions, affordable and clean energy and promote responsible consumption and production e.g. via recycling and waste management programmes, green space etc.

*Collaboration:* Partnerships within sport allow organisations to leverage each other’s’ position in the market in order to achieve a shared goal. Sport has the opportunity to move towards more sustainably responsible partnerships that encourage positive behaviours.

*Resource:* The sporting ecosystem has a large employee-base across a wide variety of roles. Even a small contribution of a workforce’s time towards sustainable initiatives, for example the training of staff or enabling them to dedicate time towards climate action, can be a significant force for good and help create a sustainable culture.

*Legacy:* Cooperation between sports organisations, political establishments and other stakeholders (e.g. constructors), combined with due consideration for the lifecycle of infrastructure, can be a powerful tool in creating a sustainability conscious legacy. Legacy considerations can be both tangible and intangible, and can have a positive, long-term impact culturally, economically and physically. The construction of new venues can provide employment, host sporting, musical or other events and be a source of recreational activity for the population.

## **BARRIERS TO CHANGE**

Despite the emerging recognition and increasing number of initiatives on the issue, gaps and barriers to change still persist. First and foremost, is the willingness and commitment of governments and other stakeholders to address climate change through sport. In some instances, declared commitments are perceived as being limited to marketing strategies and amounting to greenwashing. Secondly, when commitments are in place, policies and initiatives sometimes lack hard targets, mechanisms for control, a sense of urgency and/or a coherent and comprehensive strategy. Additionally, commitments to reduce greenhouse emissions while simultaneously receiving fossil fuel consuming-related sponsorship (such as by petrochemical companies and airlines) represents a contentious and potentially counter-productive situation that needs to be

addressed. Thirdly, the lack of comprehensive data on carbon emissions makes the planning and implementation of effective policies difficult. According to the Rapid Transition Report, sport organizations often have narrow views in assessing their environmental impacts, focusing on facilities and events, while overlooking related external factors such as transportation of teams and fans, or interlinked industries with a sizable carbon-production, such as broadcasting and sportswear industries. Some efforts towards more comprehensive assessments have been taken by the IOC, UEFA, and FIFA in relation to the Olympics, the European Football Championships and the World Cup. Additionally, sport practitioners, according to a study by Texas A&M University, can feel constrained from engaging in environmental initiatives due to lack of support from their organization’s upper management and ownership, or uncertainty about fans’ responses.

### **NON-GOVERNMENTAL INITIATIVES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL**

Beyond the public policies, climate challenges are being articulated and solutions are being implemented also by non-governmental and private actors. In Germany, the Bayer Leverkusen football club uses only clean energy, well water for irrigation, and has drastically reduced the use of single-use plastics. England’s Forest Green Rovers football club is the world’s first UN-certified carbon-free team; it boasts 100 percent renewable energy and rainwater recycling, and is building a new carbon-free, wooden stadium. Universities as well are becoming venues for training and debate on the role of sport for climate change. The Pac-12 Conference, for instance, is the first academic sport conference focused entirely on integrating sustainability, including the issue of climate change, into college athletics and across university campuses. Stanford University offers a course on “Sustainability in Athletics” and has a “Students Athletes for Sustainability” organization aimed at educating student-athletes and athletic staff on environmental sustainability and sponsoring many sustainability themed events such as electronic recycling drives at the football stadium, spreading their message beyond the athletes themselves.

Sport’s impact on climate change can be improved through the coordination of those organisations that educate themselves on the issues and invest resources effectively, with those acting first having the potential to make the most impact and reap the greatest reward.

A potential course of action for sporting organisations:

<p>1. Set out an ambitious vision for climate action, setting targets and embedding them into all aspects of your operation.</p>	<p>Public targets and commitments: Articulate clear goals to achieve net zero carbon emissions across your operations, reduce waste and resource use. These targets can be mandated by competition organisers to regulate competitors, or by a sporting organisation for action by its employees (e.g. offering employees the opportunity to have targets built into their objectives).</p>
	<p>External engagement: Promote climate action messages in stadia, broadcast to millions around the world or thousands locally, as well as social media campaigns to raise climate awareness and activism amongst fan bases. A streamlined and coherent digital strategy can help focus these goals.</p>
<p>2. Implement climate action roadmaps to deliver on your stated ambitions with the required investment, innovation and collaboration.</p>	<p>Operational net zero: Take steps to achieve net zero across your operations, from renewable energy contracts to electric vehicles, sustainable materials and estates. This requires a clear and robust approach to carbon measurement and accounting.</p>
	<p>Net zero fan base: Engage with key stakeholders across the value chain to encourage climate action across transport, merchandise, ticketing and other aspects of sporting fandom. Deliver ambitions around climate action messaging and communication.</p>
	<p>Sustainable culture: Work with employees and other key stakeholder groups to improve understanding of the importance and relevance of sustainability, explore methods for embedding a commitment to climate action within ways of working and everyday interaction.</p>
<p>3. Ensure climate action continues over time, with</p>	<p>Climate reporting and oversight: Mandated, competition-wide reporting of carbon emissions increases the</p>

<p>progress monitored and tracked through a culture of transparency, oversight, rigour and continuous improvement.</p>	<p>transparency of operations and encourages organisations to take more urgent action on climate change. Results being made public can allow comparison between peers, acting as an incentive to comply and improve. Appointing climate champions on Boards and within senior executive committees will improve ongoing oversight.</p>
	<p>Workshops to educate fans and players: raising awareness of climate change can help and empower a large stakeholder base to act and to continuously improve. For example, workshops in academies or athlete development pathways can be impactful and help athletes become sustainability-conscious from an early age and positively influence others throughout their lives.</p>

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The urgency to address climate change is growing every day. Sport can be part of the solution. As we build back better and stronger from the social, political, and economic consequences of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, there is an opportunity to rethink the relationship between sport and climate change, and support and expand the efforts already underway. While sport diplomacy is already exemplifying the positive impact that the pursuit of sport can have, it is time to expand on that mission, to build upon the foundation already laid and tackle climate change through sport using bottom-up approach.

With this aim, several actions can be taken by small sport organisations:

- The sport community should commit to reduce its direct and indirect greenhouse gas emissions, and take concrete actions. Small sport organisations could start recycle, use renewable energy, think about transportation and event management in more greener efficient way.
- Governments should set policy frameworks and incentives for sport especially for small sport organisations to become sustainable, and to promote sport as a tool to raise awareness about climate change;
- National governments, in collaboration with international organizations and other national actors, should undertake capacity building efforts targeted at different actors involved in the sporting sector on how to address and mitigate climate change;
- National and local governments, in collaboration with small sport organisations and international organizations, should collect robust data as measuring and reporting greenhouse gas emissions are important steps towards the implementation of the Paris Agreement. Estimates need to move beyond the current narrowly focused assessments and include the broader spectrum of carbon emissions related to sporting events;
- National governments and small sport organisations should create collaborations and partnerships across different stakeholders – including national and local governments, the private sector, academia, science, technology and innovation experts, and civil society organizations – to promote sport as a tool for climate action.

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