

TOWARDS THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SUPPORTER LIAISON OFFICERS



TPDS

Quality Reports – External Evaluation



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To monitor, assess and evaluate the implementation of the TPDS project's activities, the project consortium contracted an External Evaluator to carry out an evaluation and monitoring process that could provide valuable information to the consortium related to the coordination and management of the project activities and the cooperation among the members of the consortium.

Following the External Evaluator identified, the consortium decided to merge the 4 reports planned into 2 Main Reports (mid-term and final) to allow for a more thorough analysis and leave the necessary time to the members of the consortium to develop informed opinions on the implementat

‘TPDS’ Towards the Professional Development of SLOs

Interim Independent Evaluation Report



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February 2025

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1 TDPS Interim Evaluation: Executive Summary

Introduction

- This is the interim evaluation report for the 'Towards the Professional Development of SLOs' (TPDS) project, led by Football Supporters Europe.
- TPDS is a transnational project to create new learning, validation, and certification pathways for SLOs and, where necessary and appropriate, other personnel employed in matchday organizations, and operations in Europe.
- The project started in June 2023 and is expected to conclude in May 2026 with the submission of a final report to the European Commission.

Approach

- For this interim report, the independent evaluator attended one of the partner meetings to observe, carry out informal interviews and conduct a learning review workshop. An online survey was completed by and nine representatives from the seven partner organisations.

Motivations

- Professionalising the SLO role is seen to be an important issue for Football to address; and the partners are motivated to bring their varying expertise (supporting SLOs, creating occupational standards, developing and delivering training) together. There is recognition too in the value of learning from what works in different contexts, given the SLO professionalism is at very different stages across Europe.
- The legacy of this project could be quite wide ranging, serving as a blueprint for Football in South America, and with potential to influence how the role looks in other sports.
"If we can actually do this, create occupational standards that can work for SLOs. If we can have university courses in three different countries, if we can be of assistance of introducing the SLO role to Brazil and then further into South America, that would be the biggest feather in our FSE hat ever."

Achievements

- 8 of 9 partners (89%) were very satisfied or satisfied with their contributions to the project so far.
- Partners have developed an open, constructive way of working together, and the way in which they had used a technical working group (which includes SLOs) to develop the functional map and occupational standards was seen as a particular achievement.
- The partners are gaining valuable learning, and accessing different perspectives outside of their normal roles

Partner meetings

- It is encouraging that all except for 2 responses were either 'excellent' or 'good'. Partners highlighting the opportunity to feed back at the end of meetings, the knowledge gained through the meetings and the technical working group as especially strong.
- It is worth noting the partner concerns about potentially conflicting deadlines and the time constraints to develop training modules (for example where they need to align university timescales with SLOs' working schedules).
- The evaluator saw firsthand how partners were able to discuss their concerns honestly, in a supportive, constructive environment. The Coordinator was able to support the partners to agree a way forward that felt reassuring and collegiate (while remaining true to the project's agreed deadlines).

- All of the partners were clear about their roles and the stated objectives of the project but may need support to manage potentially challenging deadlines.

Project management

- Feedback on project management was positive overall. The strongest feedback (rated excellent by partners) was for FSE's expertise to help partners succeed and the Coordinator's ability to respond positively to change and make clear decisions.

Learning

- There has been valuable learning as a result of partners sharing their experiences and good practices with one another. Involving SLOs in the implementation of the TPDS project through the technical working group has proven valuable, and also enabled SLOs to influence the design of the training modules. The development of the occupational standards has led to much learning about the SLO role, and affirmed how important it is.
- Partners saw the learning value that results from collaborating with partners from other countries and recognised that for the project to be most effective, there needed to be more ongoing communication between partners between meetings.

Partner confidence

- At the interim stage, confidence overall is high, with never less than 7 out of 9 survey respondents answering either 'very confident' or 'confident' for each TPDS objective. Unsurprisingly, confidence was highest for the objective that has been tackled first, to define occupational standards. How the piloting of the training modules will be accomplished is still uncertain, and many challenges remain in the final 18 months.

Interim recommendations

1. Football Supporters Europe reflects on all of the partner feedback provided in order to inform the last phase of the project – particularly supporting partners facing deadline pressures and how to facilitate more communication between meetings.
2. Include regular recaps of the project's deliverables before or at the next partner meeting to ensure all partners have the full picture.
3. Agree an overarching evaluation framework for the three pilot modules (good practice would be for this to be led by the University of Kassel) and gain permission to recontact SLOs involved in the pilot at a later stage to consider how useful the training has been 'for real'.ⁱ
4. Set out clearly how the TPDS project outputs are distinct from the existing SLO training offer sponsored by UEFA and delivered by FSE.ⁱⁱ

Evaluator's assessment

At this interim stage (February 2025), the interim evaluation evidence shows that that the TPDS has made a strong stage. The Partners are motivated to complete this ambitious project which has clear scope for follow up projects (e.g. to transfer to other sports or new countries).

The partners have adopted an effective way to work together and involved SLOs in the development of the occupational standards and functional map, the crucial foundation for all subsequent training. There are likely to be challenges piloting the training modules within the agree timelines of the project, but this issue has been raised, discussed and solutions proposed.

Confidence is high that the TDPS team will deliver on the project's intended outputs.

2 Introduction

This is the interim evaluation report for the ‘Towards the Professional Development of SLOs’ (TPDS) led by Football Supporters Europe.ⁱⁱⁱ ‘SLOs’ are ‘Support Liaison Officers’; who “act a point of contact for supporters; while also providing a link between fans/fan groups and a Club's senior staff and ownership.”^{iv}

TPDS Football is a transnational project to create new learning, validation, and certification pathways for SLOs and, where necessary and appropriate, other personnel employed in matchday organizations, and operations in Europe.

The project started in June 2023 and is expected to conclude in May 2026 with the submission of the final report to the European Commission.

The project has the following main objectives:

1. Assess the needs of clubs and organizations to co-design use cases adapted to different countries and define the roadmap for implementation on the South American continent with the backing of good practice from Germany
2. Define occupational standards relating to SLOs in Europe and contribute to the toolkit that will foster their employability
3. Finalise, deliver, and test three use cases (piloting teaching modules) tailored with participants in three European Countries (France, Poland, Sweden)
4. Disseminate, present, and assess with external stakeholders/organizations use cases to produce refined toolkits and recommendations for the employability of SLOs in Europe and the definition of a roadmap for the South American continent
5. Effectively produce project outcomes, reach stakeholders, and ensure sustainability beyond the duration of the project across Europe and beyond.

The project is being delivered by a set of seven partners, including one from South America. Football Supporters Europe are the lead organisation and Coordinator.

1. CDES Centre de Droit et d'Economie du Sport – University of Limoges, France
2. CONMEBOL - Confederation of South American Football, Paraguay
3. EOSE - European Observatoire of Sport and Employment, France
4. Football Supporters Europe, Germany
5. Malmö University, Sweden
6. University of Gdańsk, Poland
7. University of Kassel, Germany

This project builds on the legacy of previous projects led by FSE starting in 2010^v, who currently deliver a 2-day training course to SLOs on behalf of UEFA. How the new training modules being developed are distinct from this existing offer will be a subject explored in the final evaluation.

3 Methodology

For this interim report, the independent evaluator attended a partner meeting in Malmö in November 2024, where he carried out a learning review and observed how the partners worked together.

An online survey was developed, then commented on and then approved by Football Supporters Europe.

Each of the seven consortium partners (including the Coordinator) completed the survey during January 2025. A total of 10 survey responses were received.

Unless otherwise stated, the base for all charts and tables in this report is 9. All percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number. Qualitative comments are included (all anonymously) to ensure that the voices of partners are central to the report.

All qualitative responses have been reviewed and the key themes identified. This process was carried out manually, then cross-checked and refined using artificial intelligence.

Football Supporters Europe reviewed the draft report to correct any unintended errors. None of the independent evaluator's assessments have been changed. Key findings will be shared with the project partners and will inform the last year of delivery.

A final evaluation is planned at the conclusion of the project, where the focus will be partners views on the potential sustainability and continue to explore how and why the project has worked (or not).

Limitations

This report is based on the views of the core project lead and project partners. It is not the purpose of this evaluation to judge the quality or efficacy of the outputs produced, the test of which will be their use (or not) by their intended audiences.

All suggested partner improvements and suggestions have been included. However, as will become clear from the supporting graphs, it is important to recognise that these comments come from a small proportion of the partners. They are included in full since one of the purposes of this interim evaluation report is to inform delivery in the second part of the project.

In the same spirit of continuous improvements, aspects that have been rated as 'ok' have been grouped together with 'not very good responses' in order to draw attention to them.

The key findings section begins by exploring partner motivations and expectations.

4 Key Findings

4.1 Motivations

Partners were asked for their motivations for joining the project. What is apparent is their shared commitment towards the goal of professionalising the SLO role across Europe and the benefits for the Football that could result. For organisations, this is a great opportunity to expand their networks and develop new partnerships.

Professionalisation of the SLO Role and Development of Occupational Standards	Commitment to Improving Football's Future and Fan Environment	Expanding International Cooperation and Strengthening Networks
○ "Very inspired by the new role of SLO and the need for professionalisation." ○ "We felt we had the necessary expertise and experience to support the project in developing occupational standards which could underpin future training and education." ○ "The definition of the SLO role has been very abstract in the past. The possibility to create vocational standards and higher education for SLOs would be a great step in the right direction."	○ "Important issues for the future of football." ○ "The opportunity to influence both the present and future of security and fan experience in football." ○ "To be a part of a positive change for a better, safer and more inclusive environment."	○ Willingness to cooperate with various stakeholders, willingness to expand international cooperation." ○ "Strengthen the network with partners in Europe." ○ "CDES has already been or is currently involved in a few Erasmus+ projects. These projects are part of our international development strategy, which partly motivated us to join TPDS."

4.2 Potential legacy of the project

At the interim stage, partners were asked to consider the potential legacy of TPDS for SLOs in their country. Given the maturity of the SLO role differs significantly across Europe (and, with the exception of Brazil is very under-developed in South American generally).

The legacy will include improved awareness, understanding and clarity about the SLO role.

"A more cohesive picture of the function but also expectations on the role."

"Better understanding of the football industry and its challenges."

"Increased awareness of the role of SLOs."

As a result of these steps, the SLO role would be improved and strengthened, with access to training courses underpinned by European standards.

“Improve the football and supporter landscape. Improve the role of the SLO.”

“European standards in professionalisation of SLOs.”

“Functioning university courses for SLO's, a handbook for occupational standards for SLOs, and a start for the SLO role in South America.”

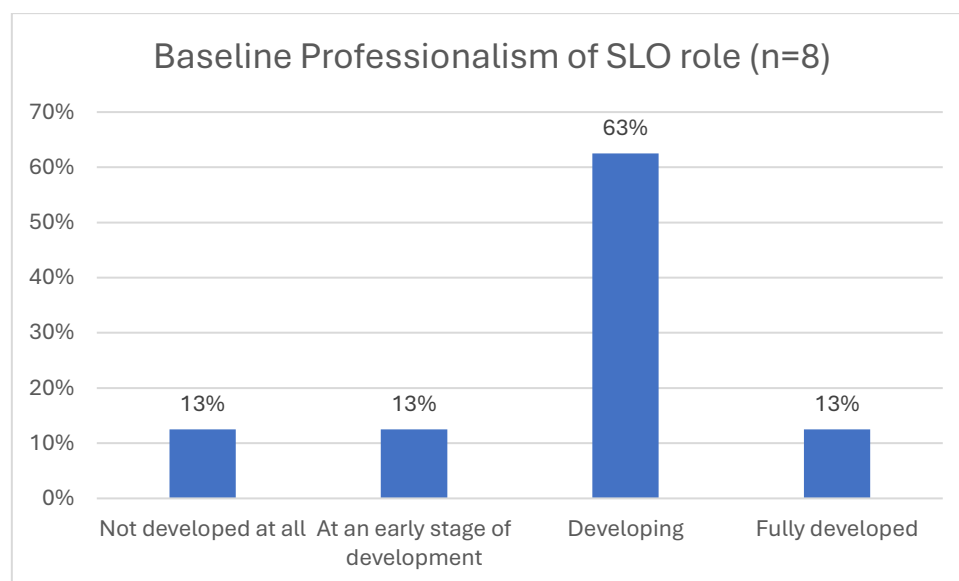
The legacy could go further, going beyond the SLO role to wider issues of safety and accessibility, and also to other sports like Rugby.

“Hopefully, this project will spark a cycle of training courses for French football SLOs. We also hope it can be expanded to other sports in the future, notably rugby, which is also starting to feel the need for SLOs.”

“The determination to take on the responsibility of fostering a safer and more accessible football environment.”

Current level of professionalisation of SLO role

In order that the benefits of TPDS could be measures over time, partners were asked to assess the current level of SLO professionalism in their home country.



Only one partner from Sweden considered the SLO role to be fully developed (other Swedish colleagues considered to be ‘developing’), whereas in all other countries it was either beginning or developing. Responses by country are shown on the next page.

Stage of Professionalism	Country	Partner comment
Not developed at all	South American	“Some exceptions may exist in Brazil but manage some groups of fans as Ultras, they don ´t work as SLOs.”
At an early stage of development	Poland	“This is a recently introduced initiative; many actors are not aware of the importance of SLOs.”
Developing	Sweden	Sweden has a long tradition of SLOs but the role needs to be more professional and be more integrated in the Swedish sport model.”
Developing	Sweden	“I am from Sweden and the implementation started 2012, we have come a long way but there is still room to improve the understanding of the role from all stakeholders.”
Developing	Sweden	“Ongoing development, some clubs far ahead with full time SLOs, and others with no SLO.”
Developing	Germany	“They are developed, but club specific aspects are still strong factors of influence on the SLO's tasks and status.”
Developing	France	“All Ligue 1 and Ligue 2 clubs now have SLOs, and the position has developed extensively in the past few years. It is important to keep in mind that France did not have any SLO prior to 2018, meaning a lot of progress was made in a short timespan. However, many issues still need to be addressed, including the recognition of the SLO role by public stakeholders like the police or prefectures. The SLOs working conditions are also quite hard in France, many of them often combine two positions at the club, which really crowds their timetable. Some SLOs don't even have a full-time job, others are not even paid for filling this role. A lot of education still has to be done regarding this position and its importance.”
Fully developed	Sweden	“Sweden is one of Europe's best-practice countries for SLOs.”

4.3 Achievements so far

Overall, 8 of 9 partners (89%) were very satisfied or satisfied with their contributions to the project so far.

“We developed the recommendations for occupational standards. Work on developing the content of the standards is progressing well. “

“There are, roughly, 3 work streams: occupational standards, university courses, and the road map to South America. For the occupational standards I am very satisfied, for the other two: satisfied.”

The other contributor was 'quite satisfied', who noted "there could be more demands for counselling the different national groups.", in other words, their expertise had not been drawn on to the full extent.

Suggestion

One of the partners made a suggestion for how FSE, the Coordinator, could do more to engage them on the project:

"In the face-to-face meetings, I would have liked to live a day or two in the life of an SLO at his club and during a match day. I've never seen that and think it is important for me to have that opportunity, to be able to know by own experience before defining the roadmap for South America."

Reflecting on achievements

During the November 2024 partner meeting, the independent evaluator carried out a learning review. We began by discussing what the partners had achieved so far.

The partners in this project have demonstrated a remarkable level of collaborative success, fostering an interactive and engaging working environment.

"I think an important thing here is, when we do these projects, we want to have interaction with it, with our partners, so it's not just us lecturing and people sitting quietly."

The emphasis on open communication and feedback has been a hallmark of the project (and notes again in partner survey responses).

A key achievement has been the establishment of a climate of trust and synergy among the team members.

"I feel free to improve, or to contribute my thoughts immediately in these in these workshops. And that's, for me, a sign for a working system."

This sense of trust and comfort in expressing ideas has facilitated productive discussions and mutual respect for each other's expertise. The partners have also successfully incorporated diverse perspectives into the project, particularly from SLOs themselves.

"I think that's been a tremendous strength to the project, and that's getting some buy in, some input from practitioners. I don't think we should have sat in a room and just thought it all up ourselves."

For the academic partners, the project has provided an opportunity for personal and professional growth, and to be part of something that could make a more lasting impact.

"I see that how, even if you are an academic, can go beyond your sometimes narrow perspective, by working with people from different areas. I have impression that what I do here with can have some social and policy impact, like a handbook with recommendation for policy makers in football."

The partners are optimistic about the potential impact of the project,

"If we can actually do this, create occupational standards that can work for SLOs. If we can have university courses in three different countries, if we can be of assistance of introducing the SLO role to Brazil and then further into South America, that would be the biggest feather in our FSE hat ever."

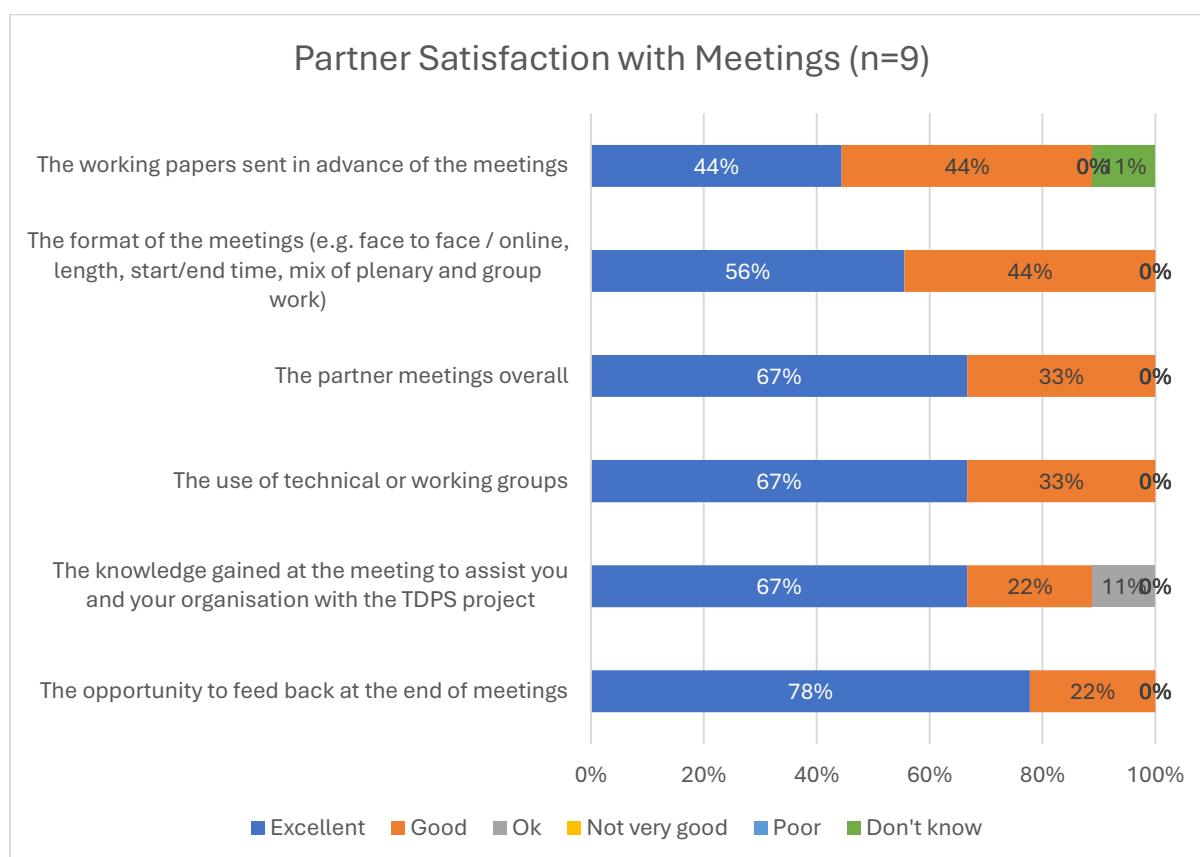
An additional benefit of the learning review was that it served to galvanise and give confidence to the partners, so they were in a positive frame of mind to tackle the challenges ahead of them in day two.

Understanding of planned deliverables and roles within the project

It is encouraging that all of the partners reported being clear about their roles and responsibilities in the TPDS project, and also about the key deliverables expected.

4.4 Partner Meetings, Working Together and Partnership Working

Partners were first asked to think about the different aspects of partner meetings.



It is encouraging that all except for 2 responses were either 'excellent' or 'good'. Partners highlighting the opportunity to feed back at the end of meetings, the knowledge gained through the meetings and the use of technical /working groups as especially strong.

Suggested improvements

Partners made the following suggestions:

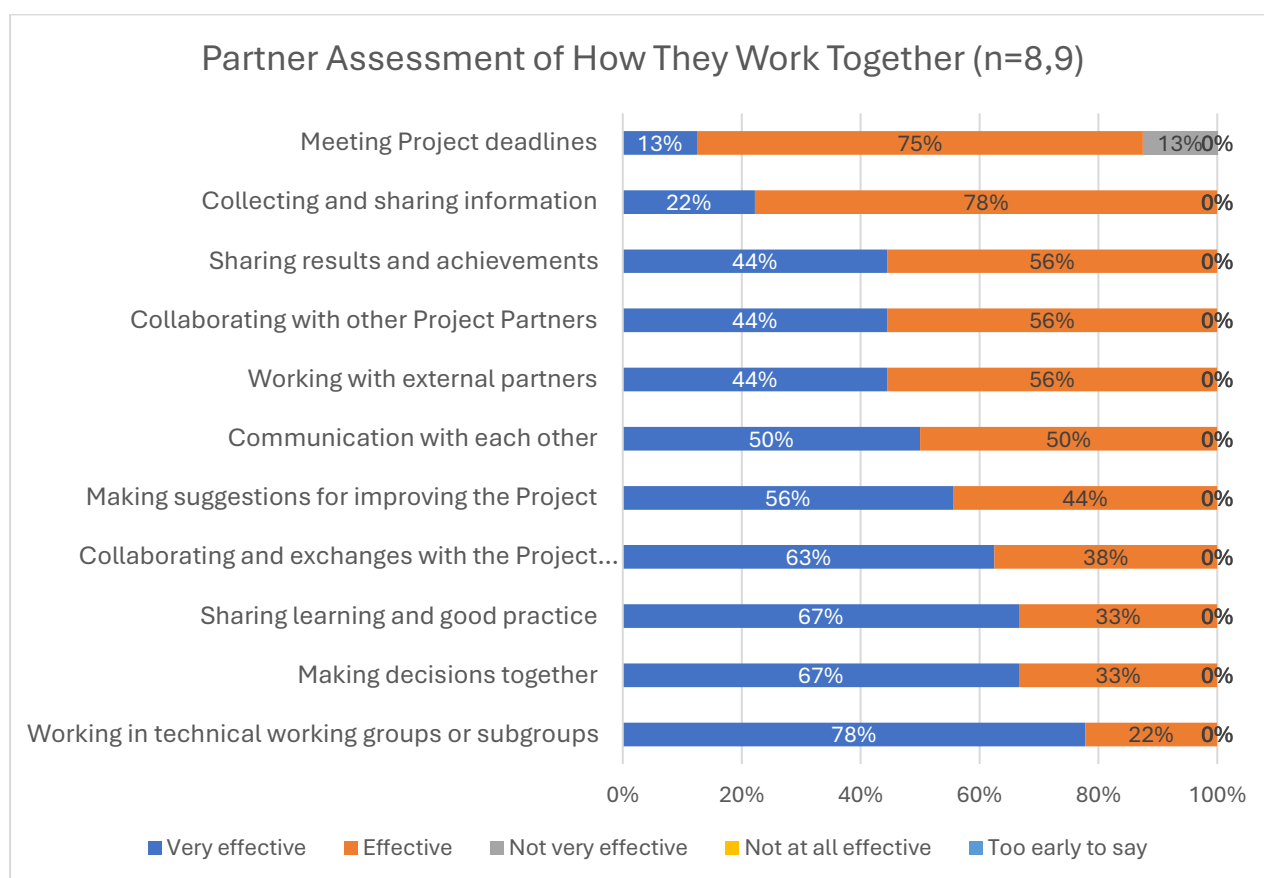
“There were early complications regarding reclaiming costs of attending meetings, but these have now been resolved.”

“Define the goals for each stakeholder/partner more clearly.”

“Earlier date setting for workshops.”

“Possibly by inviting external speakers to offer additional insights.”

Partners were asked to consider and then rate the different ways they worked together on the TPDS project. The results are shown below.



The results are again positive, but it is worth noting the partner concerns about potentially conflicting deadlines and the time constraints to develop training modules (especially where they need to align university timescales with SLO’s working schedules). It was seen to be very important that the pilot was both credible and high quality, in order that SLOs have a positive, valuable experience.

“However, I am concerned that more time should have been allocated to developing and planning the delivery of the pilot modules.”

“Working pressure from concurring themes leads to deadline conflicts.”

Independent observation

The evaluator saw firsthand how this challenge was discussed openly and honestly when the partners met. The Coordinator and FSE staff were both firm in restating the deadlines, but also understanding and open to discussing different ways the training content could be tested.

It was a useful, frank and honest conversation which concluded by highlighting that this pilot phase did allow some latitude in terms of what training was undertaken. A valuable suggestion was for the three module developers to work together to ensure that, overall, the different modules were piloted with real learners. As one partner reflected later, this showed:

“Good communication between FSE and the other partners through the project so far discussion of problematic issues and reaching consensus together.”

Partners spoke afterwards of being reassured, and glad that their concerns had been taken seriously.



Going forward, there will be value in regularly restating the project deadlines, to ensure all partners remain aware of them.

In the table below, we share further partner examples of effectively working together and why this was effective. The functional mapping and occupational standards approach, with its technical working group with SLOs actively part of the deliberations was again highlighted as good practice – by engaging stakeholders and influencing the module development.

Example where partners worked together effectively and why did it worked well

“Working with FSE on the functional mapping and occupational standards has been good.”

“I think the draft of the functional map was quite effective. Discussing it with all the partners and then having a few of the partners design the map has proven to be an efficient way of drafting it. I think it worked very well overall, and the functional map is therefore quite extensive and clear.”

“The Technical Working Group for the occupational standards has worked extremely well, with 8 SLO's from 8 different countries taking part.

“The Technical Working Group is a good practice example. FSE and EOSE worked together very effectively and got buy in from the external stakeholders (SLOs) and then shared the outcomes with the other partners, who were able to adapt their pilot courses accordingly.”

“Very satisfying interactions with the University of Kassel.”

“All transnational workshops are examples for good cooperation; the openness for each other, the inspiring frame on site and the good preparation of Mattia Angelini are the main reasons for this.”

“During the partner meeting in Malmö, we engaged in constructive discussions, effectively adjusting our approach after exchanging ideas and perspectives on the roles and responsibilities of an SLO.”

The ‘enabling factors’ are summarised below:



Suggestions

A small number of suggestions were made to improve how partners worked together, together with affirmation of the current approach.

“The process is clear and sharp; I think it should continue as planned.”

The key point raised is the value of more communication by partners between partner meetings.

“Maybe a bit more communication between meetings?”

“By reaching out to each other more actively.”

“More exchange, maybe by low level communication like signal groups”

“Possibly more could be done to get the universities to work together on the module design.”

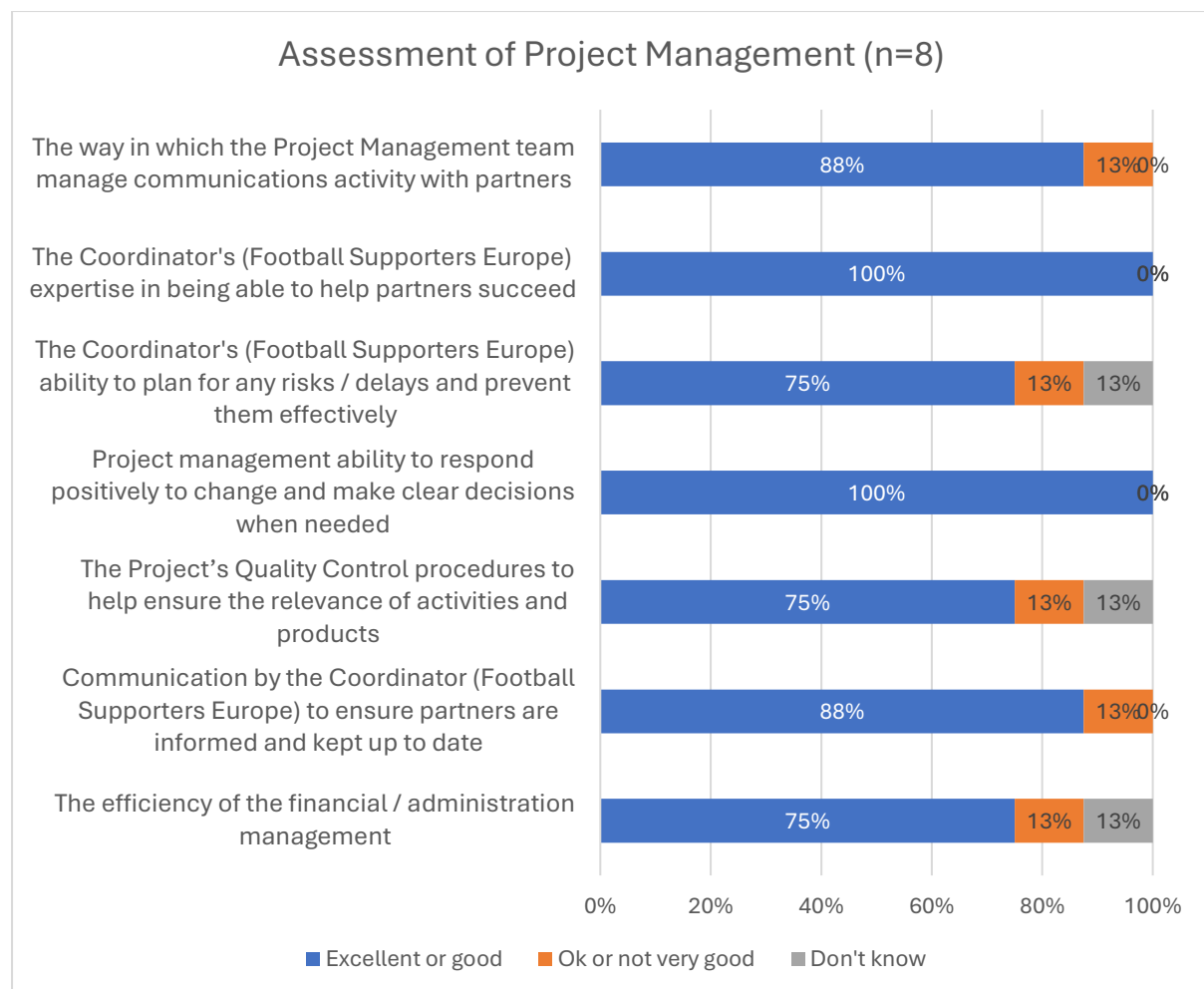
The last point made relates to ensuring expectations (and associated deadlines) are clearly communicated and understood by partners.

“Clearer expectations for each partner related to their own process.”



4.5 Project Management

This next section of the report considers partners’ views on how the project is being managed. The chart on the next page shows partner ratings to different aspects of project management.



Feedback was again positive overall. The strongest feedback (rated excellent by partners) was for FSE's expertise to help partners succeed and the Coordinator's ability to respond positively to change and make clear decisions.

Two partners gave 'ok' rating to the following:

- The efficiency of the financial / administration management
- Communication by the Coordinator (Football Supporters Europe) to ensure partners are informed and kept up to date
- The Coordinator's to plan for any risks / delays and prevent them effectively
- The way in which the Project Management team manage communications activity with partners.

One partner rated 'Communication by the Coordinator' to ensure partners are informed and kept up to date as 'not very good' and stated:

"I feel like some pieces of information could and should have been given to us sooner. It put a lot of pressure upon us to learn in November 2024 that we had to deliver the training course by May 2025. If this was a deadline known from the beginning, why weren't we made aware of this sooner?"

Only one partner reported challenges in the first half of the project, which related to financial procedures, but said that the Coordinator had been 'effective' at resolving the issue.

“Financial procedures for reclaiming expenses were unnecessarily complex, also the expectation to pay for common meals etc.”

4.6 Learning Points

An important focus for the interim evaluation is to capture learning from the first part of the project.

At the Malmö partner meeting, a learning review was carried out by the independent evaluator. The key themes are as follows:

1. Flexibility in course delivery: The project allows for national variations and adaptable course structures. It is interesting that the most advanced SLO countries (Sweden and Germany) have university level training for SLOs, whereas the scope and dose of training being planned, for example in Poland (where SLOs are still at an early stage of development) is lighter.
"You're free to do whatever suits your country, your culture"
2. Importance of feedback: Gathering quality feedback from participants and stakeholders is crucial for course development and improvement.
"We need to gather groups of people with whom we will make this workshop, and train participants and collect feedback"
3. Challenges in measuring SLO impact: Quantifying the value added by SLOs remains difficult. The partners resolved in November to reflect and consider what metrics would be most useful to measure a potential change in professionalism. Clues from the discussion include
"If you utilise your SLO(s) in the right way, you're going to save time and money for the club"
4. Need for a common evaluation framework: While the format and dose of training being developed varies by country, partners agreed that for the TDPS project, it will be necessary to develop a standardised way to assess the effectiveness of SLO training
"I think we need to build an evaluation framework into the work programme"
5. Balancing deadlines and quality: There's a need to be flexible with deliverables while maintaining project integrity.
"When the deadline is in front of us, we have to be flexible."
6. Diverse learning approaches: The project explores various training doses (in terms of guided learning hours) and methods. This is an opportunity to use the pilot as "an open experiment" to compare outcomes from different approaches. The current UEFA training delivered by FSE would act as the control or comparison group.
7. Long-term vision: The project is creating not just training modules, but also a blueprint for the SLO role in Europe and South America.

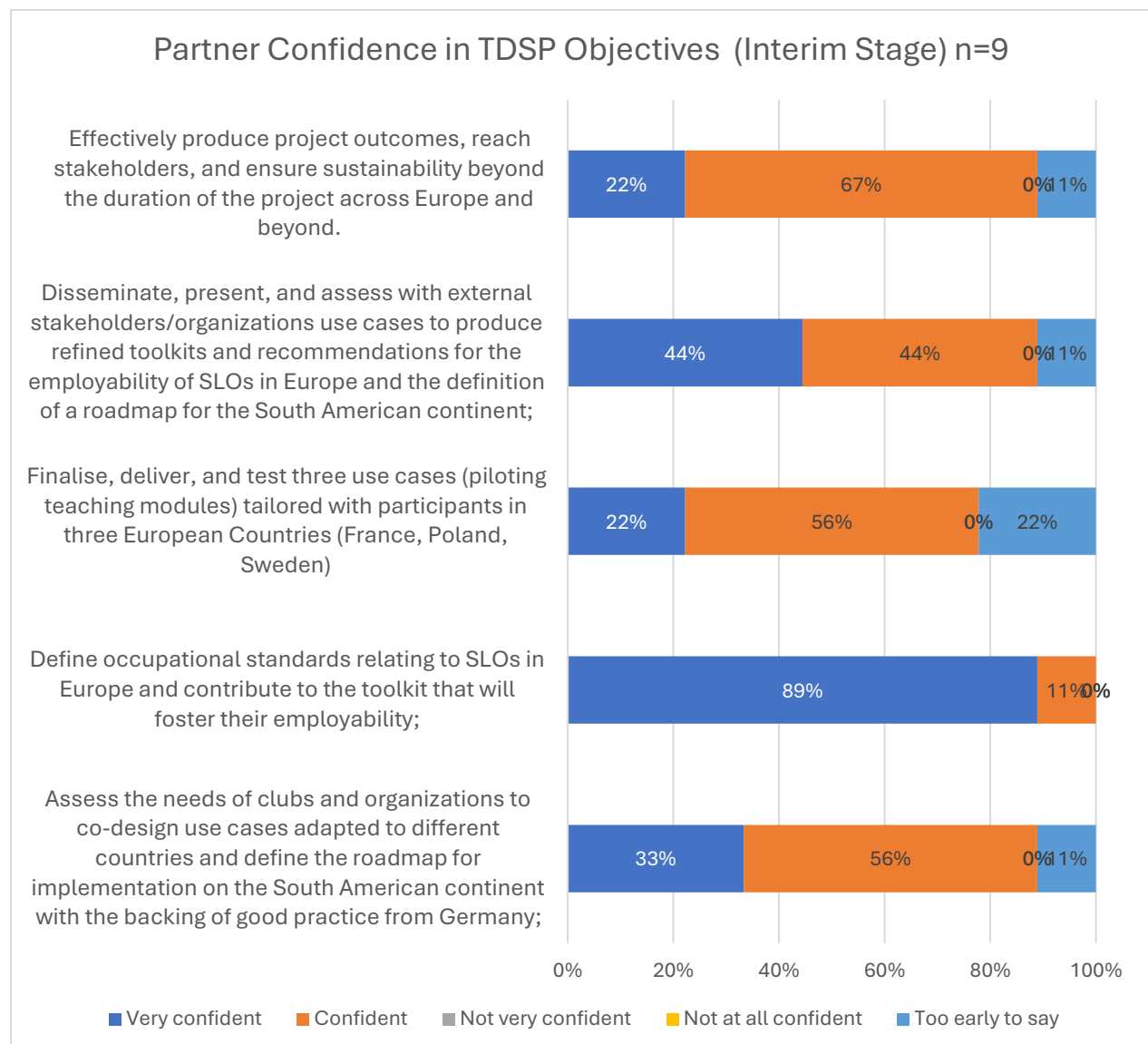
In the interim survey, partners' learning points can be summarised as follows

The Importance and need for professionalisation of the SLO Role	Value of international collaboration and knowledge exchange	Importance of ongoing communication between partners
"The vital importance of the SLO and the broad nature of the role." "Professionalisation is crucial for better fan work." "For me, the most significant takeaway has been learning about the existence and scope of the SLO role." "A lot of learnings from the work with the occupational standards, how and what the SLOs need to think about in their line of work."	"The importance of international collaboration and common discussion to improve the role of the SLO." "Transnational exchange leads to growth." "Also interesting to see that Brazil, and CONMEBOL, has come very prepared for the project."	"Communication and information diffusion is key in order to ensure the project can run smoothly." I also see a necessity for more frequent communications between meetings, so we don't 'lose' someone."

4.7 Partner Confidence

The final part of the evaluation survey tested how confident partners were feeling about successfully completing each of the key objectives of the project.

At the interim stage, confidence overall is high, with never less than 7 out of 9 survey respondents answering either 'very confident' or 'confident' for each objective. Unsurprisingly, confidence was highest for the objective that has been tackled first, to define occupational standards.



Only one supporting comment was offered:

“The piloting teaching modules (university courses) is the only one I'm a bit unsure of. It's moving a bit slower than the other ones. And it's run by people outside of football: academics. We'll see.”

4.8 Final comments

Final comments affirmed the partner's belief in the project and also provided constructive feedback to the (English) evaluator.

"We have very much enjoyed being part of this project. There is a great synergy developing among the partners."

"FSE do an important job in a diversified and complex football l- and supporter landscape. We need more collaboration and discussions for future challenges."

"Good evaluation questions :)"

"Overall, this project really is something that I am very proud to work on. I hope it will be a key milestone for the development of the SLO role in Europe and beyond, and I am very proud to be involved in this project. All the partners are great, and our working relationship is efficient. It also is a very nice human adventure, I've met incredible people along the way, so thank you TPDS."

"I am grateful for the opportunity and excited to continue advancing this project and process. I am confident that South America will complete this stage with a strong and well-defined roadmap, paving the way for successful implementation."

Evaluator's assessment

At this interim stage (February 2025), the interim evaluation evidence shows that that the TPDS has made a strong stage. The Partners are motivated to complete this ambitious project which has clear scope for follow up projects (e.g. to transfer to other sports or new countries).

The partners have adopted an effective way to work together and involved SLOs in the development of the occupational standards and functional map, the crucial foundation for all subsequent training. There are likely to be challenges piloting the training modules within the agree timelines of the project, but this issue has been raised, discussed and solutions proposed.

Confidence is high that the TDPS team will deliver on the project's intended outputs.

5 Interim Recommendations

At this interim point, the independent evaluator would like to make the following operational recommendations.

1. Football Supporters Europe reflects on all of the partner feedback provided in order to inform the last phase of the project – particularly in relation to supporting partners facing deadline pressures and how to facilitate more communication between meetings.
2. Include regular recaps of the project's deliverables before or at the next partner meeting to ensure all partners have the full picture.

3. Agree an overarching evaluation framework for the three pilot modules (good practice would be for this to be led by the University of Kassel) and gain permission to recontact SLOs involved in the pilot at a later stage to consider how useful the training has been ‘for real’.
4. Set out clearly how the TPDS project outputs are distinct from the existing SLO training offer sponsored by UEFA and delivered by FSE.

Disclaimer: Information in this interim evaluation report is presented in good faith and thought to be accurate at time of publication (February 14th, 2025), however, the author cannot accept responsibility for errors or omissions.

ⁱ For the partners to agree. The framework should ideally be informed by the approach currently in use with FSE’s UEFA training. It could include feedback on quality and relevance of training, agreement with a set of outcome statements linked to the learning objectives and project aims, a general ‘to what extent did the training fulfil the intended learning objectives’ question and a ‘willingness to recommend’ measure. This evaluation evidence would be supported by monitoring to understand how many SLOs took part and how many completed the modules included in the pilot.

ⁱⁱ Source: <https://www.fanseurope.org/implementing-the-slo-role/#:~:text=The%20delivery%20of%20SLO%20Education,challenges%20of%20the%20SLO%20role.>

ⁱⁱⁱ The project’s website is: <https://www.fanseurope.org/tpds/>

^{iv} Source: <https://www.efl.com/supporters/slos/>

^v The LIAISE project was the first to focus on SLOs. <https://www.sdeurope.eu/liaise>

‘TPDS’
Towards the Professional Development of SLOs
Final Independent Evaluation Report



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1 TPDS Final Evaluation: Executive Summary

Introduction

This is the final independent evaluation report for the 'Towards the Professional Development of SLOs' ('TPDS') project, led by Football Supporters Europe. TPDS was a transnational project to create new occupational standards, learning and develop and pilot new training for SLOs. The project started in June 2023 and finished in May 2026 with the submission of a final report to the European Commission.

Key messages

1. TPDS helped move SLO professionalisation closer by developing new training pathways.

The project clarified what professionalisation for SLOs needs to involve in practice: clearer expectations of the role, a stronger account of the skills and competences SLOs need, and more structured thinking about training and progression. TPDS helped partners understand what good SLO practice exists and how it can be adapted to their contexts.

2. The Occupational Standards Handbook is the project's most universal legacy.

This is the project output partners were most confident about, and the one with the clearest route to future use. Its strength lies in both the process and the product: it was developed with EOSE expertise, partner input and direct involvement from experienced SLOs. The Handbook can now provide a reference point for role descriptions, recruitment, training design, professional recognition and improved UEFA/FSE SLO learning. The Occupational Standards are 'context agnostic' and are designed to be implemented anywhere.

3. Partnership working was a strength, particularly where partners had a clear shared task.

The best example was the work on the Occupational Standards, where partners had a concrete output to shape together with SLO input. Partners valued the openness of the meetings, the chance to compare different national systems, and the way FSE supported discussion across universities, football organisations and SLOs. The project also showed that collaboration worked best when expectations, deadlines and deliverables were clear.

4. The training pilots produced useful learning, but their future take-up is less certain.

The pilots showed that SLO training benefits from being adapted to reflect the local context and the maturity of the SLO role in that country. France appears to have the clearest route towards a sustainable training programme, with institutional engagement and a clear next step. Sweden has interest and relevant experience, but implementation questions around scale, numbers and delivery. Poland appears to need stronger football stakeholder ownership before training can become embedded. An unexpected outcome is that the University of Kassel's best practice FZM course (Germany) is also being revised as a result of the learning from this project.

5. The South America roadmap has progressed positively, with unexpected twists.

TPDS shared European good practice with CONMEBOL to start to professionalise the SLO role in South America. The Paraguay multiplier event created positive interest and showed how SLOs could contribute to prevention, safety and supporter communication. However, the experience in Brazil also showed that the South American work is politically and practically complex. Underpinned by FSE's continued expert support to CONMEBOL, the conditions are in place for a further pilot project in South America.

6. Sustainability.

The project produced outputs that *should* be used and useful, but there was perhaps insufficient time in the second half of the project allocated to discussing sustainability options. Sustainability will depend on whether they are promoted and adopted by the right organisations now the project has ended. The lack of a sustainability action plan in the project specification was noticed and acted on by FSE, with an additional commitment to keep partner dialogue going.

Approach

- For this report, the independent evaluator developed an online survey which was completed by nine representatives from the seven partner organisations. The evaluator also watched a recording of the final partner meeting which discussed the South American multiplier event and sustainability.

Achievements

- 8 of 9 partners (89%) were very satisfied or satisfied with their contributions to the project so far – highlighting the quality of the approaches and partners' pride in their work.

Partner meetings and partnership working

- All of the partners (and never less than 6 of the 7 partners) considered the different aspects of partner meetings and partnership working to be either 'excellent' or 'good'. The partner team complemented each other well.

"The meetings in-person were very creative and well structured, and since all the participants came with a lot of knowledge, we could educate each other."

Project management

- Partners consistently rated FSE's project management as excellent or good across the seven domains tested, which is a similar picture to that reported at the interim stage (February 2025). One partner considered there was room for improvement in the efficiency of financial payments and planning for risks when implementing pilots.
- When difficulties arose in the second half of the project, the project partners involved felt well supported by FSE – particularly when difficulties arose in arranging the final partner multiplier event in South America. After the unexpected departure of the project's Brazilian contact, the event was delayed then moved to Paraguay where a very successful visit took place in April 2026.

Learning

- Partners described the project as increasing their understanding of the SLO role, its value to football, and how it can be developed across different national contexts (and potentially other sports as well).
- Partners valued learning from each other, sharing their knowledge and developing cross-cutting Occupational Standards and pilot training courses in three different contexts. The learning was not just technical, it came from working through cultural differences between Europe and South America, academia and SLOs, and different national football contexts.
- The need for further sustainability planning was identified, which FSE responded positively to by offering to lead on the creation of a sustainability action plan (which was not one of the agreed project outputs, itself a learning point for the future). Continued stakeholder promotion and support will be required, ideally with the 'top down' support from UEFA, for the Occupational Standards to be used (including in UEFA's SLO training) and, over time, embedded in how football clubs recruit and train SLOs.
- The training pilots highlighted useful learning about how to differentiate training for SLOs in different countries and with different levels of experience. FSE work and energy were still needed to embed the SLO role in different settings.

Partner confidence and sustainability

- Partners saw the Occupational Standards Handbook as the strongest and most sustainable output. Feedback suggests it is the clearest legacy from TPDS, with practical value for SLOs, SLO coordinators, football associations, clubs, and UEFA.

- Confidence was high overall that the training courses will be used and valued but acknowledged there were challenges to implementation in each of the countries. France appears to have the clearest route towards a sustainable training programme, Sweden has interest but practical challenges to overcome, and Poland has not yet set out a clear plan which depends on the support of their national football association. After sharing their good practice, the University of Kassel (Germany) is in turn updating their mature training course in light of the learning from TPDS to offer two training courses at different levels.
- Partners consider that the project's outputs are sustainable, but don't agree how. It seems likely that sustainability will depend on wider institutional commitment. Comments point to the need for UEFA, national associations, clubs, leagues, ministries and CONMEBOL to adopt, promote or invest in the different outputs if they are to have systemic impact, as well as explore further development projects
- The South America roadmap is promising but uncertain. CONMEBOL has shown positive interest in using the roadmap for a pilot project over the next two years. The pilot country is now likely to be Paraguay rather than Brazil – another key learning point from the project.

Legacy

- Partners mainly see the legacy as the professionalisation and wider recognition of the SLO role, supported by the Occupational Standards Handbook, training models and stronger cross-country networks. The legacy is seen as promising but not secured, with partners highlighting the need for adoption by football institutions, continued training roll-out and further work in South America.

Final recommendations

The independent evaluator would like to suggest two final recommendations for FSE to consider

1. FSE should invite partners to contribute to a short sustainability plan that sets out what happens to each output after the project closes. This should cover the Occupational Standards, toolkit, recommendations, training modules and South America Roadmap.
2. FSE and partners to share how they will valorise¹ (dissemination and exploitation of) the project's outputs as part of planned six monthly check ins.

Evaluator's assessment

At this final stage (May 2026), the interim and final evaluation evidence shows that the TPDS project has made important contributions towards professionalising the SLO role in Europe and South America. The partners have worked effectively together to complete this ambitious project, sharing good practice and creating valuable Occupational Standards for the role, piloting new training courses and also supporting CONMEBOL to take their first steps towards professionalising the SLO role in South America.

The project manager effectively managed the partners' contributions and the project administration so partners could focus on the task in hand. Confidence is high overall that the TPDS outputs will be sustainable, likely in different forms, but all requiring the ongoing commitment from the project partners and their national and international stakeholders. The commitment by FSE to lead on a sustainability action plan, bring the partners back together to continue to share with one another and to offer support to CONMEBOL means the conditions are in place for the project's legacy to be achieved.

2 Introduction

This is the final evaluation report for the ‘Towards the Professional Development of SLOs’ (TPDS) led by Football Supporters Europe.ⁱⁱ ‘SLOs’ are ‘Supporter Liaison Officers’, who “act as a point of contact for supporters; while also providing a link between fans/fan groups and a Club's senior staff and ownership.”ⁱⁱⁱ

TPDS was a transnational project to create new learning, validation, and certification pathways for SLOs and, where necessary and appropriate, other personnel employed in matchday organisations, and operations in Europe.

The project started in June 2023 and finished in May 2026.

The project had the following main objectives:

1. Assess the needs of clubs and organizations to co-design use cases adapted to different countries and define the roadmap for implementation on the South American continent with the backing of good practice from Germany
2. Define occupational standards relating to SLOs in Europe and contribute to the toolkit that will foster their employability
3. Finalise, deliver, and test three use cases (piloting teaching modules) tailored with participants in three European Countries (France, Poland, Sweden)
4. Disseminate, present, and assess with external stakeholders/organizations use cases to produce refined toolkits and recommendations for the employability of SLOs in Europe and the definition of a roadmap for the South American continent
5. Effectively produce project outcomes, reach stakeholders, and ensure sustainability beyond the duration of the project across Europe and beyond.

The project was delivered by a set of seven partners, including one from South America. Football Supporters Europe was the lead organisation and Coordinator.

1. CDES Centre de Droit et d'Economie du Sport – University of Limoges, France
2. CONMEBOL - Confederation of South American Football, Paraguay
3. EOSE - European Observatoire of Sport and Employment, France
4. Football Supporters Europe, Germany
5. Malmö University, Sweden
6. University of Gdańsk, Poland
7. University of Kassel, Germany

This project built on the legacy of previous projects led by FSE starting in 2010^{iv}, who continue to deliver a 2-day training course to SLOs on behalf of UEFA.

3 Methodology

For this final report, the independent evaluator prepared an online survey, which was reviewed and improved by Football Supporters Europe.

Each of the seven consortium partners (including the Coordinator) completed the survey between 7th April and 5th May 2026. A total of 9 survey responses were received.^v The evaluator sought clarification and more detail if responses were unclear or incomplete.

Unless otherwise stated, the base for all charts and tables in this report is 9. All percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number. Qualitative comments are included (all anonymously) to ensure that the voices of partners are central to the report.

All qualitative responses have been reviewed and the key themes identified. This process was carried out manually, then cross-checked and refined using artificial intelligence.

Football Supporters Europe reviewed the draft report to correct any unintended errors. None of the independent evaluator's assessments have been changed. Key findings will be shared with the project partners.

This report mirrors the format used for the draft evaluation report, but also includes a new section on how partners view the sustainability of the project's outputs.

Limitations

This report is based on the views of the core project lead and project partners. It is not the purpose of this evaluation to judge the quality or efficacy of the outputs produced, the test of which will be their use (or not) by their intended audiences.

All suggested partner improvements and suggestions have been included for transparency. However, as will become clear, it is important to recognise that these comments come from a small proportion of the partners.

The key findings section begins by exploring partner motivations and expectations.

Context^{vi}

The Towards the Professional Development of SLOs project sits within a wider phase of development for the Supporter Liaison Officer role in football. In Europe, the SLO role is already embedded in the formal football governance and licensing environment. UEFA's Club Licensing and Financial Sustainability Regulations require licence applicants to appoint a supporter liaison officer as the key contact point for supporters, and state that the SLO should meet and collaborate regularly with relevant club personnel on supporter-related matters. This means the role is no longer peripheral. It is part of the expected infrastructure of well-run professional football clubs.

However, regulation alone does not create a fully developed profession. The wider European evidence suggests that the SLO role is now recognised and increasingly visible, but still developing in terms of consistency, status, training, role boundaries and professional identity. UEFA Academy's SLO Education Programme, developed with Football Supporters Europe, already provides SLOs in clubs and national associations with the tools, knowledge and skills for the role. It is modular, can be organised as a four-day workshop or two two-day workshops, and is designed so national associations can adapt it to their own context. This provides an important European training foundation.

TPDS was designed to address a recognised gap in the SLO landscape. FSE notes that, despite the wide embrace of the role across many European leagues, there is still no consistent approach to exactly what an SLO is or does, or what experience and personal characteristics are needed to succeed. The project was therefore designed to identify the knowledge, skills and attributes, or occupational standards, needed in the SLO role, while also working with universities to establish higher education pathways in supporter liaison. EOSE's notes that SLOs are relatively new, the role is not always well defined and there are few training opportunities available.

In the interim evaluation, partners saw professionalising the SLO role as an important issue for football and valued the opportunity to bring together different expertise in supporter liaison, occupational standards, training and higher education. The project was also seen as significant because SLO professionalisation was at very different stages across Europe, creating a need for shared learning and adaptable models. The interim evaluation found that partners had developed open and constructive ways of working together, and that the technical working group, involving SLO practitioners, was regarded as a particular achievement in developing the functional map and occupational standards.

The South American context is a distinctive and innovative feature of TPDS. SLOs in South America, as in Europe, are at different stages of development. South American football governance operates within different fan cultures, organisational structures and socio-political conditions. TPDS has not tried to simply export a European model, but to provide the good practice framework that can then be contextualised.

In several CONMEBOL member association systems, there is evidence of a fan liaison type function within club licensing, but this is not mandatory for clubs (who face no sanctions if they don't honour them). For example, the Argentine Football Association's club licensing regulations require clubs to designate a person as the key contact between supporters and the club; this person must attend regular meetings with club management and collaborate with the safety officer on security matters. Paraguay shows a similar pattern. The Paraguayan Football Association's club licensing rules also include the 'Oficial de Enlace con los Aficionados', but

this is not mandated, and (according to the CONMEBOL partner) some of the role is typically picked up by an Ultra representative (unpaid and who may, or may not, deal with other ultra groups). This project will form part of the argument to formalise the role.

TPDS has helped to move SLOs from a role that may exist in regulation or administration towards a more clearly defined professional practice. A licensing requirement does not provide a shared account of the competences, training, working relationships, ethical boundaries, practical tools or professional development needed for the role to work well. TPDS added value by sharing good practice from more mature contexts, and FSE will continue to offer advice and support which provides continuity.

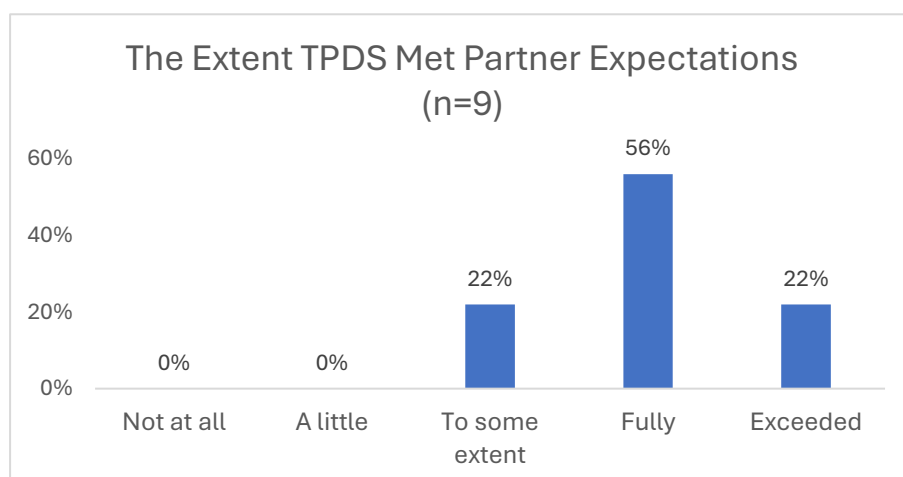
Brazil appears to be a particularly important case – but a more volatile context than FSE first imagined. Publicly available Brazilian sources point to a strong and active framework around supporter rights, stadium safety, access, anti-racism, competition regulation and the management of supporter experience. Historically, Brazil's Estatuto de Defesa do Torcedor required clubs to publish basic relationship guidelines with supporters, including communication between the supporter and the club. Under the newer Lei Geral do Esporte, Brazilian sport regulation continues to include supporter-facing mechanisms such as the competition ombudsman, with the regulation, competition tables and name of the competition ombudsman to be published before a competition begins.

The South American dimension of TPDS is also significant because CONMEBOL has been an active partner in the project, FSE's first project to feature a South American partner, with CONMEBOL involved in developing a roadmap for establishing the SLO role on the continent, and commitment to progress shared at a visit to Paraguay in April 2026 – described as [“the full South American experience”](#) – a symbolic and timely visit - which was seen to have made an important contribution to SLO development on that continent.

4 Key Findings

4.1 Meeting Expectations

Partners were asked to consider the extent to which the TPDS project had met their expectations. For 8 of the 9 respondents (6 of the 7 partners), the project fully met or exceeded their expectations. Partners recognised that the project was well managed and they gained knowledge and connections from their work. The project helped to legitimise the case for professionalising SLOs. Two partners provided constructive feedback, one around the implementation of the pilots and from the other, a regret they were not more involved in these.



Supporting comments have been coded and shown below.

Theme	Count	Example responses
Positive overall experience, with expectations fully met or exceeded	4	"Well played." "Great organisation, relevance of topic and learnings."
Stronger knowledge, legitimacy and new partner relationships	1	"When the project started, our knowledge of supporters management and SLO was minimal, and we didn't know any of the project members. Eventually, we gained a lot of knowledge and legitimacy on this matter and met nice passionate colleagues."
Occupational Standards, university courses and South America work performed strongly	1	"The work on the Occupational Standards has exceeded my expectations. The work on the university courses has fully met them, and the work on the road map to South America has, in the end, exceeded my expectations."
Training courses needed greater consistency and fuller piloting	1	"I felt there should have been greater consistency between the courses offered by the training providers and all providers should have fully piloted their courses."
One partner wanted deeper involvement in national groups	1	"I would like to be more involved in the work of the national groups."

4.2 Achievements

Overall, 8 of 9 respondents (89%, or 6 of 7 partners) were very satisfied or satisfied with their contributions to the project.

Total responses to this open question: n=5		
Theme (top 5 only)	Count	Example responses
Strong contribution to delivery and quality outputs	2	"I think we worked very hard with FSE and the Technical Working Group to create a quality product. We probably went above and beyond what had been expected."

		"I think FSE has managed to lead and make sure every part of this project got fulfilled."
Stakeholder engagement, course delivery and wider sector discussions	1	"We managed to gather a lot of stakeholders and SLOs, attracted many interested parties, organised a course and participated in larger scale discussions at conferences."
Internal support enabled the organisation to deliver what it wanted	1	"We got internal support and could develop everything we wanted."
One partner felt they could have contributed more	1	"I could have invested much more time to give more information and advice to the project partners."

Support received from the Project Coordinator

All of the project partners felt well supported throughout the project by FSE and made the following constructive comments.

"I feel we got good support in the standards development from FSE. My only minor complaint was sometimes there was a bit of a time lag between a request on our side and a response from theirs."

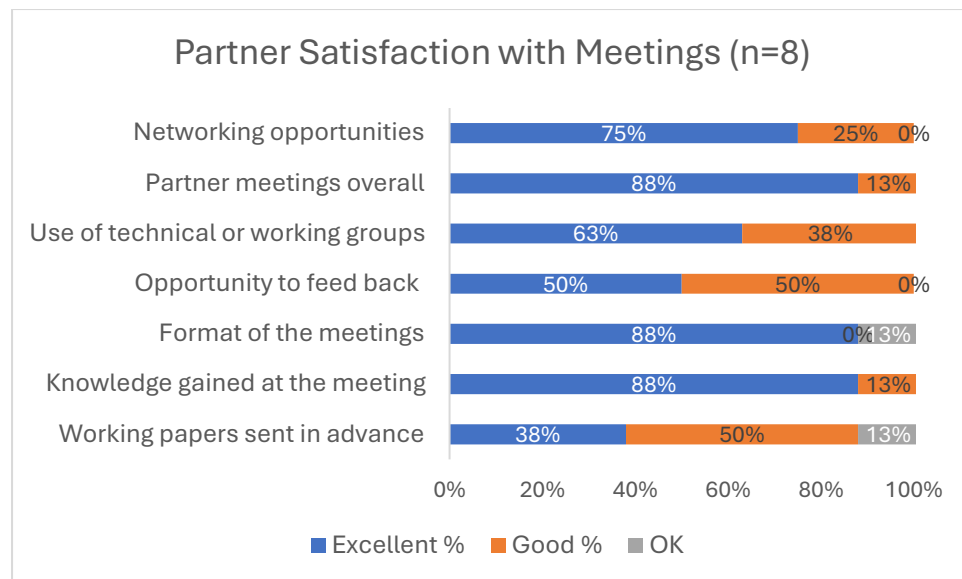
"Only issue was a lack of communication of an important deadline^{vii}, which caused stress. But everything eventually settled."

FSE themselves noted that:

"As FSE we are very satisfied with how the whole project implementation was carried out. The piloting of the training and the organisation of the Global Multiplier Event in South America were probably the most challenging aspects and we will take this challenge as a lesson on how to better prepare the consortium and how to better plan in the future to address it."

4.3 Partner Meetings

Partners were again asked to think about the different aspects of partner meetings. At the interim stage all except for 2 responses were either 'excellent' or 'good'. At the end of the project, the same pattern was repeated. All or the large majority of partners considered all aspects of partner meetings to be excellent or good. There were 2 'ok' ratings, both from the same partner, for the format of meetings and the working papers sent beforehand. None of the partners rated any aspect as 'not very good' or 'poor'.



Suggested improvements

FSE could consider the following improvements for future projects.

"Clearer structure for the meetings. More 1-on-1 meetings with partners to facilitate communications and gather information and feedback that can be then addressed collectively."

"Improve the financial arrangements for expenses, but I think we have discussed this at length in the past."

The following improvement relates to the key point of sustainability:

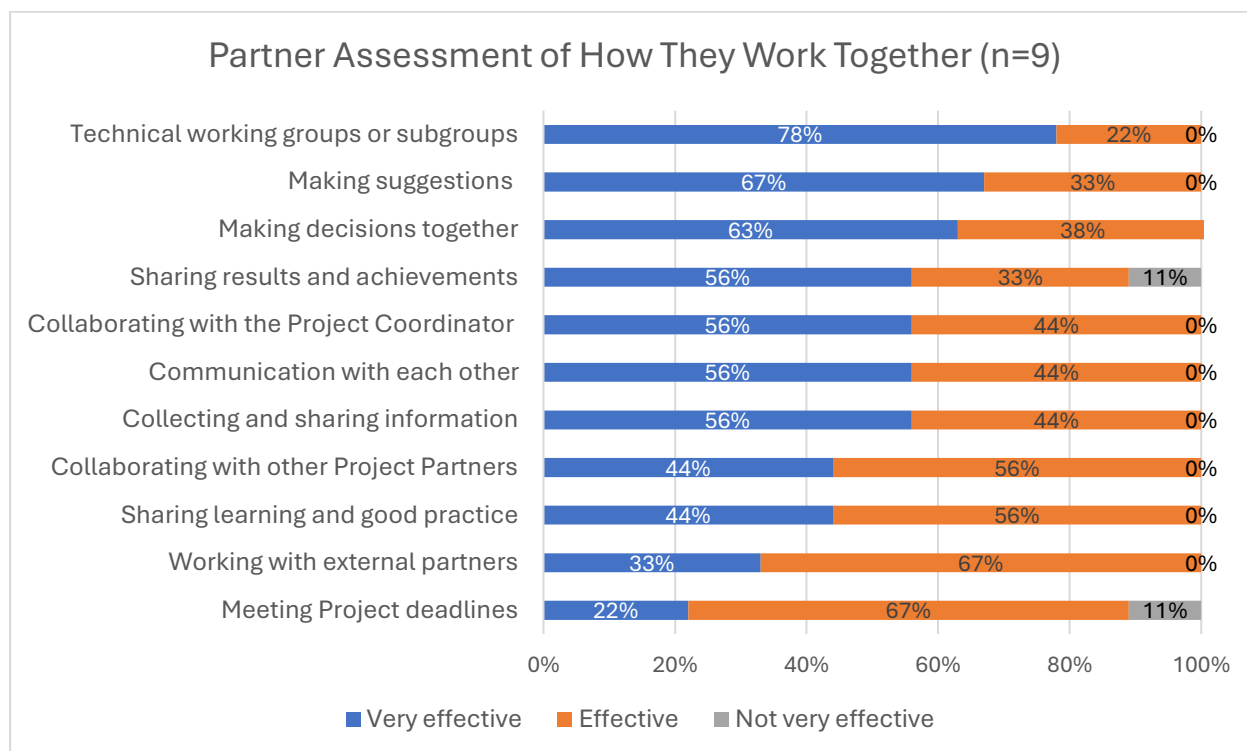
"I think the project would have benefitted from one more in-person event. It was particularly regrettable that there was no final in-person meeting, and I don't think many partners were aware that Malmö (June 2025) was the final opportunity."

The comment above was written before the final partner meeting, which was held online on May 19th 2026, where sustainability was one of the key agenda items.

Partners were then asked to consider and then rate the different ways they worked together on the TPDS project. The results are shown on the next page.

4.4 Partnership Working

In this section we consider partner views on how they worked and collaborated together. The responses are again very similar to the interim results showing how partners considered that they had worked together effectively over the duration of the project.



There was one supporting comment provided.

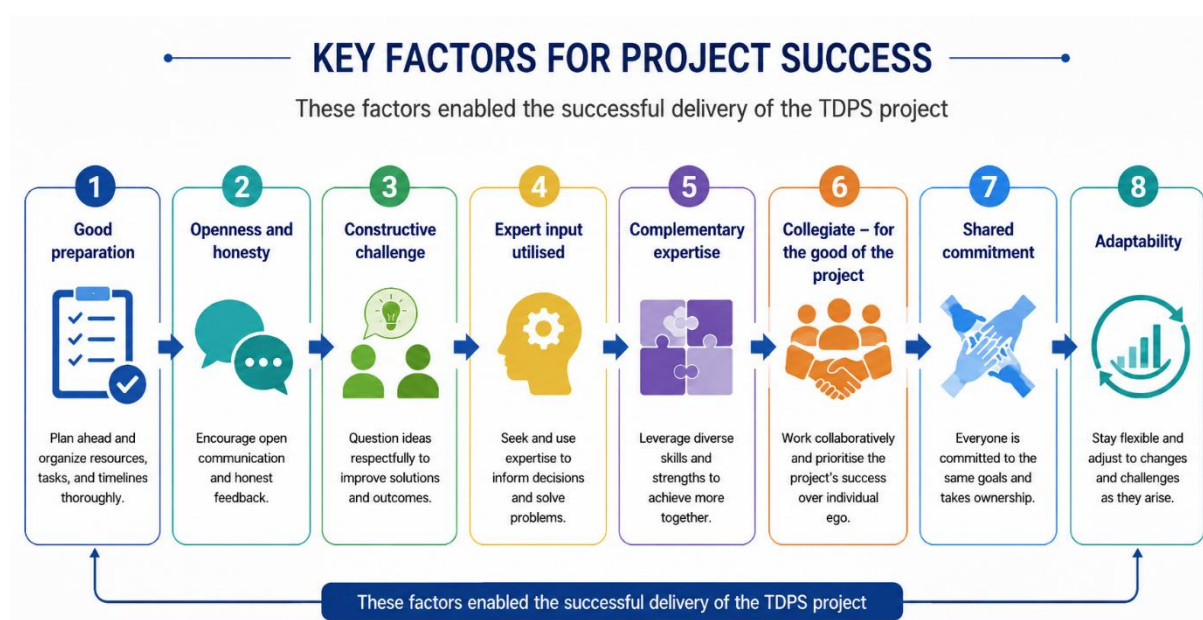
“I think some of the training providers were surprised by their deadlines. This probably resulted in less effective piloting than I had expected. I think the Coordinator should have been more careful to ensure they understood and were ready...”

In the table below, we share illustrative partner examples of partnership working and why these were effective. The functional mapping and occupational standards approach, with its technical working group with SLOs was highlighted as good practice for engaging stakeholders and influencing the module development.

Total responses to this open question: n=7		
Theme (top 5 only)	Count	Example responses
Knowledge sharing and mutual learning across partners	4	"The meetings in-person were very creative and well structured, and since all the participants came with a lot of knowledge, we could educate each other." "The initial level of knowledge of SLO was very diverse and we were part of the 'rookies'. However, I believe we were invited to join the consortium for our expertise in professional training programmes in the field of sport. All the partners collaborated to end up with a great piece of training, and we definitely couldn't have reached this level without our partners helping a lot and sharing their knowledge."
Occupational Standards as the strongest collaboration example	3	"Development of the occupational standards. I think both FSE and EOSE understood the value of this deliverable and were prepared to give it 100%." "During the work with the Occupational Standards handbook EOSE, FSE, the technical working group and the University of Kassel all worked really well together to create a lasting document that I think will have great impact on the role of the SLO in Europe." "I think the work around the SLO Occupational Standards was very positive because it relied on periodic feedback and engagement from all the partners. The entire consortium actively discussed and contributed to the definition of the Standards and, in particular, to how these standards could be practically applied to training modules and to real-life scenarios. This led to constructive and deep conversation both online and during in-person meetings."

In-person meetings created openness, structure and interaction	3	"During the partners' meetings, interaction space, exchange of information, ideas, feedback." "Project start in Frankfurt: openness of all partners; good preparation by FSE."
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The 'enabling factors' are visualised below:



Suggestions

A small number of suggestions were made to improve how partners worked together, together with affirmation of the current approach.

"The process is clear and sharp; I think it should continue as planned."

The key point raised is the value of more communication by partners between partner meetings.

"Maybe a bit more communication between meetings?"

"By reaching out to each other more actively."

"More exchange, maybe by low level communication like signal groups"

"Possibly more could be done to get the universities to work together on the module design."

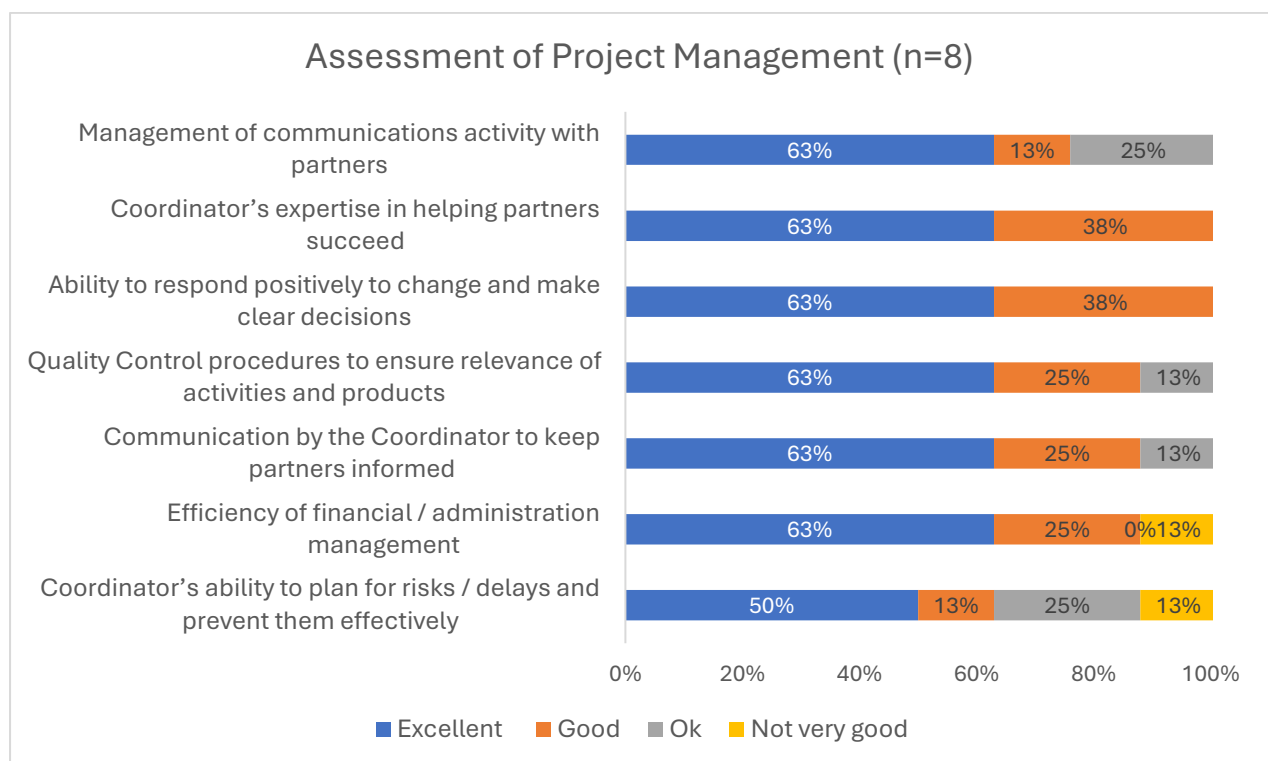
The last point made relates to ensuring expectations (and associated deadlines) are clearly communicated and understood by partners.

"Clearer expectations for each partner related to their own process."



4.5 Project Management

This next section of the report considers partners' views on how the project was managed. As the chart below shows, partners consistently rated FSE's project management as excellent or good.



Suggested improvements

One partner considered there was room for improvement in the efficiency of financial payments and planning for risks when implementing pilots.

“The allocation of budgets for the FPMs and the procedures to reclaim expenses were often difficult and drawn out. It might have been better to allocate all partners a travel allowance in their budgets and for the coordinator to hold a common budget for accommodation and for the host partner only to have a budget for venue and catering.

The delay in the readiness to pilot the courses (or perhaps varying perceptions of what piloting meant) should have been anticipated and mitigation measures taken.”

4.6 Learning Points

An important focus for the independent evaluation is to capture learning for future projects.

Difficulties in the second half of the project

Three of the partners noted that there had been challenges arranging the final multiplier event in Brazil. After the unexpected departure of the project’s Brazilian contact, the event was delayed then rescheduled to take place in Paraguay. This change meant that only two members of the project group were able to go.

“The organisation of the Global Multiplier Event proved challenging but this was connected to unforeseen events such as the main contact from the CBF (Brazilian Football Federation) leaving the organisation. Following this, FSE worked with CONMEBOL and managed to successfully hold the event in Asunción at CONMEBOL Headquarters.”

“The planning and arranging of the final meeting in Asunción took a bit too long, and dragged on unnecessarily long.”

All three considered that these difficulties were effectively resolved by FSE.

"This was out of the hands of FSE. I don't think there was anything they could have done."

"I would say we reacted quickly and were ready to move with an alternative with CONMEBOL. Ultimately the event was successful."

One partner reflected, with hindsight, that:

“My own feeling is that we should have explored the possibility of a general foundation course of short duration (possibly an update of the existing UEFA offering) and then specialist modules which SLOs can take according to individual needs. These could have been accredited through the EU's new approach to micro-credentials.”

Learning from South America

"If we can be of assistance of introducing the SLO role to Brazil and then further into South America, that would be the biggest feather in our FSE hat ever." (Partner, interim report)

The evaluator followed up with one of those who travelled to Paraguay to get their reflections on the trip. It is important to note that Paraguay, not Brazil will be the likely focus for a future project, in light of the volatile events that led to the switch in countries.

What do you think needs to happen next?

"It was probably a mistake in the first place to pick Brazil as our pilot country in South America. We didn't know it at the time, but Brazil is a highly politicised country, and you have to tread very lightly. Our contact person at the CBF got fired and CONMEBOL had to take one step away. We and our partner CONMEBOL decided to go forward with Paraguay as the pilot country instead. IF this happens, and it's still an if."

Is there a willingness to invest in SLOs?

"The match observation in Asuncion (where the game was abandoned due to violence in the stands) and then the big meeting the day after, really did the job. They were very interested in the SLO role, and had lots of questions, and due to the game being abandoned, they wanted to know how SLOs work with prevention. So, I expect that there will be a legacy for this project, and that FSE will be going back for further meetings."

The partner also reflected to the project's WhatsApp group.

"Incredible experience. All credit goes out to Federico (Chaves Cortez, CONMEBOL) for arranging this. The match observation was perfect and the actual meeting very interesting. Lots of people, lots of questions and discussions. Many thanks to everyone who took part in this project. We're very happy here at FSE. And it might just be that the SLO role will continue in South America."

The Conmebol partner talked warmly in the final partner meeting about how much value South American stakeholders attached to the partners' in-person visit, which made the project much more immediate to them (and less distant) and how that will be an important factor in the development of SLOs.

"We have much higher hopes for SLOs in South America than before the visit. This issue is really important now. For future projects when there is a partner on another continent, it would be good practice to include an in-person visit."

In the final survey, partners were asked to consider the learning points for their organisations, for the project overall and about sustainability. The three overarching learning points are shown below, followed by more detailed learning tables.

1. The project deepened their understanding of the SLO role and helped partners see its wider professional value.

Partners described the project as increasing their understanding of the SLO role, its value to football, and how it can be developed across different national, organisational and sector contexts.

2. Collaboration across countries and sectors was one of the project's main strengths, but it required patience and active communication.

Partners valued learning from each other, sharing cases and comparing different realities. The learning was not just technical; it came from working through differences between Europe and South America, academia and practice, and different national football contexts.

3. Sustainability depends on turning project outputs into practical implementation plans.

The need for further sustainability planning was identified, since continued stakeholder engagement, attention to course delivery, realistic planning for the time, work and energy were still needed to embed the SLO role in different settings.

Learning points for the partner organisations

The strongest organisational learning was a deeper understanding of the SLO role, its value and how it can be adapted across different contexts. Partners also valued the chance to learn from international partners, while a smaller number highlighted practical learning around training, Occupational Standards, legitimacy and project management.

Theme	Example responses
Deeper understanding of the SLO role, its value and different contexts	"The value of the SLO role to the football industry. It was an eye-opener."
	"Working on the training and the Occupational Standards helped us develop an even deeper understanding of the SLO role and on how this role can be shaped in different contexts."
Learning from international or collaborative partners	"learning aspects and experiences from the collaborative partners, FSE and national and international SLOs."
	"Talking about own projects with international externals helps to improve own work."
Training, course and Occupational Standards development learning	"How the SLO role works in Europe, educational courses variants possible."
Gaining legitimacy and working across academic/non-academic settings	"Possibility to work in a non-academic environment."
Need for firmer deadlines and project steering	"You really need set deadlines. You need to steer the partners with a firm hand. To push and push to make sure things happen."

Learning points for the project overall

At project level, the main learning was the differences between countries, sectors and cultural contexts, and how they could be managed through teamwork, patience and communication. Partners also recognised the wider value of professionalising the SLO role, while identifying improvement points around planning, risk anticipation and financial processes.

Theme	Example responses
Differences between countries, sectors and contexts matter, but can be worked through	“Complex differences and also the similarities.”
	“That there are differences between a) university/academia and an organisation like FSE, and b) that there are differences between Europe and South America. But also, c) that these differences can be overcome with work and patience.”
Teamwork and sharing cases/context realities build better solutions	“Teamwork and sharing different cases and context realities help build better solutions.”
Professionalisation of the SLO role is impactful and needs tools/good practice	“The professionalisation of the SLO role is an objective that carries a great impact on European (and non-European) football. The project activities identified challenges and provided valuable good practices and developed new tools to move forward towards a more professionalised and recognised role.”
Better planning, risk anticipation and streamlined finance are needed	“Better forward planning, risk anticipation and mitigation. More streamlined financial arrangements.”
Communication is critical	“Communication is king! for ever and all.”

Sustainability learning

For sustainability, partners emphasised that the project outputs are a foundation to build on. Implementing Occupational Standards and strengthening the SLO role will require continued work, adaptation to context and planning with major stakeholders.

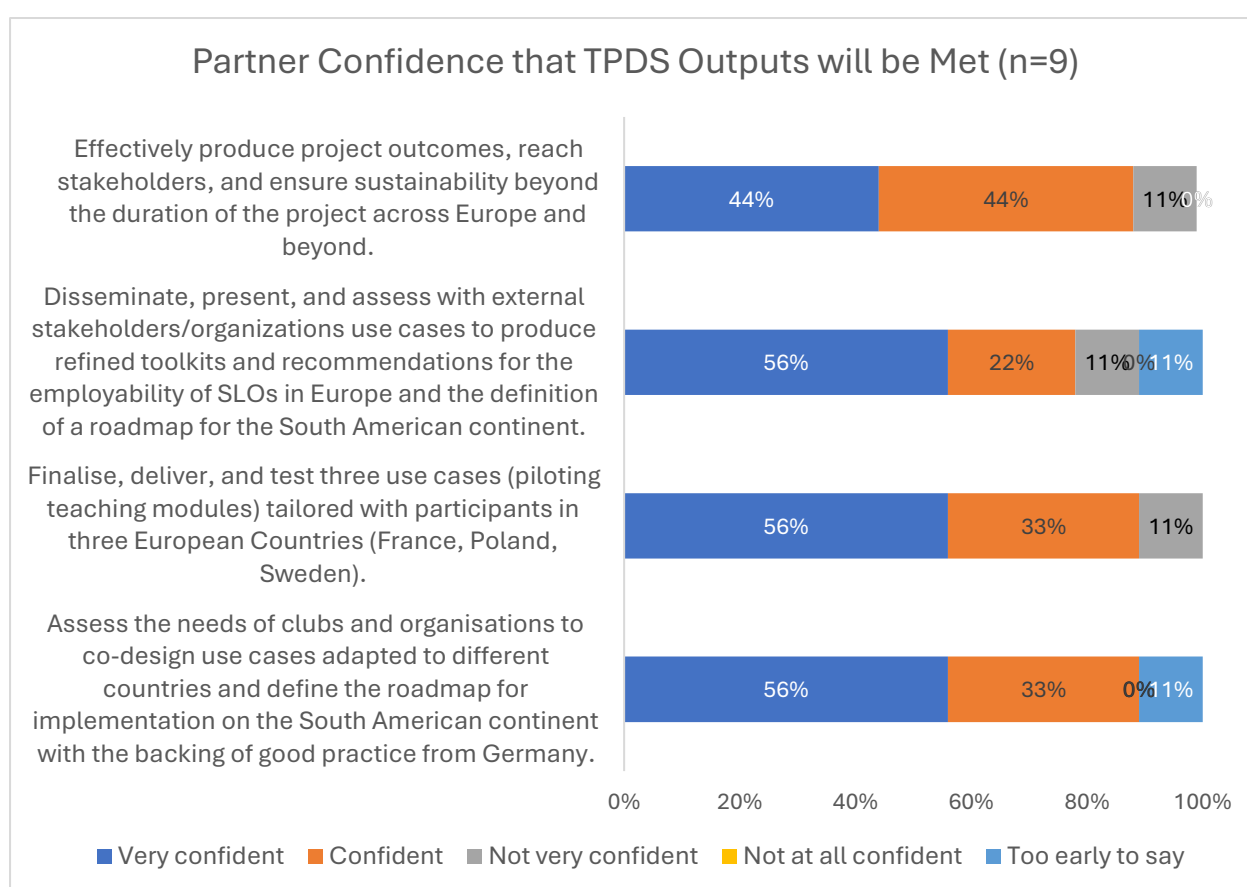
Theme	Example responses
Future implementation of the SLO role/standards will require sustained work	“The work done during the project will strengthen future activities related to promoting and improving the SLO role in Europe.”
	“That it will take hard work, time and energy to make sure that there are occupational standards for SLOs implemented, and the same thing goes for implementing the SLO role in South America.”
Need clearer sustainability planning and stakeholder engagement	“I feel there should have been far more discussion about sustainability amongst the partners. We should also have had closer engagement with major stakeholders throughout the project, e.g., UEFA and Council of Europe.”
Different approaches will be needed in different contexts	“The need for different approaches depending on context.”

Continue reflection on goals and alternative ways forward	“Never stop reflecting about goals and alternative ways to reach them.”
Keep the same work or carry forward existing learning	“Keep doing the same work.”

4.7 Partner Confidence

Partners were asked how confident they were feeling that the key objectives of the project would be met as the TPDS ended.

At the interim stage, confidence overall was high, with never less than 7 out of 9 survey respondents answering either ‘very confident’ or ‘confident’ for each objective. There was, on balance slightly lower confidence reported at the end – as explained by the supporting comments.



“The teaching modules were developed but only really piloted, i.e. tested in France. In the other cases it did not seem to go beyond consultation. However, this may be down to different perceptions of piloting.

In terms of dissemination, we did that through the FSE event in Malmö and through the SLO network, but I haven't been informed about wider efforts or to engage with the major stakeholders. I don't know what further sustainability activities will take place because these haven't really been discussed in any systematic way (at least among the partners). The roll-out in S. America seems to be much more limited than what was expected, but this was beyond FSE's control.”

5 Sustainability

The project's full title makes it clear that this is part of ongoing efforts towards the professionalisation of SLOs. One of the project's objectives is to 'ensure sustainability beyond the duration of the project across Europe and beyond.' However, despite this, a sustainability plan was not included in the agreed project outputs under Work package 4 'Networking and Mainstreaming'.^{viii}

The final partner meeting was therefore a good opportunity to seek the following: 'Clarity among the consortium about future steps to generate more systemic impact.' (TPDS-Project Summary). It was encouraging that FSE made the commitment to produce a sustainability action plan (which was not a project requirement – but is good practice).

Sustainability will require all of the partners to contribute and the university partners to take the lead on national efforts.

"As FSE we will provide support to the universities for their training, but we expect them to be leading the effort in their country and in their institutions as to fully implement these trainings they need support from national stakeholders."

FSE also clarified how the TPDS outputs sit alongside their UEFA training for SLOs.

"The Occupational Standards work and learning points will be taken into account in the further development of the UEFA training. The content of the training is a continuous work of refinement and updates, so having a source like the Standards to draw from is going to further raise the quality of the UEFA training we deliver."

5.1 Confidence in Project Outputs

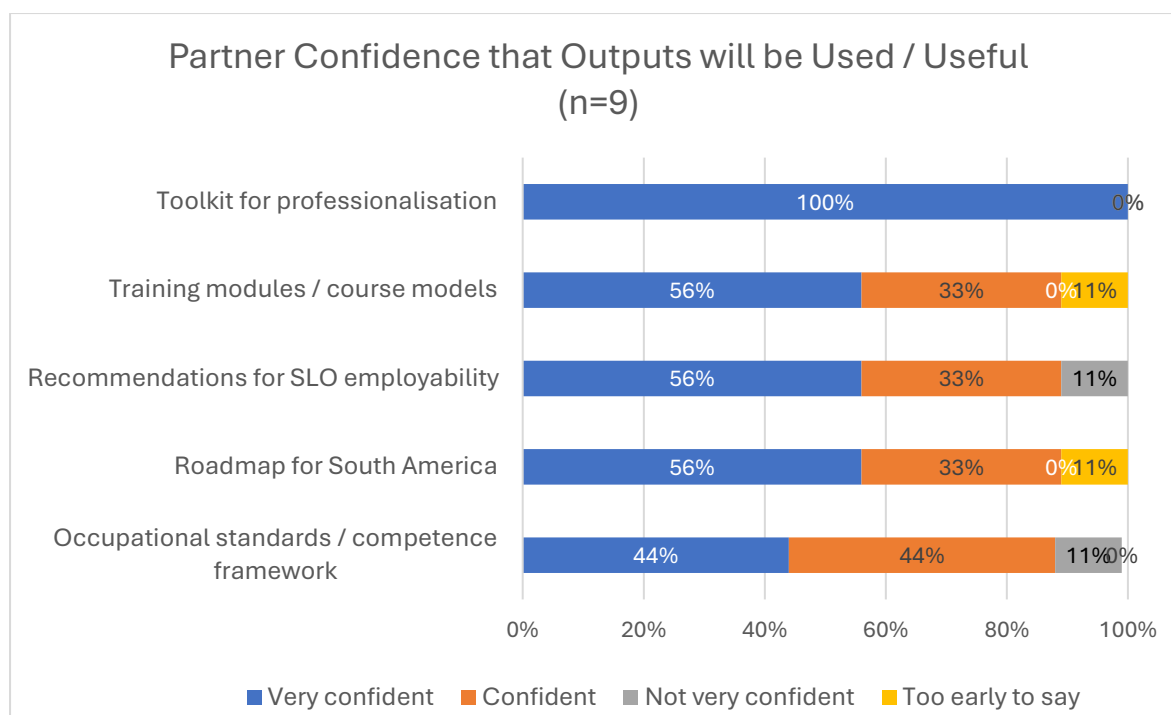
Overall, partner confidence is high that the outputs created by the TPDS project will be used and useful, the Occupational Standards in particular, which could underpin recruitment of SLOs going forward.

"If we had these Standards when we began this journey, we would be further forward now."

"I am certainly hopeful that the Occupational Standards Handbook will have an important legacy for the SLO community. Ideally, it should be professionally designed, adopted and disseminated by UEFA and Conmebol."

As is understandable, there is less confidence about how the roadmap for South America will play out. The evaluation survey was completed before the final partner meeting (19th May 2026) which focused on sustainability, so comments from that meeting have been added (and labelled for transparency).

"I am not sure about the roadmap for SA, since there is such a big difference in the supporter culture."



Two further supporting comments were made

“I said ‘not confident’ for the training modules because I think there is a mixed picture. I am confident for France. I feel there is willingness in Sweden, but there are practical difficulties around sustainability in the case of student numbers etc. I didn't get the feeling there was much of an appetite from the Polish football community.”

This comment led the evaluator to check the position in Poland which is set out below.

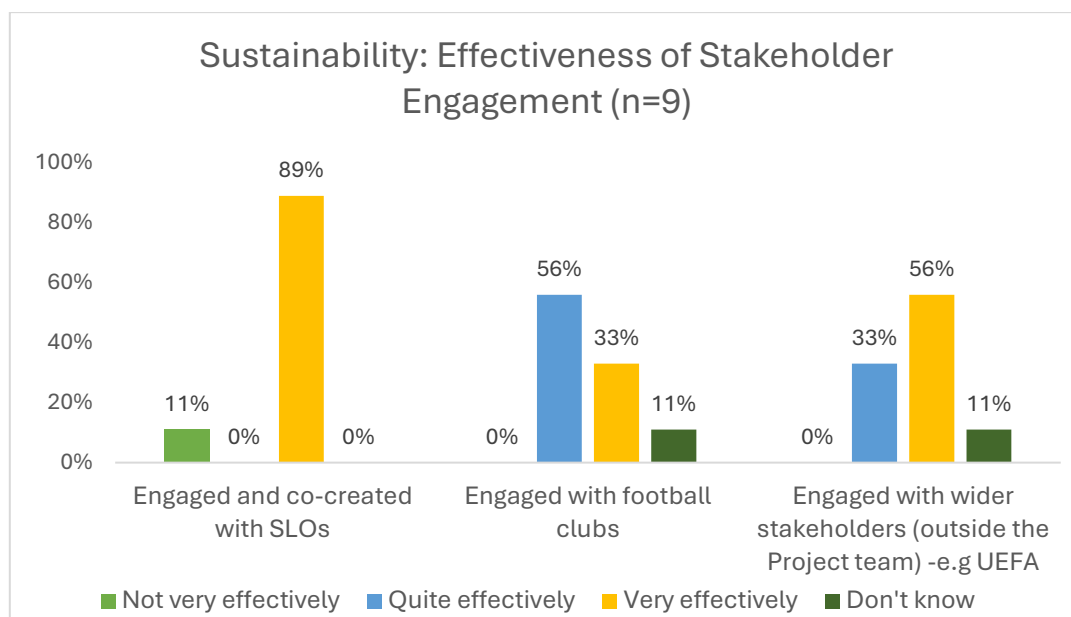
“This answer is connected to the general mistrust among fans toward certain official procedures. So, it depends on PZPN (Polish Football Association) to convince fans and their community to engage in this process. Fans by themselves are not so open to initiate some processes by their own...”

The decision on who will be in charge of organising the course has not been made yet. The idea is that PZPN will be the place and organisation to do it, because it has greater legitimacy in fandom culture and manages procedures and people. So, I believe that PZPN will be the organiser, but with the help of experts from the University.”

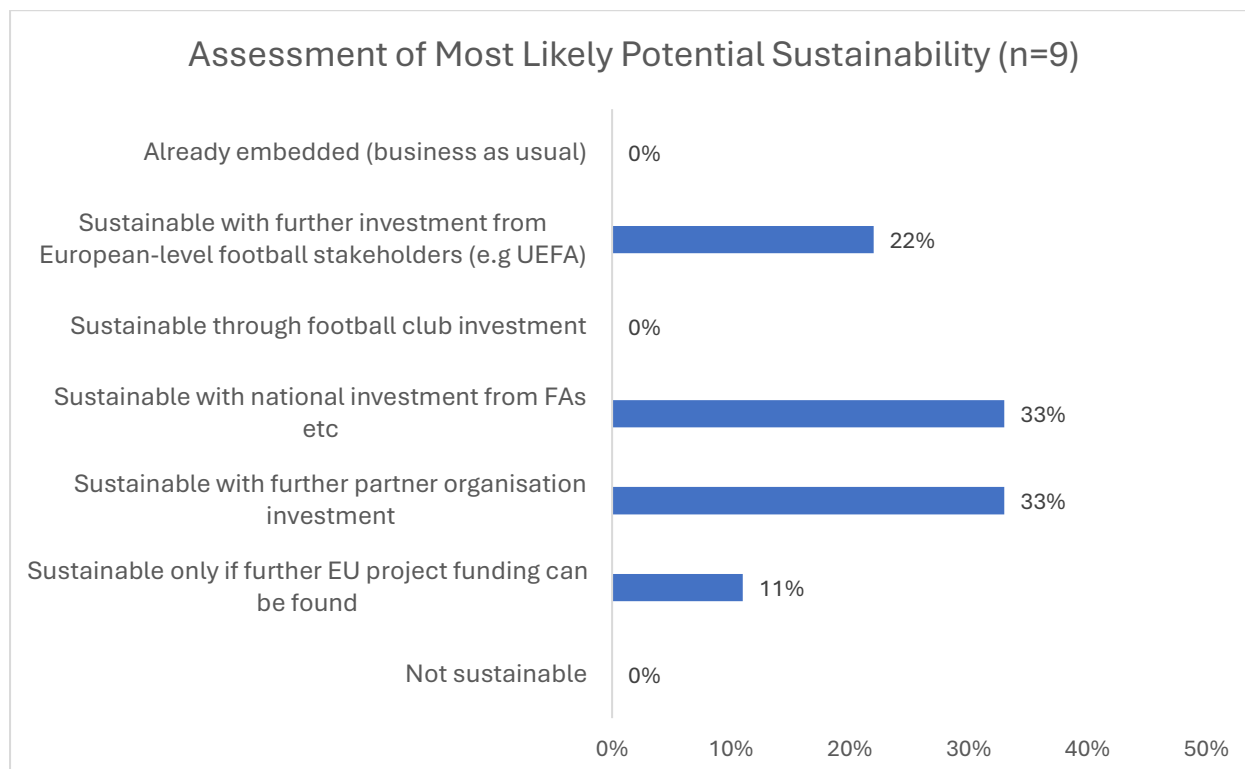
5.2 Engaging with Stakeholders

As the chart on the next page shows, partners consider that engagement has been strongest with SLOs, then wider stakeholders followed by football clubs – all of which would need to be involved in sustainability planning. The project partners considered UEFA to be the most important in terms of sharing the Occupational Standards to the national FAs then on to football clubs.

“The Occupational Standards are also going to be part of a dissemination campaign we will direct at UEFA, Football Associations and clubs, where we will ask these stakeholders to use, implement and, if possible, endorse the Standards.”



Partners were asked to consider how sustainable the project's outputs are, and which of the six scenarios they felt was most likely. As the chart below shows, the partners agreed that the outputs are sustainable but do not agree on the most likely trajectory. As one of the comments below astutely observes, the likely pathway to sustainability would require the involvement of all of these stakeholders. Furthermore, the different outputs will be sustainable in different ways, and in different contexts.



Their supporting comments are shown on the next page.

Theme	Example responses
External stakeholder investment or support is needed to scale and sustain the work	"I would like to tick all that apply, but in fact the questionnaire only allows you to tick one! Probably the full engagement and support of UEFA is most important. I would then rank national investment from FAs and football clubs. Another EU funded project seems less likely unless we can identify real issues, e.g., the practical arrangements for course design, delivery and accreditation which would benefit from further exploration."
	"In France, the Ministry should be involved, especially if SLO develop in other sports than football."
Outputs can be embedded in FSE's future SLO work, with wider football stakeholder commitment strengthening sustainability	"From FSE's point of view, the outputs are sustainable and will be included and embedded in the future work related to the SLO role. A commitment from clubs, FAs and leagues could lead to an increased sustainability of the project outputs."
Different outputs have different sustainability needs	"The university courses and the implementation of the SLO role in South America will need further organisation investment. Both time and money. The Occupational Standards handbook will work on its own."

Partners were asked to give an example of how they plan to use the project outputs. It is encouraging that there are plans in all except one country.

Country / legacy focus	How partners plan to use the outputs
Sweden	"Create the courses, develop the collaboration with different stakeholders."
France	"Create and Coordinate a sustainable training program for SLO in France."
Poland	<i>No response.</i>
Germany	"Rebuilding the FZM course; split in two levels" (see case study below)
South America	"CONMEBOL will use the Roadmap for South America and the other Outputs in order to develop a Project for implementation of the SLO role in a pilot project during the next 2 years."
Europe	"We will certainly use the Standards Handbook as an example of what can be done and how standards can be used. The learning points gathered by the work on the training modules and the Occupational Standards will be taken into account into developing the future SLO training programs carried out by FSE. The Occupational Standards handbook will be a useful tool in the UEFA Academy SLO training that we arrange all over Europe together with UEFA."

The University of Kassel's role was to share good practice from their mature SLO training offer. It is very encouraging to report that they have also been influenced by the project to improve their training by offering differentiated levels. This is an additional and unexpected outcome from the project.

Case study

"Currently, we are working on an improved relaunch of our academic course for SLOs, 'Fan- und Zuschauermanagement' ('Fan - and Spectator Management').

We have discussed lowering the threshold for joining the course. Before, the SLOs had to participate in 27 course days over 18 months. We plan to shorten and to compress the course.

In TPDS in the discussion with the national groups in France, Poland and Sweden, I understood much more the immense meaning of the different starting points of SLOs dealing with the challenge of professionalisation.

And I saw that we should not treat all SLOs equally but think about differentiation. We decided to split the former course into a basic course with 12 days and basic themes (for job beginners) and an advanced course for SLOs who have completed the basic course and/or have more experience and in a leadership role."

6 Legacy considerations

Partners were asked to consider the legacy of the project, either in their country or in Europe and South America. These are shown in full below, followed by a summary of a rapid evidence review to consider the potential legacy across the different contexts (a process supported by AI, and then sense checked with the partners).

Partners mainly see the legacy as the professionalisation and wider recognition of the SLO role, supported by the Occupational Standards Handbook, training models and stronger cross-country networks. The legacy is seen as promising but not secured, with partners highlighting the need for adoption by football institutions, continued training roll-out and further work in South America.

Country legacy	Response
Sweden	"It will make the European football fans safer and better, the SLO role more professional and sustainable. A stronger connection between different football clubs in general, and a better work environment for SLOs specifically."
France	"In France, in the context of the project, we launched the pilot of the training program for SLO. As we decided to involve the institutions in charge of supporter management in the discussion around the programme, they followed closely the project. As a consequence, I'm optimistic we can create a sustainable training program dedicated to SLO in the near future, as the Ministry of Sport seems to be okay to lead the next steps. We should then ensure a legacy and avoid the 'one-shot'."
Poland	"Better understanding of the SLO's role."
Germany	"Further attention on SLOs' work; stronger ties between the national organisations."

South America	“The awareness of the importance of SLO role and benefits it can bring in terms of safety at stadiums.”
Europe and South America	“1) that the Occupational Standards handbook will be a useful tool for SLOs, SLO coordinators, FAs and clubs. 2) that the university courses continue in at least one of the countries, and 3) that we will see the introduction of the SLO role in parts of South America.” “The work carried out in the TPDS project has the potential to be a core milestone in the SLO activities FSE carried out during the years. Developing trainings, identifying Occupational Standards and connecting with partners from South America to bring the SLO role in different contexts all provided incredible learning experiences for FSE and will strengthen the way we carry out our SLO work in the future.”

To support these comments, a rapid evidence review was carried out to consider the potential legacy for the project in Europe and South America.^{ix}

In Europe, it helps move the SLO role from regulatory recognition towards professionalisation. The role already exists in UEFA licensing and is supported by UEFA/FSE education, but TPDS helped to define what good practice requires and what competences underpin the role.

In South America, the project is part of a conversation to turn existing fan liaison-type requirements and supporter-facing regulation into a more coherent professional role.

The legacy so far is perhaps strongest in relation to the Occupational Standards. Partner evidence identifies the Standards Handbook as a practical tool for SLOs, SLO coordinators, football associations and clubs. It is also expected to support future FSE training and UEFA Academy SLO training. This is the clearest and most durable legacy because it provides a shared professional language for the role, supporting recruitment, training, development, employability and recognition.

TPDS supported higher education partners in France, Poland and Sweden to explore training models for SLOs, drawing on existing experience from Germany. The evidence shows different levels of readiness and maturity in SLO professionalisation. However, it has still generated important learning about course models, practical feasibility, accreditation, national adaptation and the relationship between foundation-level learning and more specialist modules.

A third legacy is the South American roadmap and the relationship-building around it. This project marked a structured step forward in the journey towards a fully operational SLO model across South America. Its legacy is that CONMEBOL and European partners have learned from one another, and created more favourable conditions for the development of a professional SLO role in South America. It is hoped another pilot project will take this work forward.

If, as seems most likely, the South American focus shifts from Brazil to Paraguay, Paraguay already appears to have a clearer regulatory ‘hook’ for the SLO role. The Asociación Paraguaya de Fútbol’s (APF) Club Licensing Regulations include an administrative criterion for an “Oficial de Enlace con los Aficionados”. If this were policed, then it would seem to require clubs to designate a person as the key contact between supporters and the club, to attend regular meetings with club management and to collaborate with the club’s security officer on safety issues. The CONMEBOL partner from Paraguay reports that this requirement is not policed

however. The same APF licensing framework shows this A07 requirement applying to the División de Honor, but not clearly across all levels of the Paraguayan game.

This means the potential Paraguay legacy will likely be different from the trajectory in Brazil. In Paraguay, TPDS could help move the role from a licensing requirement into a recognised professional function. The legacy could be a practical pathway showing what a functioning professional Paraguayan SLO model looks like: how SLOs are recruited, trained and supported; how they work with supporters, club management and safety officers; how they contribute to away-fan arrangements and matchday communication; and how they help shift supporter engagement from a mainly security-led response towards a more proactive model based on dialogue, trust and prevention.

This would fit closely with the current Paraguayan context. The APF states that it respects and applies FIFA and CONMEBOL rules, and has objectives which include regulating and controlling football across Paraguay, safeguarding members' interests and supervising matches across the country. The APF also has its own stadium planning, inspection and safety regulations, which it frames around providing a safe environment for supporters attending football matches. At national level, Paraguay has also recently strengthened its violence-prevention framework for sport through 'Law 7269/2024 and Decree 3337/2025', described by the national sports authority as 'an integrated framework to protect spectators, the sporting community and the safe development of sporting events'.

The opportunity in Paraguay could therefore be to connect the APF licensing requirement for an SLO, the APF and national emphasis on stadium safety with the TPDS Occupational Standards and training learning. Its added value would be that it gives clubs and football authorities a supporter-facing professional role that can support safety through communication, trust and prevention, rather than inconsistent implementation by volunteer Ultras.

Overall, TPDS created a strong foundation for the next phase of SLO professionalisation. FSE and partners now have a stronger professional language, an occupational standards framework, emerging training models and a plan to support South America.

In Europe, this can strengthen a role that is already required but unevenly professionalised. In some South American contexts, it can help move fan liaison from licensing language and supporter-facing regulation towards practical professional implementation.

FSE will continue to be available for CONMEBOL for digital meetings and support. There is an agreement between CONMEBOL and UEFA called 'UEFA Together'^x, and it is hoped that the work on introducing the SLO role to South America will be placed in this co-operation.

7 Final Recommendations

At the end of the TPDS project, the independent evaluator would like to make the following two recommendations.

1. FSE should invite partners to contribute to a short sustainability plan that sets out what happens to each output after the project closes. This should cover the Occupational Standards, toolkit, recommendations, training modules and South America Roadmap.
2. FSE and partners to share how they will valorise^{xi} (dissemination and exploitation of) the project's outputs as part of planned six monthly check ins.

8 Final Comments

Four final comments show both the partner's commitment to the project and how they have valued the experience, which the evaluator observed at the final partner meeting where the shared sense of achievement and purpose to take the work forward was commendable.

"Working with FSE and the other partners has been enjoyable and a great experience.

"Happy for joining this project!"

"I'm really proud to have been part of this project. I think it will mean something for SLOs around Europe (and hopefully South America)."

"We would be happy to form part of a future SLO project as this one has helped us enormously."

Evaluator's assessment

At this final stage (May 2026), the interim and final evaluation evidence shows that the TPDS project has made important contributions towards professionalising the SLO role in Europe and South America. The partners have worked effectively together to complete this ambitious project, sharing good practice and creating valuable Occupational Standards for the role, piloting new training courses and also supporting CONMEBOL to take their first steps towards professionalising the SLO role in South America.

The project manager effectively managed the partners' contributions and the project administration so partners could focus on the task in hand. Confidence is high overall that the TPDS outputs will be sustainable, likely in different forms, but all requiring the ongoing commitment from the project partners and their national and international stakeholders. The commitment by FSE to lead on a sustainability action plan, bring the partners back together to continue to share with one another and to offer support to CONMEBOL means the conditions are in place for the project's legacy to be achieved.

Disclaimer: Information in this final independent evaluation report is presented in good faith and thought to be accurate at time of publication (May 27th 2026), however, the author cannot accept responsibility for errors or omissions.

ⁱ See European Commission / EACEA, Erasmus+ Cooperation Partnerships: '[Tips to prepare a good project proposal \(2024\)](#).'

ⁱⁱ The project's website is: <https://www.fanseurope.org/tpds/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Source: <https://www.efl.com/supporters/slos/>

^{iv} The LIAISE project was the first to focus on SLOs. <https://www.sdeurope.eu/liaise>

^v Malmö Universitet and FSE provided 2 survey responses each. These have been treated as unique responses rather than combined. For the sections on project meetings and project management, the responses from FSE's project manager was omitted with his permission.

^{vi} Sources for the context and legacy sections.

1. Aage Radmann et al., Towards the Professional Development of Supporter Liaison Officers: A Transnational Approach, idrottsforum.org.
2. Asociación del Fútbol Argentino, Reglamento de Licencias de Clubes, Boletín Especial nº 5378.
3. Asociación Paraguaya de Fútbol, La APF recuerda las medidas de seguridad vigentes en los eventos deportivos.
4. Asociación Paraguaya de Fútbol, Quienes somos.
5. Asociación Paraguaya de Fútbol, Reglamento de Licencia de Clubes.
6. Biblioteca y Archivo Central del Congreso de la Nación, Ley Nº 7269/2024: De prevención, control y erradicación de la violencia en el deporte.
7. Câmara dos Deputados / República Federativa do Brasil, Estatuto de Defesa do Torcedor, Lei nº 10.671, 15 May 2003.
8. CONMEBOL, APF aprueba reglamento para la implementación de Licencia de Clubes.
9. Confederação Brasileira de Futebol, CBF divulga Manual de Competições.
10. EOSE, Towards the professional development of football Supporter Liaison Officers.
11. Federación Ecuatoriana de Fútbol, Reglamento del Sistema de Licencias.
12. Football Supporters Europe, Towards the Professional Development of SLOs.
13. República Federativa do Brasil, Lei Geral do Esporte, Lei nº 14.597, 14 June 2023, as referenced through official legislative records and linked provisions on the competition ombudsman.
14. Secretaría Nacional de Deportes, Gran paso hacia la prevención de la violencia en el deporte.
15. UEFA, UEFA Club Licensing and Financial Sustainability Regulations 2025, Article 45: Supporter Liaison Officer.
16. UEFA Academy, *UEFA SLO Education Programme*.

^{vii} Detailed in the interim independent evaluation report (February 2025)

^{viii} Source: Project Handbook pages 5 and 6.

^{ix} AI was used to assist this task. The 'deep dive' search function of ChatGBT was used to carry out the task to source Spanish-language sources for the South American context, so the reader should use caution.

^x UEFA Together: <https://www.uefa.com/news-media/news/0295-1ccd856fc8e8-8e437dab38e6-1000--uefa-together-turning-global-football-development-into-a/>

^{xi} See European Commission / EACEA, Erasmus+ Cooperation Partnerships: '[Tips to prepare a good project proposal \(2024\)](#).'