

TOWARDS THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SUPPORTER LIAISON OFFICERS



Recommendation for the Development of
Occupational Standards



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

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1. About This Report

This report provides deliverable D2.1 for the TPDS project: *Occupational Standards Recommendations (OSR) to inform the use cases in WP3*

2. About the TPDS Project

TPDS (Towards the Professional Development of SLOs) is a project funded by the European Commission under its Erasmus+ Sport programme and coordinated by Football Supporters Europe (FSE). There are six additional organisations involved:

- University of Kassel, Germany
- CDES Centre de Droit et d'Economie du Sport – University of Limoges, France
- Malmö University, Sweden
- University of Gdańsk, Poland
- EOSE - European Observatoire of Sport and Employment, France
- CONMEBOL - Confederation of South American Football, Paraguay

TPDS aims to strengthen and promote the role of Supporter Liaison Officers (SLOs) in European countries and the South American continent with the central aim of reducing incidents at football events and improving delivery of domestic, European and international sporting competitions through the professional development and recognition of SLOs.

2.1 Project objectives

To achieve this aim, the project focuses on the following specific objectives:

1. Assess the needs of clubs and organisations in order 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/organisations use cases in order to produce refined toolkit and recommendations for 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.

In order to do so, the project focuses on transferring good practices from Germany, where the role originated, in terms of education and training of SLOs and develop occupational standards for the role that are transferable around Europe. Furthermore, the project includes a pilot stage for the training programmes to be delivered in France, Poland and Sweden and the definition of a roadmap for the introduction of the SLO role in the South American continent.

3. Occupational Standards for the SLO Role

Occupational standards are statements of the functions, performance criteria, skills and knowledge which a worker needs in order to perform competently in their job. Occupational standards are developed by an industry, or sector in an industry, to define good practice and to highlight the essential performance, skills and knowledge which someone needs to learn and develop in order to achieve good practice.

The development of occupational standards (project objective 2 above) is an important component in TPDS. Occupational standards will:

- Provide, for the first time, an agreed European-wide description of what the SLO role covers and the competencies which are needed. This will assist the recruitment, management and continuing professional development of SLOs and create a common reference point for dialogue between federations, clubs, SLOs themselves and external stakeholders such as local authorities and the police.
- Underpin and inform the design of the training modules (objective 3), ensuring that teaching and learning is relevant and aligns with the main competencies required in the job.

The partner responsible for developing the occupational standards in TPDS, EOSE, has extensive experience of occupational standards through the application of its *7-Step Model for Lifelong Learning in Sport*.¹

4. Methodology

The methodology used to develop the occupational standards consisted of the following stages:

4.1 Desk Research and Identification of Existing Standards

The following sources were reviewed:

- European Union: *Council of European Union Resolution on SLO*²
- France: *Liaison-based Integrated Approach to Improving Supporter Engagement (LIAISE)* – Erasmus+ Sport Project Report
- Germany: *Supporter Liaison Officer Handbook*
- Sweden: *The value of Supporter Liaison Officers in fan dialogue conflict governance and football crowd management in Sweden*
- Switzerland: *Football League SLO Guidelines*
- UEFA –
 - Checklist for Supporter Liaison Officers in European competition
 - Practical Guide to Supporter Liaison
 - Supporter Liaison Officer Handbook

4.2 Analysis of Relevant Job Descriptions

SLO job descriptions were compiled and analysed from the following sources:

¹ See, for example, <https://www.change-sport.eu/> and <https://www.onside-sport.eu/>

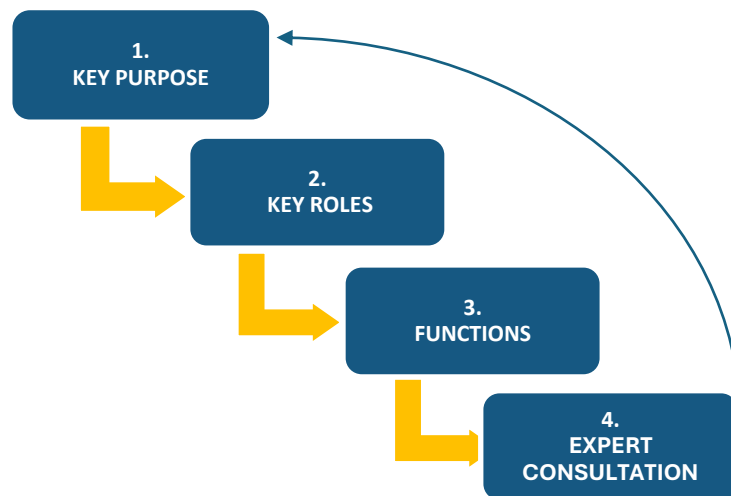
² Secretariat of the Council of the European Union, Brussels, 13 October 2022

- Austria: Bundesliga
- England: Newcastle United and Doncaster Rovers Football Clubs
- Germany: Bundesliga
- Norway: Vålerenga Football Club
- Scotland: Celtic, St Johnstone and Dunfermline Football Clubs
- Serbia: Football Association
- Sweden: Malmö FF and Gothenburg Football Clubs
- Switzerland: SLO Job Specification

4.3 Functional Analysis

Having reviewed and analysed the desk research sources and job descriptions, EOSE then worked closely with FSE to begin the process of functional analysis.

Functional analysis is the most systematic method of developing occupational standards³. It begins by identifying a **Key Purpose** for an occupation (its overall mission or goal) and then the analysis proceeds by identifying the **Key Roles** (main areas of work) which a worker needs to carry out to achieve the Key Purpose. Each Key Role is then analysed in the same way in order to identify the **Functions** (day-to-day activities) which the worker needs to carry out to achieve each Key Role.



Functional analysis is based on *role expectation*, in other words it focuses on what someone *needs to do* in a job. If applied correctly it should result in a model of good practice or *competence* in the occupation.

It is also an *iterative process*, i.e., when the first version of the functional analysis is developed, it is then offered to more industry experts to critique and improve. This cycle can be repeated several times until the analysis fully receives the support of the industry experts.

³ For the use of Functional Analysis in Occupational Standards Development:
<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7dd27ce5274a5eb14e7657/nos-guide-for-developers-2011.pdf>

Once the Functions are agreed, they can be described more fully in explanatory notes which can later be expanded to create the full content of the occupational standards which consists of performance criteria, knowledge and skills statements.

5. Expert Industry Input

In order to enable expert industry input, FSE created an SLO Technical Working Group (TWG). This consisted of the following members:

Name	Organisation	Country
1. Tony Ernst	FSE	Europe
2. Geoff Carroll	EOSE	Europe
3. Lena Gustafson Wiberg	Djurgården Elitfotboll AB, FSE	Sweden and Europe
4. Birk Jakob Slipesæter	Vålerenga and National Team	Norway
5. John Paul Taylor	Celtic Football Club	Scotland
6. Marcin Kawka	Lech Poznan Football Club	Poland
7. Matt Willis	Newcastle United Football Club	England
8. Pedro Silva	Famalicao Football Club	Portugal
9. Pierre Nordberg	Malmö FF Football Club	Sweden
10. Tomas Carnogursky	Slovan Liberec Football Club	Czechia

Eight of these members are experienced and practising SLOs who are well-regarded by their clubs and the wider European football community.

The TWG met online on four occasions:

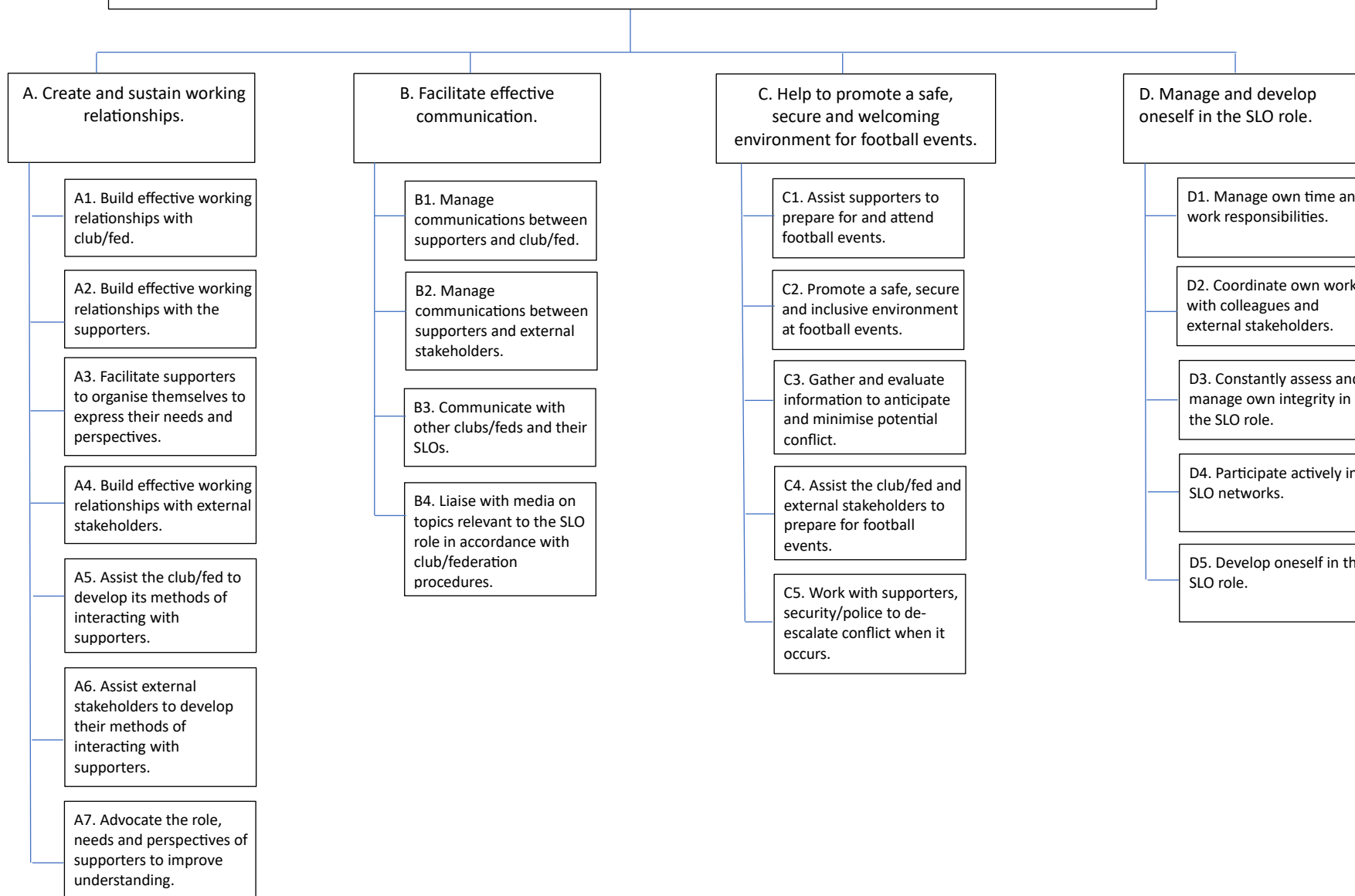
- 19 October 2023
- 17 November 2023
- 8 December 2023
- 6 February 2024

Between meetings, group members consulted with their colleagues in other football clubs and across the European SLO network.

From the original function analysis and inputs from the TWG and their own consultations, a final industry agreed Functional Map was created.

Functional Map of the Supporter Liaison Officer Role Version 1.6

Key Purpose: *Create and sustain working relationships between supporters, the club/federation and other key stakeholders which will strengthen the club/federation and promote safety, security and service.*



**Key
Roles**

Functions

7. Recommendation for the Development of Occupational Standards

Using the agreed Functional Map above, EOSE, FSE and the TWG then developed explanatory notes for each one of the SLO functions showing how they can be developed into occupational standards.

The recommendation, therefore, is to develop the following occupational standards:

Occupational Standard	Notes on Content
A1. Build effective working relationships with club/federation.	<i>Identifying key individuals with whom to work, identifying and evaluating their roles and responsibilities, establishing contact, explaining own role as SLO, setting up communication/coordination channels etc. Colleagues are people in club/federation to whom the SLO reports and the staff most relevant to their role, for example, security, marketing, communications.</i>
A2. Build effective working relationships with the supporters.	<i>Attending home and away games, being visible to supporters, interacting with supporters, identifying supporter groups, key influencers, forming good relationships, maintaining contacts between events, attending supporter meetings when invited etc.</i>
A3. Facilitate supporters organise themselves to express their needs and perspectives.	<i>Helping supporters to form groups and projects, improving the operation of existing groups, ensuring that supporter groups can articulate the needs and perspectives of their members/supporters as a whole etc.</i>
A4. Build effective working relationships with external stakeholders.	<i>Identifying key individuals with whom to work, identifying and evaluating their roles and responsibilities, establishing contact, explaining own role as SLO, setting up communication/coordination channels etc. External stakeholders may include police, local authorities, other SLOs/clubs/federations, governing bodies, media and transport companies etc.</i>
A5. Assist the club/federation to develop and improve its methods of interacting with supporters.	<i>Researching and evaluating the effectiveness of current arrangements for supporter engagement, identifying and proposing ways of improving, supporting new arrangements for supporter engagement etc. External stakeholders include police, local authorities, other SLOs/clubs/federations, governing bodies, media and transport companies etc.</i>
A6. Assist external stakeholders to develop its methods of interacting with supporters.	<i>Researching and evaluating existing relationships between external stakeholders and supporters, recent incidents, identifying and proposing improvements and supporting new methods of interaction etc.</i>
A7. Advocate the role, needs and perspectives of supporters to improve understanding.	<i>Promoting understanding that supporters are not just consumers, instead they are a vital part of the game and the club/federation who deserve respect and that clubs/federations need to understand and address their needs and perspectives, help supporters to understand the club/federation etc.</i>

Occupational Standard	Notes on Content
B1. Manage communications between supporters and the club/federation.	<i>Gathering and evaluating relevant information from supporters, developing key messages for the club/federation, structuring and conveying key messages to the right people clearly and comprehensively, gathering feedback and conveying this back to supporters. Also doing the same on behalf of the club to supporters etc. This might also include dealing with enquiries, correspondence/emails with supporters and a range of other communication methods such as social media, website etc. Standard could include elements of negotiation.</i>
B2. Manage communications between supporters and external stakeholders.	<i>Gathering and evaluating relevant information from supporters, developing key messages for the police/local authority, structuring and conveying key messages to the right people clearly and comprehensively, gathering feedback and conveying this back to supporters. Also doing the same on behalf of the police/local authority to supporters etc. Standard could include elements of negotiation.</i>
B3. Communicate with other clubs/federations and their SLOs.	<i>Dealing with enquiries, gathering information about other clubs/federations' supporters and their plans for matches, locations, venues, cultural requirements, transport arrangements, access to stadiums etc. and conveying similar information to other clubs/federations and SLOs.</i>
B4. Liaise with media on topics relevant to the SLO role in accordance with club/federation procedures.	<i>Dealing with press/media enquiries, taking part in press/media interviews etc. whilst always taking account of the club/federation's internal procedures for interacting with the media.</i>
C1. Assist supporters to prepare for and attend football events.	<i>Gathering and evaluating relevant information from supporters about their plans for events, such as choreographies, providing advice, organising ticketing and transport arrangements etc. Standard could include elements of negotiation.</i>
C2. Promote a safe, secure and inclusive environment at football events.	<i>Minimising harmful attitudes which may threaten safety and security, trying to create a safe game, getting information out to supporters, informing them about the possible consequences of their planned actions etc.</i>
C3. Gather and evaluate information to anticipate and minimise potential conflict.	<i>Collecting information about potential conflict or other threats to safety and security, reflecting on previous incidents, evaluating this information for real potential for problems and passing this information on to internal security, police and local authorities etc. whilst protecting confidential information which might compromise the SLO's integrity and relationship with supporters.</i>
C4. Assist the club/federation to prepare for football events.	<i>Attending briefing and debriefing meetings, providing information and advice about supporter plans for the event, learning from</i>

Occupational Standard	Notes on Content
	<i>incidents, agreeing strategies to minimise potential problems before they occur etc.</i>
C5. Work with supporters, security/police to de-escalate conflict when it occurs.	<i>Coordinating with supporters and their representatives, the club/federation, security, police and media to de-escalate situations when they occur, withdrawing when SLO can do no more etc., keeping oneself safe.</i>
D1. Manage own time and work responsibilities.	<i>Time management, planning and organisation of work duties.</i>
D2. Coordinate own work with colleagues and external stakeholders.	<i>Working effectively with club/federation colleagues, security/police, other clubs/federations etc., respecting other people's boundaries and areas of competence, carrying out own role as agreed etc.</i>
D3. Constantly assess and manage own integrity in the SLO role.	<i>Identifying situations where the SLO could be seen as being biased either to the club/federation or the supporters, balancing different interests so that neutrality can be maintained and perceived etc.</i>
D4. Participate actively in SLO networks.	<i>Using the network as a resource, being an active member of SLO network, attending meetings, making contributions to discussions and debates, sharing knowledge with others, gaining knowledge from others and applying new knowledge in the SLO role etc.</i>
D5. Develop oneself in the SLO role.	<i>Gathering feedback from supporters, colleagues and external stakeholders on personal performance, reflecting on own practice, identifying strengths and weaknesses, taking part in continuing professional development etc.</i>

8. Further Development

In the next stage of development, EOSE, FSE and the TWG will build fully formed occupational standards for the SLO which will include performance criteria, knowledge and skills statements.