

TOWARDS THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SUPPORTER LIAISON OFFICERS



TPDS

Report on Pilot Implementation



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This document was created with the objective to collect the feedback and the assessment shared by the participants and the organizers of the 3 Pilot Training carried out for the TPDS Project.

These reports contain a wide range of unvaluable information that will be used in the development of a first finalized version of the Training Modules developed for the TPDS project and that will be available to guide the continuous evolution of SLO training programmes both in the project consortium countries and in other countries that will work on the development of similar training programmes.

Each of the 3 partners in charge of the pilot training delivery and the collection of the feedback followed their specific methodology in doing so, while still following an agreed-upon template to maintain consistency in the deliverable and facilitate the access and use of the information contained in this report.

France - Centre de Droit et d'Economie du Sport (CDES)

1. Feedback from the participants to your pilot training (what worked, what didn't work). Include, if suitable, direct examples of the feedback shared by the participants.

The overall feedback from the participants of our first training module is really positive. We have a 100% satisfaction rate on this first session, with 15% of participants saying they are satisfied, while 85% are very satisfied. Here is a more detailed breakdown of the participant feedbacks, including some quotations from our satisfaction survey sent to the participants after the session. It is to be noted that 13 out of the 14 participants answered the survey (93% response rate).

On the bright side, it seems like the participants really enjoyed this session overall and the start of the training course as a whole. One even reported that the session exceeded their expectations ("The training module fully met our expectations and even went better than expected. In fact, we all moved forward together, while some of us got to know each other better, producing a real team effort."). Most participants enjoyed working with a smaller team of SLOs than usual. As they are around 40 in France, it is quite hard for them to bond and a majority of them even mentioned that speaking in the WhatsApp group including all SLOs was sometimes hard, especially for the newer SLOs. The training course kind of solves this issue as the group is smaller, in person and all of them have the will to learn from their peers ("I've come to realize that I've grown in stature and confidence during this course, and I've come away with a lot of motivation for the future."). This created a very kind and supportive atmosphere, encouraging less experienced SLOs to share their views and experience. Contributing to the creation of an SLO network in France is one of the core goals of this training session, and it seems to be meeting its objectives with that regard.

Many participants liked the format of the module, which blended theoretical interventions with more practical workshops like case studies or discussions ("Alternating time for discussion and theory is a real advantage"). The quality of our speakers has also been appreciated by the participants ("Essential theme and high quality of speakers", "Very interesting theory lessons! Nicolas' storytelling is amazing and with Ronan's expertise it worked really well", "The speakers are really top quality. They are perfect in transmitting their knowledge", "Very interactive, with three competent people who know their stuff", "Very good example of Arnaud sharing his experience").

The different topics covered by this first module, namely fan culture and the role as well as position of the SLO, made for a very good and interesting session. It was really needed for the least experienced SLOs (some of our participants have been SLOs for less than a year). The discussions seemed to be interesting to all of our participants ("This is the central theme of our SLO posts", "It's an essential theme because it relates to us every day", "This is a very useful topic for us as SOs, and one that tends to get left out. Very important!"). It was also appreciated that we organized something around practical discussions and case studies, and not only theoretical classes. Overall, the pedagogical format seems to be well

balanced (“With the various case studies we carried out, coupled with our experiences in different clubs, we were able to give examples of responses to certain conflicts that concern us on a daily basis”, “It was very important to be able to tackle this subject with the benefit of concrete cases”, “As I said above, the most important thing was to share experiences and opinions”).

The very few negative pieces feedback we received were mainly directed at some logistical issues which were linked to the way the room in which we were welcomed at the ministry of Sports was organized. The chairs were not really comfortable and not suited for two days seated in a row at the same spot, which was not an ideal setup (“The chairs were not suitable for this type of format and the length of the session”, “Uncomfortable stools”, “Need to improve furniture comfort for long days”).

2. Recommendations from the participants to your pilot training and from, if any, guest speaker involved in the training (what could be improved)

Our participants gave us the following recommendations in order to improve the course:

- Organize as many discussions / case studies as possible as they learn most during these exercises. It allows them to bond, exchange their views and share their experience and should therefore be the core of the modules.
- Prepare a bibliography for each module, which can be transmitted before the module if needed but can also list some interesting readings for the SLOs.
- Aside from the technological recommendations, which we already mentioned (chairs), one participant also suggested to organize some kind of teambuilding event at night, to further reinforce the bond between the participants.

3. Self-assessment and conclusion (what do you think worked well, what needs to be improved and what do you feel should be the next steps to improve and update the training)

This first training module was overall a great success. We were welcomed at the ministry of Sports and the SLOs could even discuss with ministry cabinet members to tackle the tensed context surrounding French football. The speakers were of the highest quality and their interventions seem to have really interested the participants. Finally, the case studies and the atmosphere of the training course really allowed the SLOs, especially the least experienced ones, to feel at ease and confident while discussing with their peers. We are thus very happy with this first module, which has been praised by the participants and has fully met our expectations. We seem to have some kind of margin to improve the technical aspect of the course (although we are constrained by what the organization hosting us can propose), but nothing which can not be corrected as soon as during the second module. We will also focus on improving the courses building upon the participant feedback. That’s why we will try to provide them with a bibliography in the next modules and try to organize more events with the group, such as sports activities together. To conclude, we think that

have very solid foundations upon which we can further build this training course, we are convinced it has a great potential and can become a great course for French SLOs in the future.

Poland – University of Gdańsk

1. Feedback from the participants to your pilot training (what worked, what didn't work). Include, if suitable, direct examples of the feedback shared by the participants.

1a. What worked, what was beneficial

"Placing a strong emphasis on legal issues. Such knowledge is essential. There is a great deal of match legislation in Poland. These need to be clarified"

"Legal module is the best. Other than that, there is nothing to complain about."

"Consistency, compactness, and situating within a broader context."

"Interesting selection of topics, consideration of the community of supporters with disabilities."

"Certainly, an emphasis on legal aspects is good, such as knowing the laws relating to the organisation of sports events or paying attention to the rights and obligations of fans/clubs in a legal context."

1b. What didn't work, what was poor, underdeveloped in the presented modules

"Perhaps more 'real life' examples were missing"

"I'm a bit uncomfortable with this division—that there is a dual voice, that there is an SLO, and that there could be a DSLO. Attention should be drawn to the fact that this could be one person. The DSLO should handle the SLO's matters, and the SLO should handle the DSLO's issues. You can be the best SLO in the world, but if you have no understanding of disability, you won't manage it. Because in theory, you can be great. But you have to go, you have to touch, you have to experience it."

"The legal module would likely require some clarification, as it is probably crucial, along with a clear indication of the specific dangers associated with the work of SLO."

"I haven't noticed anything not worth including in these trainings."

2. Recommendations from the participants to your pilot training and from, if any, guest speaker involved in the training (what could be improved)

"More legal topics, issues"

"In the conversation at the workshop, the question of whether it is worth adding a function to the SLO, which could be a DSLO, or an 'officer' dealing only with supporters with disabilities, came up. The purpose of this is to have a special and highly specialised SLO who may not have enough knowledge in terms of handling people with special needs, including disabilities."

“Training should combine practitioners with theoretical knowledge to make it easier for people to understand how things work”.

“What I missed was information about what the status of SLOs in Poland looks like today, how all the issues related to these functions are regulated, the scopes of duties, etc. And above all, it is not about what legally follows from the regulations, but how it all works in practice. It seems to me that, in this case, it would be important for course students to have the opportunity to talk to people in these functions, discussing their problems and experiences in specific cases (or for there to be an analysis of such cases in the programme). The more concrete, the better. A workshop where the audience would have to try to face real challenges and crises would be a great addition. Besides, it would be worth inviting not only SLOs from Poland but also from abroad to see how universal and how specific the challenges are in the work of SLOs in PL and elsewhere where there is a strong fan culture.”

“In a module on the sociology of sport, or the legal part, it would probably also be worthwhile to include content on the growing ‘policing’ of fandom, sometimes limiting the civil rights of fans. In this context, Module 4 should discuss issues concerning the duties and responsibilities of fans, the duties and responsibilities of event organisers and police and the civil rights of fans. Knowing (and communicating) what rights they have, what is allowed and what is not allowed to the police and organisers should be part of the know-how and modus operandi of SLOs”

“It needs to be pointed out that being an SLO is not just about the match. It’s about relationships. A person does certain things on match day, but besides that, they drink a lot of coffee with a large group of people. And this starts from the primary school principal and goes all the way up to the provincial governor. Yes, because you have to build those relationships, and of course, that’s always somewhat of a challenge. But generally, let’s not kid ourselves—it’s not like we all want the same good. The reality is that there is a conflict of interest between security, money, and supporting the team, and this conflict is permanent and unsolvable. You can manage to arrange things for a while, but it will fall apart again soon, because a new police chief will arrive, or a new club owner, or a new group of young fans will start to take charge. So, this is the kind of issue we’re dealing with. So, you must build relationships everywhere: in the club, with the police, within the fan community—you have to find friends everywhere. But friends who share a straightforward philosophy. If the fans start to control football, that’s bad; if money starts to control it, it’s just as bad. As long as the commander in charge isn’t like Putin, but rather someone with whom people can somehow reach an understanding—not in all areas, of course—there is a chance that something good can come out of it. The most valuable asset of an SLO is people. I know smart police officers, and I know idiots. I know smart fans and I know idiots. I try to gather as many of the smart ones around me as possible because these are the people who understand certain things. Whether we like it or not, we have to do something together. And we need to say that clearly.”

“It’s worth providing some basic training on special needs related to people with disabilities, because there are already quite a few of these people attending matches.

They have different numbers, different needs, and you should get somewhat familiar with that.”

“It’s also necessary to educate such a person so that even if they don’t know what to do, they know who to turn to clarify something. It’s not that people want to do something wrong; they simply don’t know.”

“I think it would be valuable for each module to be led by a specialist. Experts should speak on the topic. So, beforehand, people who know the subject prepare and present it during the training. The expert prepares the module's content, which is then consulted with others.”

“It should also be emphasised that the SLO represents the interests of all fans. And this is possible if they know who to communicate with and can communicate with everyone.”

“Since every stadium is different, situations vary; on the surface, everything seems similar, yet it’s not. Some modules should have a creative character. For example, tasks like: ‘This situation happened. What would you do?’—case studies. Let people think to develop and engage the habit of creative problem-solving.”

“These trainings should help people exchange experiences because that contributes more than ten slides.”

“It would also be helpful to conduct training for club management. They would benefit from understanding specific mechanisms. Because what’s the point of sending the best guy in the club, who understands everything, to training if he arrives at the club with no decision-making power? And he faces a wall he can’t break through in his own house.”

“Good practices from other countries and Poland, along with the identification of stakeholders involved in the role of the SLO and a discussion of the SLO’s relationships with each of these stakeholders.”

“The aspect related to techniques for effective communication with diverse groups of fans should be addressed, including, perhaps, a lack of emphasis on inclusivity and diversity, and the creation of a stadium space friendly to all social groups. One can still think about the thread of project management and social initiatives - the planning and implementation of projects involving the fan community or the issue of organising events to promote a positive image of supporters.”

3. Self-assessment and conclusion (what do you think worked well, what needs to be improved and what do you feel should be the next steps to improve and update the training)

The key conclusions are that the participants clearly emphasise the role of examples and problem situations around which training for SLO’s should be built. They believed this is the easiest way to learn this role, especially for less experienced individuals. Therefore, training for SLOs should combine practitioners with extensive experience and experts with deep substantive knowledge. Regarding theoretical topics, many attendees

mentioned legal aspects, which are very important. Future training should also include content related to soft skills, building relationships, and communication with various stakeholders. However, dedicated training modules should have a workshop character rather than purely theoretical.

Sweden - University of Malmö

1. Feedback from the participants to your pilot training (what worked, what didn't work). Include, if suitable, direct examples of the feedback shared by the participants.

The students appreciated the idea of a tailor-made SLO (Supporter Liaison Officer) course, distinct from existing university programs. They suggested a hybrid format, combining pre-recorded digital lectures for flexibility with two in-person sessions to foster interaction and practical engagement. Additionally, they recommended study visits to relevant organizations or clubs to provide real-world context. For assessment, an oral examination linked to real case scenarios was proposed, ensuring practical applicability over theoretical memorization.

The feedback highlighted several strengths, emphasizing that such a course would raise the professional status of SLOs, providing them with better legitimacy and recognition. Some students noted that making it mandatory or widely accessible could improve eligibility and attract more individuals to the role. Furthermore, the course could serve as a valuable entry point for new SLOs, offering essential tools and knowledge while encouraging long-term commitment to the position.

However, concerns were raised about lack of formal academic credits, which might reduce motivation for enrollment if the course isn't integrated into a university program. Another issue was long-term sustainability—would the course remain active, or risk becoming dormant? Smaller clubs, in particular, might struggle with recruitment if the training is too demanding. Accessibility was also questioned: would all potential SLOs, especially those balancing other jobs, have the time and resources to participate?

Despite these challenges, students saw significant opportunities. Many expressed a strong interest in further education, suggesting that this course could serve as foundational training, possibly even leading to additional university studies. Integrating it into existing SLO events or "SLO days" could enhance engagement. Most importantly, it could increase understanding of the SLO role's necessity, ensuring that those who take on the position are better prepared and more likely to stay in it long-term.

The main threats identified included a limited target audience, as the number of active SLOs may be small. Funding and bureaucratic hurdles could also hinder implementation, particularly if clubs or supporters see the training as unnecessary or a waste of time. Some might argue that SLOs should simply "do their job" without formal education, posing a cultural resistance that would need to be addressed.

Overall, the feedback reflects enthusiasm for a structured, practical SLO training program, but also highlights the need for credibility, accessibility, and sustainability. Balancing flexibility with formal recognition, while addressing concerns from clubs and supporters, will be key to its success. If implemented thoughtfully, the course could

significantly professionalize the SLO role, ensuring better-prepared individuals and stronger supporter relations in the long run.

2. Recommendations from the participants to your pilot training and from, if any, guest speaker involved in the training (what could be improved)

Students suggested two key enhancements to strengthen the SLO training program:

1. **Collaboration with Fryshuset** – Given Fryshuset's expertise in youth engagement and social inclusion, partnering with this Swedish organization could bring valuable insights into supporter dynamics, especially concerning younger fans. Their experience in conflict resolution and community-building could help tailor the course to real-world challenges SLOs face.
2. **Monthly SLO Meetings** – Regular (e.g., once-a-month) structured meetings for SLOs were proposed as a way to maintain engagement, share best practices, and address ongoing issues. These sessions could serve as a platform for peer learning, updates on policy changes, and collective problem-solving, ensuring that SLOs feel continuously supported rather than isolated in their roles.

A question about SLOs relation with the relevant stakeholders was asked, these were the main points raised by the participants.

- **Politicians & Decision-Makers:** SLOs need a **seat at the table** where policies affecting supporters are discussed. Too often, decisions about policing, stadium regulations, or fan bans are made without input from those who understand terrace dynamics. Advocacy at this level could help align rules with realistic, inclusive solutions.
- **Police Relations:** The role of law enforcement was flagged as a potential **threat**—over-policing or heavy-handed tactics can undermine SLOs' efforts to mediate conflicts. Building trust and clear communication channels between SLOs and police is essential to prevent escalations.
- **Declining Influence of Official Supporter Groups:** Traditional, organized supporter groups are weakening, leaving a vacuum where informal or fringe elements can dominate. SLOs need tools to **rebuild these structures**, ensuring they represent diverse voices—not just the loudest or most extreme.
- **Fragmented Leadership:** The stands have become **less hierarchical**, with no single "leader" to negotiate with. Post-Covid, generational divides and conflicts between older and younger fans have made consensus harder. SLOs must now engage **multiple key individuals** across subgroups, including unorganized fans who've drifted from official memberships.
- **From Subculture to Mainstream:** Football's commercialization and social media have diluted the old terrace subculture, creating a broader but more fragmented supporter base. Younger fans often emulate global "Ultras World" aesthetics without understanding local context, leading to clashes over what "real" support

looks like. SLOs must bridge this gap , educating while respecting evolving traditions.
3. Self-assessment and conclusion (what do you think worked well, what needs to be improved and what do you feel should be the next steps to improve and update the training)
The workshop yielded significant insights into the contemporary Swedish supporter landscape and identified the primary challenges that Swedish Supporter Liaison Officers (SLOs) consider crucial to manage in the future. This information offers an excellent supplement to the Occupational Standards being developed for the SLO role in general. Consequently, it constitutes an essential and indispensable contribution to ensuring that the training programs are as pertinent as possible within the Swedish context.