

TOWARDS THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SUPPORTER LIAISON OFFICERS



TPDS

Reports from networking events online and offline



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During the implementation of all project activities and the development of all deliverables, the project consortium maintained constant communication with relevant stakeholders to fine-tune the project outputs and increase their effectiveness and impact in relation to the TPDS project's objectives.

This deliverable contains a summary of the networking and communication activities carried out during the project implementation.

Networking related to the development and piloting of the TPDS project's training modules

In the implementation of the activities related to the development and piloting of the TPDS project's 3 training modules, the University of Malmo, the University of Gdansk and CDES (associated with the University of Limoges) carried out a series of networking and feedback gathering activities to tailor the content and the methodology of the training modules and maximize their impact by taking into account the perspectives of experts and relevant stakeholders at a national level, such as SLOs, football governing bodies and policy-makers. Moreover, in each of the 3 countries a specific National Workshop was organized to carry out an high-level and collective discussion on the future of the SLO role at a national level and the best strategy to implement to move towards its professionalization and improved implementation (in accordance with the objectives of the TPDS project).

Each of the 3 partners 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.

CDES conducted online interviews with three primary groups of stakeholders to assess needs and identify the best methodologies and practices to move forward towards a professionalization and improvement of the SLO role in France.

The main stakeholders involved in these discussions were:

- Football Institutions: Representatives from the LFP.
- Academic Experts: academicians and researchers on fan culture and experts on French legislation.
- Practitioners: Experienced French SLOs to provide insights into the competencies required for the role and share information based on their on-field experience.

During the in-person discussion carried out at the National Workshop and in first piloting implementation, CDES reported receiving positive feedback in the discussion and presentation of their training modules. They witnessed high levels of engagement and the achievement of core objectives. A notable highlight was the possibility of being invited at the Ministry of Sports, where Supporter Liaison Officers (SLOs) held discussions with ministry cabinet members to address the current complexities within the French football context. The high quality of the speakers involved and their interventions generated substantial interest among participants. Furthermore, the inclusion of practical case studies and the collaborative atmosphere of the piloting enabled attendees—particularly less experienced SLOs—to build confidence and participate in peer-to-peer dialogue.

These results provided a solid foundation for the program, which demonstrates significant potential to become a definitive training standard for French SLOs.

The University of Gdansk carried out in-person and online discussions with a variety of stakeholders, in particular:

- **Supporter Liaison Officers (SLOs)** from various levels of Polish football and the **national coordinator** from the Polish Football Association.

- **Academicians and researchers:** Including social scientists and students specializing in the role of sport in social change and fan activism.
- **Club executive personnel:** Experienced executives and former presidents from several prominent Polish clubs.

Among the main points raised during these conversations:

- **Professional Recognition:** There is a significant lack of understanding of the SLO role among club management and PZPN delegates. Proposed solutions include specialized training for club boards and study visits to established foreign clubs (e.g., Eintracht Frankfurt).
- **External Relations:** Cooperation is hindered by the police, who often misperceive SLOs as "informers."
- **Labor Conditions:** SLOs report concerns regarding low compensation relative to high overtime demands.
- **Development Needs:** There is a call for quarterly peer-to-peer meetings to share best practices, alongside training in legislation (Mass Event Safety Act), conflict management, and communication.
- **The "Credibility Gap":** Stakeholders emphasize a delicate balance regarding fan ties. An SLO must be deeply embedded enough in the supporter community to maintain trust and manage crises, yet independent enough to avoid prioritizing hooligan interests or illegal activities.
- **Expanded Mandate:** Beyond match-day operations, clubs expect SLOs to act as project managers who engage the broader fan base, including families and non-ultras, to develop general fan culture.
- **Core Competencies:** Stakeholders prioritize the acquisition of "soft skills"—specifically negotiation and crisis prevention—and a robust command of the legal frameworks governing mass events.

The University of Malmo has a well-developed network around the culture of Swedish football with representatives from the Swedish Football Association, clubs, SLO's, journalists, the Players' association, academics and others. For the discussion about the development of the SLO role and the implementation and dissemination of the work carried out with the TPDS project, the University involved:

- **Football Clubs:** Malmö FF, Hammarby IF, Djurgården, AIK for their experience in the practical implementation of the SLO role and its inclusion in the match-day operations.
- **Fan National Organisation:** the **Swedish Football Supporter Union** was part of the networking and feedback gathering process, as they can provide the supporters' perspectives on the application of the SLO and its effectiveness in the many aspects of SLO work.
- **Football Governing Bodies:** the Swedish Professional Football League was involved in this process for their knowledge and experience around regulations, high-level organisations and policies and standards development.

The feedback gathered during this first round of networking and during the National Workshop and first piloting of the training modules highlighted a few relevant points for the development of the SLO role in Sweden:

- 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 match-day dynamics. Advocacy at this level could help align rules with realistic, inclusive solutions.
- The role of law enforcement was flagged as 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.
- Traditional, organised 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.
- 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 unorganised fans who've drifted from official memberships.
- Football's commercialisation 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.

Networking related to the development and dissemination of the TPDS Project SLOs Occupational Standards

The Occupational Standards were mainly developed by FSE with technical support from the European Observatoire of Sport and Employment (EOSE). FSE and EOSE analysed a number of key documents relevant to the SLO role

The project then established a Technical Working Group (TWG) consisting of experienced SLOs from eight representative European clubs. Building on the document review and their own expertise, the TWG, with guidance from EOSE, then developed the Occupational Standards, using a well-established process known as functional analysis.

Six digital meetings for the TWG were organised over an eight-month period. The objective of these meetings was to review the current status of the Occupational Standard to fine-tune it and improve its development process to take into account the perspective and experience of high-level SLO practitioners. The process included a constant review of the document by the TWG members who were able to provide continuous feedback and comments to the document and had the chance to discuss these points during the digital meetings.

This work provided a strong foundation for the development of an impactful and effective project output and ensured that it was validated by current practitioners before its dissemination, which has been part of the project dissemination strategy and will continue after the project conclusion as the Occupational Standards will be integrated in FSE's core of resources for SLOs education and development.

The Occupational Standards were also presented to the European SLO Network Meeting that took place during FSE's Fans Football Congress in 2025 in Malmo. The Network Meeting saw the participation of more than 50 supporter liaison officers (SLOs) and national coordinators from 20 European countries. During the event, the attending SLOs had the chance to share their opinions and provide initial feedback to the document with the objective of gathering relevant information for further improvement and development of the document.

This first presentation was then followed by an online consultation exercise, which invited comments from the members of the SLO network and other relevant football stakeholders. 53 responses from SLOs, leagues and federations across Europe revealed a very high level of support (over 90%) for the Occupational Standards, with some minor suggestions for improvement.

Networking related to the development of the SLO Roadmap to South America

For the development of the TPDS project SLO Roadmap to South America, a document that outlines an action plan for the implementation of the SLO role in South American football and in which CONMEBOL (the South American Football Confederation), one of the members of the project consortium, had a main role in planning and developing.

One of the Roadmap to South America's strengths is its chance to integrate the learning points and outputs developed during the TPDS project implementation, such as the training modules and the Occupational Standards.

Because of this, first of all, the development of this document saw the strong involvement of all the members of the project consortium to integrate the different aspects of the outputs mentioned and identify the elements that would need to be highlighted in the Roadmap.

Moreover, constant communication with CONMEBOL departments was carried out to ensure that the Roadmap and its future implementation had a strong foundation in the organisational and strategic needs of the organisation and could be effectively carried out in the South American football environment.

CBF, the Brazilian Football Confederation, was also included in the project communication and was strongly engaged from the beginning of the project (also taking part in one in-person Partner Meeting and the European Multiplier Event) as it represents, by far, the biggest league in South America. Their feedback and involvement in the development of the Roadmap and in the implementation of all project activities have been crucial to ensure that the Roadmap and its implementation plan can take into account the specific national and continental needs of South American Football, while maintaining the foundation developed during the years of practice of the SLO role in European football.

ANATORG, the national Brazilian Supporter Organisation, was also part of this networking process in three online meetings to ensure that the fans' interests, needs and perspectives are central in the development of the SLO role in Brazil and South America.

Moreover, an SLO from Coquimbo Unido, a Chilean club, was interviewed to gather information on the first implementations of the SLO role in South America, and identify the most effective methodology and approach to introduce (where needed) and professionalise the SLO role in the continent.

A major element of this networking process will be carried out during the TPDS Global Multiplier Event that will be held on the 20th of April in Asuncion, Paraguay, at CONMEBOL HQ. This event will represent an invaluable chance to disseminate the project results to an audience of football stakeholders (clubs, leagues and federation representatives, fans) and gather their feedback and insight to lay the ground for a long-term collaboration to promote the professionalisation and implementation of the SLO role in South America.