

Football Partners Support Transition Towards Goals of EU Green Deal

April 14th, 2023, Pisa: The FREE KICKS project, co-ordinated by the Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies (SSSA), and in partnership with FC Porto, Fundación Real Betis Balompie, Malmö FF, Racing Club, Romanian Football Federation and European Club Association (ECA), has launched and will address the topics of circular economy and environmental sustainability in football organisations.



No organisation in the football world has yet pursued the adoption of EU environmental management tools, such as Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS), EU Ecolabel, Product Environmental Footprint (PEF) or Organisation Environmental Footprint (OEF).

Against this backdrop, the FREE KICKS (*Football Relies on EMAS and ECOLABEL to Keep Innovating on Circularity as a Key for Sustainability*) Project – co-funded by the European Union* – aims to trigger football's transition towards the goals of the Green Deal and the New Circular Economy Action Plan, at collective and individual levels, by supporting:

- The uptake of leading-edge environmental management practices and sustainable organizational models among national football associations and professional clubs, focusing on operational activities
- Climate-conscious and environment-friendly behavioural patterns among football organizations

Project coordinators, the Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies, will work with project partners on three key task areas, to:

1. Assess the sustainability needs and environmental priorities of the participating football organisations, and three participating project partners will engage in obtaining EMAS (Eco-Management and Audit Scheme) registration during the project
2. Improve the environmental governance of the football supply chain in the participating football organizations
3. Calculate the environmental footprint of three partner football organizations through the PEF or OEF methodological standards of the European Commission using a life cycle analysis (LCA)

From these efforts each football organization with the support of SSSA and project partner ECA, will define their own Environmental Improvement Plan.



Sport Positive, the London-based organisation that heads up world-leading Sport Positive Summit, Sport Positive Leagues, The Climate of Sport Podcast, intelligence bulletins, media and support to increase action and ambition on sustainability, climate change, biodiversity and environmental justice in sport, will support the project as communication and dissemination partner. This role will include ensuring the learnings and take-aways from project actions are shared with the world of football and sport, to encourage increased action throughout the community.

Over the project's 30-month duration, from February 2023 – August 2025, FREE KICKS partners will share progress and learnings via dissemination moments including awareness raising events, a mid-term report and conference, knowledge sharing via podcasts, social media, newsletters and videos and a final report and conference detailing the findings and achievements of the project.

At the launch of the project, partners commented on their hopes for the project:

Teresa Santos, Sustainability Manager of FC Porto said "With FC Porto's participation in the FREE KICKS project, we are convinced it will be another lever for the continuous improvement of our environmental performance. Our experience in environmental management, acquired through the implementation of ISO 14001 within the FC Porto facilities, combined with the diverse know-how of the consortium partners, we believe it will be an important contribution to motivate and achieve behavioural change and environmental performance among sports organizations."

Rafael Muela, General Manager at Fundación Real Betis said "This project is a new opportunity to learn and innovate in sustainability from important partners such as the ECA and many other European clubs and federations active in the fight against climate change through sustainable initiatives."

Niclas Carlén, CEO of Malmö FF commented: "At Malmö FF, we recognise the importance of advocating for sustainability in football as a driver for impactful change and promotion of sustainable solutions. While striving for sporting achievements and sporting successes, it is also important for our club to act as a role model leading the development in our community and in society. Therefore, we are proud to take part in the FREE KICKS project to keep innovating and to implement environmental management actions."

Tiberio Daddi, associate professor at the Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies, added: "The FREE KICKS project represents a further step forward in the promotion of sustainable solutions for the world of football. The Sustainability Management Laboratory at Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies has extensive experience in EMAS and PEF/OEF. Our research group, focused on Sports and Sustainability, looks forward to applying these tools to football in collaboration with our high-level project Consortium."

* Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or EACEA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

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