



Green Transition and Sport At All Levels - Executive Summary -

SHARE

initiative



Sport

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Green Transition and Sport at All Levels

Executive Summary

The main aim has been to provide some orientation for sport organisations at all levels on the part they can play in helping to deliver the transition towards a greener and more sustainable economy.

The Meaning of 'Transition'

First, the discussion explores **the concept of 'transition'**, starting with academic analysis of the transformation of societies, as they move from the use of one set of technologies to another. The increasing use of this approach to characterise the changes needed to move to a sustainable economy and society (**'Green Transition'**) are then noted. All this analysis refers to the **complex interaction of technology and social and political factors** in these processes and their **operation at multiple levels**, but also the fact that typically they play out over long periods. The problem in the face of climate change is that slow **incremental changes will not suffice. More urgent action is needed.**

In response, the **'transition management'** movement argues that it is necessary to go beyond top-down steering by centralised government or free market approaches to mobilise bottom-up **community and local action**, including through informal network processes, which can be especially innovative and adaptive.

This approach has generated multiple **initiatives at the local or regional level**. Some of these are represented in the [Transition Network](#), which is a world-wide network of transition hubs and initiatives, linking what is happening on the ground, exchanging information and offering resources, such as the ['Essential Guide to Doing Transition'](#).

At a European level, the [European Climate Pact](#), encourages individuals, communities and organisations to connect and collectively develop and implement climate solutions and build a greener Europe from the bottom up.

Examples are given of the types of activity that such initiatives can develop, which range from community clean energy generation and promoting greener transport to improved recycling and waste management and local sustainable food production.

However, it is pointed out that, although transition initiatives claim to encompass multiple aspects of modern society, they generally make very **little reference to the role that sport and sport organisations can play** in encouraging and delivering sustainability transition.

Sport and Physical Activity and Transition

The central question for the research paper is: how can sport and physical activity and its organisations contribute to transition and, in particular, how can there be a contribution to bottom-up, community-based transition initiatives?

There are two aspects of this potential contribution:

- The first concerns **how sport and physical activity at all levels, including the grassroots, can make its own facilities and activities sustainable**. How can we green sport?
- The second aspect (where the paper makes a more original contribution) is **how sport and sport organisations can bring new and powerful elements to broader community initiatives** to bring about transition.

The greening of sport's own facilities and activities is being promoted at all levels. The United Nations has created a **global framework** in its [Sustainable Development Goals](#), but has also defined a ['Sports for Climate Action Framework'](#). The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has

supported this framework and gone on to develop its own strategies. The approach has also influenced FIFA's [Sustainability Strategy](#) in relation to the World Cup in 2022.

At a European level, the policy framework on sustainability has achieved new impetus with the [European Green Deal](#). As part of the effort to mainstream sustainability in all EU policies, the EU's [Work Plan for Sport](#)¹ for 2021 - 2024 identified Green Sport as a key topic, with a possible Council Resolution on a Green pact for sport being planned for the first half of 2022.

At a more detailed level in Europe there have been a number of **national initiatives** that have specified ways that the principles set out in international commitments can be implemented on the ground. In France in 2017 and 2018, the Ministry of Sport and WWF France developed two documents each with 15 commitments to environmentally responsible practices, reflecting UN Sustainable Development Goals. One was addressed to organisers of sporting events.² The other was addressed to the managers of large-scale sports facilities and venues³. To assist and encourage other sport organisations, the French Government has also published a [Compendium of Experiences](#), with examples of good practice from across France. A similarly useful and practical document has been developed by the Portuguese authorities in a [Manual of Good Environmental Practices in Sport](#).

Sport's Wider Contribution to Transition Management

Over and beyond sport ensuring that its own activities and facilities are sustainable, sport organisations at all levels can make **a much more integrated contribution to transition**, by making use of their strengths, their roots in local communities and their assets and know-how. And in doing so, these sport organisations can more effectively promote sport and physical activity.

Many sport organisations exist at a local community level and enjoy a high profile in their own communities. Frequently they will have extensive networks of members and volunteers within these local communities and often have a broad social base, bringing people from all sorts of backgrounds together to enjoy sport and/or physical activity. Furthermore, even the sport organisations that operate at a national or international level often retain strong local connections with the communities gave rise to them originally or in which they have their main stadiums, training facilities etc.

This **strong community presence** puts sports organisations in an excellent position to be able to work with others in local communities in undertaking the sort of activities that are typically pursued by transition towns or groups. Sport organisations can join others in promoting greater energy efficiency, the use of electric vehicles and local food production or they can help safeguard or further develop bio-diversity. They will be especially effective in advocating developments, especially in urban areas, that are directly related to sport and physical activity, such as the enhancing of green infrastructure to facilitate both active lifestyles and healthier environments or sustainable mobility schemes, which encourage the greater use of cycling and walking. However, they should by no means be restricted to activities with such links.

The particular contributions that local sport organisations could make include the following:

- Helping transition initiatives to have a stronger, more positive image as developments promoting wellbeing and a healthy and modern lifestyle

¹ Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the European Union Work Plan for Sport (1 January 2021-30 June 2024); Official Journal of the European Union 2020 C 419/1; 4.12.20

² EN version: '[Environmentally responsible commitments from event organisers](#)'

³ EN version: '[Environmentally responsible commitments from the managers of large-scale sports facilities and venues](#)'

- Motivating changes in consumption patterns, including in the types of food that are consumed, changes in work and travelling practices and in day-to-day living arrangements
- Mobilising a wide section of the local community in support of the transition process, through their extensive and diverse contacts in the community
- Using their experience of voluntarism to help in the organisation of community transition groups, and bringing a wide range of physical and mental skills
- Addressing mobility or transport issues and promoting walking and cycling
- Bringing into the transition process technology and processes developed by sport innovators
- Making their facilities available to the transition groups
- Promoting green infrastructure especially in urban areas
- Bringing together the green and digital transitions through the use of apps for health monitoring in outdoor activities.

Although sport associations and clubs at a local level are organised in many different ways across Europe, most organisations, including commercial organisations, ought to be able to participate in Transition initiatives, even if it is on the basis of voluntary contributions on the part of those who are involved in a particular association, club or organisation.

It is important to emphasise the advantages of this participation:

- By promoting sport and physical activity as an intrinsic element in transition to a healthier society and environment, participation in transition groups can more effectively promote participation in sport and physical activity
- By working with other community organisations, sport organisations can raise their own profile in their local community
- By extending their social contacts, sport organisations will have greater scope for attracting new participants in their main activities and, where relevant, additional volunteers to help organise them.
- Participation in transition work can add to the motivation and coherence of their own members, by broadening the nature of the achievements made by particular sport associations or clubs.
- Participation in transition projects may provide access to additional sources of funding for sport organisations.

There is therefore huge potential for engagement by community sport organisations in transition to a green economy, both by greening their own activities and by engaging in a broader community effort. **Awareness of this potential needs to be promoted** and there is an important role for European and national authorities and sport organisations in this, through their contact with sport organisations on the ground. There is also an important task of alerting transition groups and their networks to the nature of sport's potential contributions and persuading them to include sports organisations in local initiatives.

EU funding for Transition Initiatives

All sport organisations should review their activities and facilities and adopt strategies to reduce their environmental impact. There are also compelling reasons for sport organisations to look beyond their own internal situation and become engaged in community transition processes irrespective of whether there is funding available to support them. However, clearly, if it is

possible to secure funding, the engagement of sport organisations with these processes will be much deeper, more systematic and will have greater eventual impact.

The paper provides several examples of transition initiatives supported by various EU funds. It then goes on to look at the possibilities for sport organisations to obtain funding for transition initiatives in the current programming period.

As always, a basic point is that **sport organisations will not be funded because they promote sport but because they are effective vehicles for achieving many of the various stated objectives of the main funds**. But with the amount of funds dedicated to Green Transition, there is considerable scope for support for sport-based transition initiatives.

Here we are talking about sport and physical activity organisations at all levels. It may be national or regional organisations, which develop sport-based project ideas, but equally, and especially in the transition context, it could be local community-level sport organisations that become the focus for funded projects, albeit at times with support from national organisations.

The paper concentrates therefore on highlighting **those aspects that are most interesting in terms of funding sport-related transition initiatives, especially those taking place at a community level**.

Opportunities are identified in the paper in the core Cohesion Funds – the ERDF (European Regional Development Fund - including INTERREG), the ESF+ (European Social Fund Plus) and the EAFRD (European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development). Support for local and small-scale actions are highlighted, as being of potential interest to community sport organisations and transition initiatives, e.g. ‘innovative actions’ under ESF+ and Community-led Local Development (CLLD) in LEADER programmes under the EAFRD.

Other sources are also identified, including the Just Transition Fund for areas that have been heavily dependent on energy production and extractive industries, the Life+ Programme and ERASMUS +, where again support for small-scale activities are highlighted.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The conclusions re-iterate the points made about the potential for local, community sports organisations to play their part in promoting change. In doing so, **sport and physical activity organisations need to go beyond greening their own activities to contributing to transition initiatives especially at a community level**. This can help strengthen their core activities.

The following recommendations arise from the discussion in the paper:

- The public authorities and major sport organisations should continue to encourage sports organisations on the ground to adopt sustainability strategies in line with the guidance they have provided.
- Sports organisations at the local level should be encouraged to join, or where necessary, initiate community transition initiatives.
- The public authorities and major sport organisations should highlight the benefits for community sport associations of being involved in local transition initiatives.
- Sport organisations on the ground should be encouraged to sign up to the [European Climate Pact Pledge](#).
- Sport organisations on the ground should also be encouraged to sign up to the [‘Sports for Climate Action Framework’](#).
- SHARE should assist community transition initiatives involving sport organisations to identify and apply for appropriate EU funds.
- The SHARE Green Transition Group should develop practical guidance on community green transition for sport and physical activity organisations on the ground.

- The SHARE Green Transition Group and the wider sport community should bring the potential contribution of local sport and physical activity organisations to the attention of those involved in the community transition movement.