



Project Final Report

# IMPROVING FOOTBALL GOVERNANCE THROUGH SUPPORTER INVOLVEMENT AND COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP

A project supported by the European Commission through the 2011 Preparatory Actions in the field of sport





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## substance.

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## THE PROJECT

“

Active citizenship and the culture of participation are essential to our daily lives in Europe and sport is a field where this can be both prominent and effective.

Supporters sustain sport not only through economic investment but also through countless hours they devote to volunteering and participation at their clubs. This is a vital part of the role that sport can play in building stronger communities. At the same time the relationship between supporters and their club constitutes one of the fundamental specificities of the sport sector relative to other economic activities.

The work of Supporters Direct Europe shows how fans can help to develop inclusive and sustainable structures at both their grass roots and professional levels, giving life to the concept of active citizenship and demonstrating how supporters can contribute to better governance and long term sustainability in sport. Supporters are also a vital partner to our collective efforts to reduce discrimination and violence and combat the growing menace of match fixing.

It is for these reasons that the voices and ideas of supporters should be listened to carefully by all relevant stakeholders helping to improve the social and community functions of sport.

I would like to voice my own endorsement of the work of SD Europe and encourage them and their members to continue their work across Europe in order to help sport fulfil its incredible potential.

”

### **Androulla Vassiliou**

European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism, Sport, Media and Youth, 2012

“

The bulk of European clubs are facing a receding future, many leagues are struggling to make ends meet. SD Europe patiently canvassed our continent offering advice, hope and practical solutions. Supporters trusts or their equivalent in each national context provide a true alternative to the precarious nature of the current models of ownership and above all afford the kind of grassroots control that most football fans have always dreamt. The project has fulfilled its promises and has mobilized fans all over Europe, it could offer the only viable, realistic option for long-term survival for tens of historical football clubs that are being financially choked by the current crisis.

”

### **William Gaillard**

Senior Advisor to the President of UEFA, 2013

“

This project has been of huge importance to all the partners and also to SD Europe. Many football clubs across Europe are in crisis, and the number of supporters' organisations who want to not only save them, but ensure that things are done differently in the future, is growing. The same can be said of the demand for SD Europe's assistance. By supporting this project, the European Commission provided much-needed funds and political support that allowed these groups to take the next step: whether that was providing assistance to fellow supporters in their countries, promoting alternative ownership and governance structures of football clubs, setting up national supporter organisations in order to represent fan interests, or generally improving the relationship between supporters, national governments, leagues, clubs and other institutions. The project has been a huge boost for all of us, and we look forward to the future - together.

”

### **Antonia Hagemann**

Head of European Development, Supporters Direct

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## PREFACE

# This project really has broken new ground.

It is the first time that there has been a coordinated approach to the development of democratic supporter organisations across Europe, with an aim of increasing the involvement of football supporters in the governance of clubs, leagues and national associations.

The scope of the project has been huge, in a relatively short space of time – working with 9 partners in 8 countries, each with different national and local contexts, organisational capacity and starting points.

But it has not taken a 'one size fits all approach'. By giving the partners in each country the resources and chance to lead, the project has been sensitive to those different settings, tailoring the development of knowledge, workshops, toolkits and networking to suit local circumstances. Yet has done this whilst maintaining

a common aim and belief: that by increasing the involvement of supporters in decision making processes, and developing supporter ownership, the governance of football in Europe will be improved.

On one hand, the project has successfully delivered the hard outcomes it set out to do. It has delivered workshops and events held in each country which have brought together supporters, clubs, national associations and government officials, in many cases for the first time. It has also delivered new publications for each of the 8 countries – toolkits in each language that will be utilised by supporters' groups across those countries over the coming months and years.

These toolkits set out the very serious issues faced by those working to improve governance and financial stability in football and what organised supporters can do to tackle them.

None of this will happen without organisation, hard work and coordination. The workshops have fired the starting gun in bringing supporters together with other stakeholders and decision makers. The toolkits are working documents that will help guide the further development of supporter organisations in each country – and their representation at national and European levels.

On the other, the project has also delivered significant 'added value'.

In statistical terms it has generated the involvement of hundreds of volunteers and contributed large numbers of unpaid days' work by the organisations involved beyond that which has been funded – which we conservatively calculate at around 12,000 Euros of additional work in little over a year.

In more qualitative ways, the project has created a space, both 'real' and 'virtual', at both national and international levels. It has allowed these different groups to come together, to exchange experiences, understand national and cultural difference and identify common purposes. The significance of this learning across European nations should not be underestimated. It builds confidence, increases capacity and contributes to key EU agendas and European values: involving citizens in democratic processes and organisations, sparking volunteering and learning, developing community links and building pan-European understanding. This sort of outcome is difficult to quantify in statistical terms, but it is no less real for that.

Perhaps most significantly, there have been real milestones set as a result of the project.



The first ever lobby of the European Parliament and European Commission by supporters on improving the governance and financial stability of football was held in November 2012.

The establishment of the first national supporters organisations in Ireland and Italy.

The successful coordination of supporter owned clubs in Sweden, which delivered an unequivocal rebuttal to attempts to alter the 50%+1 rule that enshrines supporter ownership in that country.

The first roundtable discussions between supporters, football stakeholders and politicians in Italy and Spain and the first meeting of supporters from different clubs in Portugal.

The largest ever survey of supporters in Europe on issues of governance – involving nearly 12,000 fans – has highlighted the dissatisfaction that exists across Europe with how football is run.

The generation of high-level support for the work of SD Europe from the European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism, Sport, Media and Youth, Mrs Androulla Vassiliou; as well as from national politicians, MEPS, UEFA and others.

Much has been achieved.

But the project has also highlighted the issues that remain.

Except in just a few countries, supporter ownership is the exception not the norm. And in some it has been on the retreat because of new regulations that are a consequence of football's commercial acceleration, with disastrous consequences in places like Spain and Portugal.

Supporters are almost universally excluded from involvement in national associations and in the vast majority of countries from involvement in their clubs. Indeed, despite the best efforts of the partners, clubs remain largely unresponsive, except where supporters are involved in ownership.

Whilst there are differences between countries, there is an over-riding sense evidenced in the project survey that supporters are very, very unhappy with how football is being managed and run.

Although the project has shown what can be achieved with limited investment, supporter organisations lack the resources and capacity to do what needs to be done – at the same time as more supporters than ever are taking steps to form such organisations. There is an ongoing need to financially support the development of supporter organisations in each country as well as for research to support that development and the coordination of activities across Europe.

So although this Final Report marks the end of the EC Preparatory Action project, it is merely the end of the beginning of improving football governance through supporter involvement and ownership.

# PROJECT PARTNERS



## A LA NANTAISE (FC Nantes, France)

A la Nantaise brings together supporters, former players, entrepreneurs, researchers and lawyers to promote and protect FC Nantes and its football division. Created in the context of a crisis, it aims to be involved in the club's future. Given the precarious situation of FC Nantes in terms of governance and financial sustainability, it believes greater supporter involvement is the only way to address these issues, in France and across Europe.



## ASSOCIAÇÃO DE ADEPTOS SPORTINGUISTAS (Sporting Clube de Portugal)

Associação de Adeptos Sportinguistas is the supporters' association of Sporting Clube de Portugal. Its activities are focused on increasing supporter involvement in the decision making process at clubs, leagues and national associations; along with improving the governance and regulation of the game in Portugal to better reflect its status as a social entity rather than a profit-making business. AAS provides support to Sporting members and fans, organises an annual conference on current issues within football, and is widely recognised as an active, democratic organisation.



## COOPERATIVES EUROPE

Cooperatives Europe is the European region of the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA). It was founded in 2006 following the merger of two existing organisations: ICA Europe and the Coordinating Committee of European Co-operative Associations. Cooperatives Europe is an independent, non-governmental organisation aiming to unite, represent and promote co-operative organisations across Europe; support and develop the co-operative business model; and promote the sharing of experiences and best practices.



## ESKABEE 1935 (vzw Eskabee 1935, Belgium)

The organisation created a supporter owned team in Belgium, SK (Yellow Blue) Beveren, following the relegation and subsequent merging (without any supporter consultation) of KSK Beveren; after a significant lobbying process from external interests. Supporters formed SK Beveren in order to honour the legacy of their former club, and now run the first democratically owned club in Belgium.



## FEDERACIÓN DE ACCIONISTAS Y SOCIOS DEL FÚTBOL ESPAÑOL (National Federation For Supporters' Trusts: Spain)

FASFE operates as a network, sharing knowledge and best practices with the aim of achieving increased supporter ownership and participation in Spanish football. It advises its members and other interested groups on a number of issues, including:

How to organise themselves (legal structure, bureaucratic requirements, etc.); how to increase membership; methods of raising finance; developing a stronger relationship with their clubs (participation in AGMs, shareholder rights, developing dialogue, etc.).





### **FRIENDS OF THE REBEL ARMY SOCIETY (Owners of Cork City FC: Republic of Ireland)**

FORAS is a not-for-profit co-operative society and supporters' trust, which has 650 members, and currently owns and runs Cork City Football Club. A board of 10 volunteers, coupled with the support of the membership, currently runs the club on a day to day basis along with three paid staff. As one of the first clubs to be run by supporters in the Republic of Ireland, FORAS has led the way in promoting improved governance in a country that has repeatedly seen clubs descend into financial chaos.

SVENSKA FOTBOLLSSUPPORTERUNIONEN



### **SVENSKA FOOTBALLSSUPPORTERUNIONEN (Swedish Football Supporters' Union: Sweden)**

SFSU represents over 12,000 supporters from 30 different supporters' organisations at Swedish clubs, on a national and international level. It is a democratic organisation, and was formed for the benefit of Swedish football as a whole. This benefit is achieved mainly by presenting the views of supporters in an open dialogue with the national league and football association. SFSU campaigns for fair and reasonable treatment of supporters, and the preservation of Swedish football's fundamental democratic structure – through retention of the '50+1' rule. SFSU encourages all its members to take an active role in the running of their clubs.



### **UNIONE ITALIANA SPORT PER TUTTI – COMITATO REGIONALE EMILIA ROMAGNA (Sport for All: Italy)**

UISP Emilia Romagna is a UISP Regional Committee, organising activities throughout the Emilia Romagna region. It believes in the promotion of sport for all, without discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, religion, culture, gender, age, disability or sexual orientation. We promote collective activities, sport in at-risk areas and coordinate community initiatives. UISP has also played a role in the growing Italian supporters' trust movement.



### **UNSERE KURVE Germany**

Unsere Kurve is a joint venture of German football fans, bridging the club-supporter divide for the benefit of overall common interests. It is the largest organisation of active supporters in Germany, representing approximately 200,000 members of supporters' clubs across the country. It campaigns for the maintenance of football's specific supporter-led culture, and was founded in 2005 when supporter delegates from clubs such as Borussia Dortmund, Eintracht Frankfurt and Hamburger SV met to discuss supporter-related issues; and found that the challenges faced were mutual.

# INTRODUCTION

## THE PROJECT

This final report is an independent assessment of a European Commission-funded project under the Preparatory Action in the Field of Sport (EAC/18/2011). Substance, a research cooperative based in Manchester, UK, were commissioned through a competitive tender to deliver both a needs analysis to support project development and an evaluation of the project.

Supporters Direct Europe (SD Europe), along with eight fans' organisations and Cooperatives Europe, secured funding for the project, entitled 'Improving Football Governance through Supporter Involvement and Community Ownership'<sup>1</sup>. It ran from 2012-2013 supported by a grant of €205,000 from the European Commission and was one of a series of projects to support good governance in sport.

The project is the latest stage in the development of a European-wide network of fans organisations who are seeking greater involvement in the decision-making processes in football, supported by SD Europe, which began in 2007.

## ABOUT SD EUROPE

SD Europe is an organisation that assists football supporter organisations in achieving formal structured involvement in their clubs and associations and developing supporter ownership of football clubs. SD Europe also advises clubs on their ownership and governance structure and works with football associations, leagues, and UEFA. Established in 2007 with funding from UEFA, SD Europe has helped meet these objectives by advising football fans across Europe, increasing the resources at their disposal to improve both the governance of sport and the social function it serves.

Our work over more than a decade has given us a recognised expertise, not just in developing supporter involvement and ownership, but also in wider issues relating to sports governance. Helping to improve football's governance and addressing financial instability are vital, not only in improving sport but addressing key issues in Europe; strengthening democracy and citizenship; building cooperation and dialogue, and improving communities.

### SD Europe:

- Is working in over 20 countries;
- Is regularly consulted by the European Commission and European Parliament, and is an Observer at Commission Expert Groups on sports and sports governance;
- Has worked with member state governments in the UK, France, Germany, Italy and Spain;
- Has undertaken a Europe-wide feasibility study on behalf of UEFA, on increasing supporter involvement at clubs.

## CONTEXT

All of this combines to reduce the positive social impact that sport can have in Europe.

The supporters' trust movement in the UK, along with the long-standing culture of fan ownership across the continent, has demonstrated that there is a way in which football clubs can be competitive on the pitch, whilst also being a positive presence in their communities, owned by fans, better run and more responsible.

SD Europe has seen a marked increase in demands for its services in recent years, which clearly indicates that there is real appetite for both improved governance and supporter ownership at all levels of the game. The main objective of this project is to continue the process of harnessing that desire.

The project also took place within a context of increasing interest in supporter ownership in football and improving governance in sport more generally. In February 2012 the European Parliament ratified a report on European Sport ('the Fisas Report'<sup>2</sup>) which emphasized the importance of supporter involvement, the latest in a series of papers by the EU, EC and parliament to do so.

The project also took place as SD Europe published a well-received briefing paper, *The Heart of the Game: Why supporters are vital to improving governance in football*<sup>3</sup>. This was launched in November 2012 at an event sponsored by Ivo Belet MEP at the European Parliament and attended by supporters' groups from 15 countries, as well as representatives from the following key stakeholders: UEFA, European Commission (Sport, Culture), European Parliament, European Club Association, FIFPro, Football Supporters Europe, FARE Network, and a number of leagues and associations.

**Across Europe, football has for many years struggled with the adverse effects of unsustainable financial models, weak governance, and a lack of democratic accountability.**

## KEY POINTS:

- This final report has been produced by Substance
- It covers the 'Improving Football Governance through Supporter Involvement and Community Ownership' project, coordinated by Supporters Direct Europe
- The project was aimed at building capacity, strengthening networks, and deepening dialogue with stakeholders for democratic supporters' groups
- Partners organised national workshops, and produced toolkits
- Both of these were aimed at improving football governance in their countries

## PURPOSE

Improving governance, involving supporters in ownership and giving supporters structured roles within governance at club and national level all support the development of key EU values such as citizen participation, democratic involvement, transparency and creating social value.

As well as strengthening the network of supporter ownership in Europe through the identification and sharing of best practice, the eight football supporter organisation partners undertook the production of a 'toolkit' for their country. These documents will provide a key resource for supporters' trusts/groups and mutually owned clubs in the future in each country.

Six of the partners also held national workshops that brought their own members, other supporters, clubs, governing bodies and government representatives together. These included training sessions in areas such as setting up democratic fans organisations, fundraising, community work, membership and legal frameworks. The events also focused on how to build the capacity of organisations, lobby government, clubs and national associations and raise awareness amongst stakeholders of the importance of supporter involvement.

Both the toolkits and events sought to develop a longer term aim of improving governance in football in each country.

**The purpose of the project was to help build the capacity of supporters' organisations, strengthen the network between them and create and deepen dialogue with football governing bodies (national and European) and other stakeholders**

### The objectives of the project were to:

- Strengthen the European supporter ownership network by capacity building on local, national and European levels
- Promote good governance amongst supporters' trusts/groups, clubs, and other stakeholders
- Promote democratic ownership structures in football
- Promote football's social value through supporter involvement
- Develop a long-term vision for spreading good governance principles from clubs to governing bodies and other sports.

### The main activities were:

- Exchanges of experiences and assessment of best practices
- A needs analysis to inform the project of needs of supporters' trusts/groups in relation to the governance of their clubs and national associations
- Delivery of workshops in six countries and a final conference
- Publication and dissemination of eight national tailored toolkits and a final report.

# PROJECT OUTPUTS AND ACTIVITIES



## STEERING GROUP MEETINGS

**Two meetings were held during the life of the project:**

### **Steering Group Meeting 1**

was the first opportunity to deal with procedural matters, but was also an opportunity for partners to introduce themselves, their organisations and their work. It was also important in allowing a discussion of the very different contexts in which each group was operating.

Key issues covered included: Introducing the project, Recording activities during the project, Communicating internally during the project, Finances, Needs Analysis research, Planning toolkits, Planning workshops, Communications about the project.

### **Steering Group Meeting 2**

was held in Brussels the day before the launch of SD Europe's position paper, The Heart of the Game. The meeting focused on how groups were progressing with development of toolkits and staging of events, with experience and advice shared between them.

Key issues covered: Financial Records, Project planning, Key deadlines, Publicising the project, Survey results, Workshop updates, Toolkit updates.

**A final meeting of project partners will take place at the annual Supporters Direct conference, where this report will also be presented to key stakeholders. Partners will reflect on the project and its key outcomes, as well as outlining the next steps they have planned.**



## KEY POINTS:

- Steering Group Meetings
- Needs Analysis Research
- Partner workshops and events
- Partner Toolkits
- Communications Toolkit and Lobbying Guide for Partners

## NEEDS ANALYSIS RESEARCH

Substance, a social research cooperative based in Manchester, was commissioned by SD Europe to conduct some needs analysis research to inform the project. The purpose of this was to conduct research with football fans in the eight participating countries to generate data about the involvement of fans in the club and football in their country, their views about the levels of involvement they have and on how football is run, and opinions about some of the potential solutions to problems of governance.

### PARTNER CONSULTATION AND SURVEY

The first stage of this work was to consult with project partners. The main form of this was a survey that each of the partners completed which asked them to describe contexts and needs in their countries.

The survey by Substance covered the level of ownership of clubs, supporter representation and levels of involvement, good and bad practice in governance, and the needs of both their organisation and those of other supporter groups in their country.

The responses were compiled in an internal report which was provided by Substance to SD Europe and project partners to help inform understandings of the different needs in each country, but also the commonalities that existed.

### PARTNER NEEDS

In one section, partners were asked to rate different needs within their organisation. Although these needs were reasonably evenly distributed, development of knowledge scored highest, followed by help with networking and development of skills.

Table 1: partner needs

	1. Most important	2	3	4	5. Most unimportant	Rating Average
Skills	1	6	1	0	0	4.0
Knowledge	3	5	0	0	0	4.4
Advice	1	5	1	1	0	3.8
Training	2	4	1	1	0	3.9
Networking	4	3	0	0	1	4.1
Funding	3	1	3	0	1	3.6

Some selected comments about these needs were:

**Training** - we need incoming Board members to be more aware of proper governance, what their role and input needs to be and whether or not they are even suitable for the role. **Knowledge** - we are currently working on several internal structures within the club and Trust and any additional knowledge is very helpful to guide us on what might best suit our particularly situation. (FORAS)

Our good network, both national and international, has enabled the organisation of successful events and public recognition, including by Government

**bodies. To increase this network is relevant for reaching new stages of development and implementation. The latter applies to funding as well. (AAS)**

The more you know, the more you understand, the better / more effective you can work. **Networking** inside the club, inside the country and international gives you a better 'surround-view' (Unsere Kurve)

It is important that elected fan representatives from different clubs are discussing their problems in their clubs and sharing their experiences. This is causing a higher level of knowledge. (Unsere Kurve)

## SUPPORTER NEEDS

Partners were also asked about the needs of other supporters groups in their country. This again reflected some differences, from countries with no similar democratic supporter organisations (Italy, France, Portugal), to those where sharing of experience is now the priority.

**Training is really important. To know how to lobby, how to organise, how to get third parties on side etc. Getting advice from an organisation that has already been there and done that is essentially, heartening, motivating and refreshing. (FORAS)**

**There aren't other kinds of supporter organizations. (UISP)**

**There are no other supporters organisation fully established in Portugal. (AAS)**

**Some clubs don't have fan organisations that are accepted in the whole fan scene of their club. So the fans can't be represented by somebody in discussions with the club's boards. So they need advice how to build up a accepted and representative fan organisation. (Unsere Kurve)**

**Raise awareness and give advice fans to fans whilst setting up an club-based umbrella fan-organization. (Unsere Kurve)**

**Knowledge: they need to learn more about community ownership and different opportunities.**

**Networking: most fan groups do not have contacts with local/national authorities. (A la nantaise)**

## VARIANCE

This variance reflects the very different contexts of European football which was also discussed at the steering group meetings. Some countries - Germany and Sweden – have regulations which stipulate a minimum level of supporter ownership at football clubs, the '50%+1 Rule'. In all the other partner countries there is no such rule. Indeed, in Spain and Portugal there has been a process whereby clubs have been forced out of member ownership models into limited company status with some disastrous results.

There was also significant variance expressed in relations with clubs and national

associations. Where supporters own part or all of their clubs, supporter interests were catered for much more with some examples of excellent practice (e.g. Hamburger SV). However, where supporters had been marginalised relationships were much poorer.

There were however recurring issues expressed: a failure of national associations to consult properly with supporters, an almost universal lack of formal involvement of supporters in national association structures, critical debt and over-spending at many clubs and a lack of transparency.

## GOOD PRACTICE

The consultation with partners also highlighted some good practice being developed:

**We introduced postal votes in an effort to get members more involved in AGMs, members meetings etc We have also been making an effort to include Q&As with the manager, CEO around these meetings to give members an extra incentive to come and take part. We have also set up a rules committee to review the Trust's rules and see how it might operate more effectively. (FORAS)**

**Sosteniamolancona supporters trust own 2% of Ancona (Serie D). The trust has two elected directors in the club and hold a board meeting every week. Each meeting is open to every fan that wants to take part.(UISP)**

**The pro 50+1 campaign in Germany reinforced the importance of this rule. (UK)**

**Probably the best we are doing is lobbying government and MPs, some of which are starting to acknowledge us and using our input. (FASFE)**

**We managed to get a debate going about the 51 % rule when it was under threat and thereby helped save the rule. (SFSU)**

**Antwerp-fans (FASC) have led the raising of awareness about the financial situation at their club. (VSW Eskabee)**

## PRIORITIES

Finally, partners were asked to list the three most important issues in each country which went on to inform the supporters survey subsequently conducted. The results are shown in the table below, with the strongest recurrent theme being about greater democratic involvement of supporters

**Table 2: Partner Priorities**

	1	2	3
<b>FORAS</b>	Overcoming obstacles and barriers supporters perceive when it comes to running their football club themselves?	Having a national voice – and whether there is interest in a national organisation representing Supporters-run clubs and organisations?	Support – the mechanisms (formal, informal) supporters need to set up an organisation or club themselves.
<b>UISP</b>	The very short life span expectation of the present ownership model.	The right of fans to be actually involved in the club most important decisions.	The positive role fans can play at every level in football.
<b>AAS</b>	Models of club governance.	Supporters involvement in their clubs' daily life.	Financial fair play.
<b>Unsere Kurve</b>	The Financial Fair play rule for German football clubs.	50+1 rule.	More fan departments.
<b>FASFE</b>	Whether clubs listens to supporters.	How the current situation could be changed.	Understanding whether supporters think fan ownership could be a solution.
<b>SFSU</b>	The seemingly competing interests of ownership, democracy and money.	How to modernize democracy.	Why aren't fans more involved, on paper we are the owners.
<b>Eskabee 1935</b>	Using the survey and project to raise awareness.	Informing fans of the financial situation at their clubs.	The treatment of fans as customers by club boards.
<b>Nantes</b>	How a national fans' body could be useful and necessary.	How external expertise could be utilised.	

This consultation process with partners reinforced the importance of the approach the project sought to take, namely developing toolkits for members, supporters and their organisations specifically relevant to each country and written in their language; as well as the importance of bringing interested groups together in workshop events to discuss practice, campaigning and organising more effectively.

## EUROPEAN SUPPORTERS' SURVEY

The supporters' survey was designed to get wider feedback on how football fans in different countries felt about their involvement in their clubs and national associations and whether the development of supporter organisations (and other measures) could help improve the running of football more generally.

Substance designed and ran a survey in each country which was then translated into each language. This allowed individual partners to have an individual report for their country. By using the same questions for the bulk of the questionnaire, Substance was also able to produce overall results and conduct some comparisons. However, the survey also had three questions specific to each country/partner.

The surveys were promoted by partners in their country, which also allowed them to raise awareness of the project as a whole and the issues it was concerned with. In some countries significant support for the survey was received from clubs, fan departments and even national associations (Sweden). The survey took place between September 1st and October 15th 2012.

In total nearly 12,000 supporters took part in the survey, although participation did vary from country to country. This is the largest known survey of supporters across different European countries on football governance yet undertaken. Although it was delivered online and as such is 'self selected' the results are nonetheless statistically important.

### Country Responses (Started Survey)

Sweden	2,386
Spain	2,032
Germany	2,012
Ireland	1,509
Portugal	1,194
France	1,169
Italy	788
Belgium	740 (+38 Fr)
Total	11,868

## ORGANISATION MEMBERSHIP

We asked supporters whether they were a member of either a club based organisation and/or a national supporters organisation. There was considerably higher membership of club-based organisations than national, which is perhaps not surprising. However a majority of respondents were not members of any organisation.

**Table 4: Organisation membership**

	Club		National	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Yes	5,468	45%	907	8%
No	6,693	55%	10,783	92%

**In total nearly 12,000 supporters took part in the survey**

## SUPPORTER INVOLVEMENT

Substance asked supporters how involved they felt in the running of their club and nationally. The results were fairly striking in that only a tiny minority – 7% at club level and just 2% at national level - felt that they were 'very involved and have a role in decision making'.

In contrast 39% of respondents said that they were 'almost completely ignored' at club level and 73% felt the same way at national level. This illustrates a deep-seated problem in European football governance in that one of its most important stakeholders feels excluded from decision making either at club or national level.

**Table 5: Supporter involvement**

	Club		National	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Considerable: I am very involved and have a role in decision making	808	7%	163	2%
Some: I have been consulted, but have no role in decision making	1,944	17%	540	5%
Little: I am not really involved, except on rare occasions	4,067	36%	2,176	21%
None: I am almost completely ignored	4,445	39%	7,636	73%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>11,264</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>10,515</b>	<b>100%</b>



## SATISFACTION

We also asked supporters how satisfied they felt with the running of football at both their club and their country generally.

Again, the results were fairly stark:

- Just 10% were very satisfied with the running of football at their club and 2% with the running of football nationally
- In contrast 72% were either 'very unsatisfied' or 'unsatisfied' with the running of football nationally, although only about half this figure (36%) were either 'very unsatisfied' or 'unsatisfied' with the running of football at their club.

**Table 6: Supporter satisfaction**

	Club		National	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
1 (Very satisfied)	1,043	10%	173	2%
2 (Satisfied)	3,476	34%	986	10%
3 (Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied)	1,974	19%	1,588	16%
4 (Unsatisfied)	1,692	17%	3,080	30%
5 (Very unsatisfied)	1,969	19%	4,319	42%
Don't know	84	1%	94	1%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>10,238</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>10,240</b>	<b>100%</b>

## IMPROVING GOVERNANCE

We also asked supporters to say how effective they felt that greater supporter involvement or a club licensing system would be in improving the running of football in their country. Supporters were asked to rank the effect it would have from 1 (it will improve it a lot) to 5 (it won't improve it at all).

There was huge support for greater supporter involvement in running football. In total 70% of supporters felt that this would improve the running of football, with 46% saying that it will make a big difference.

**Table 7: Impact of supporter involvement**

	Count	Percent
1 (it will improve it a lot)	4456	46%
2 (it will improve it some)	2332	24%
3 (it will improve it a little bit)	1458	15%
4 (it won't really improve it)	594	6%
5 (it won't improve it at all)	424	4%
Don't know	386	4%
	<b>9,650</b>	<b>100%</b>

## PARTNER EXPERIENCES



For a number of years Spanish football supporters have been creating groups in order to gain influence within our clubs and for the last five years most of these groups started to work together in FASFE, our umbrella organisation. Finally, for the last year, thanks to the ‘Improving Football Governance Project’ we have had the chance to work closely with our European colleagues through the Supporters Direct Europe network learning about governance models and sharing best practices. All these have materialised in a first of its kind workshop in Spain attended by more than 80 Spanish fans where we learned about the German and Irish experiences and had the chance to address government and EU officials and football authorities. Another crucial result of the project has been the development of a toolkit that will help Spanish fans to group and work towards fan ownership and participation.

**Emilio Abejón**  
**Federación de Accionistas y Socios del Fútbol Español, Spain**

This project has been a unique opportunity to raise awareness about fan ownership in France, among fans, football authorities and decision-makers. But has also been important in laying the foundations of a mature, democratic and inclusive French fan movement. Through exchanges of good practices with our European colleagues, we have been able to set guidelines towards the implementation of community ownership in the French football.

**Ronan Evain**  
**A la nantaise, France**

Football's true spirit comes from passion, team-work and collective support on the field, in the stadium and beyond. Cooperative supporter schemes are a safeguard of those values! This project is a great step forwarding in building a European network!

**Klaus Niederlander, Director; Marc Noel, Cooperative Development Manager, Cooperatives Europe**

The Improving Football Governance project has been critical to the development of supporter involvement in Irish football over the past 18 months. While there were several supporters-run clubs and trusts doing a lot of good work in isolation, the project - and specifically the need to put together a handbook - has brought several different parties together for the first time.

We, with the help of our project partners, have been able to take a closer look at what's happening across Europe and use various different initiatives as inspiration for what we need to do ourselves in order to establish an Irish network. Lobbying at European level had benefits that we are now also realising at national and local levels and the value of having institutions and organisations such as the European Commission, Uefa and Supporters Direct Europe behind us means doors are opening to us in a way never seen before.

**Niamh O'Mahony**  
**Friends of the Rebel Army Society, Ireland**

This project has been very important for the fans movement in Portugal. It has provided the opportunity for supporters to get acquainted with different realities that explore all the potentialities of supporters associations, and it has gathered people from different clubs and a wide array of official entities. We're confident that it will contribute to changing mentalities and to improve fan involvement in Portugal.

**Bruno Oliveira Martins**  
**Associação de Adeptos Sportinguistas, Portugal**

For the Italian movement of football supporter trusts, the project has been a fundamental chance to move towards a national organization. The Italian trust movement is a really young one, and only in recent years have fans' associations been set up. The project has been a great chance to bring together trusts and develop a sound base for a national organisation, which was founded in early 2013. On the other side, the chance to hear about other national experiences gave the opportunity to exchange learning about national specificities. In all those senses, the project left an important legacy for the Italian trusts' movement. The project helped us to see how deep and shared in all European countries the need is to involve fans in the governance of football clubs and football movements. FOOTBALL IS OF ITS PEOPLE!

**Pippo Russo**  
**Unione Italiana Sport per tutti, Italy**

Although the Belgian legal system and the organisation of Belgian football are different from other countries, Belgian fans will learn much from colleagues in supporters organisations from across Europe and the world because the most important values for every football fan are the same: good financial governance, respect for the social value of a football club and football in general. Exchanging information on these issues has been the main benefit of this project. Democratic fan involvement is possible in every country and both Eskabee 1935 and FASC (R. Antwerp FC-fans) already have created democratic organisations and are giving the message to others: "If you've got the will, you will surely find a way."

**Jim Van de Vyver**  
**Eskabee 1935, Belgium**

Supporter ownership of football clubs puts the crucial decisions in the hands of the right people - the fans. Unsere Kurve believes that football will only survive in the future if fans are involved in the decision-making processes at their clubs and their clubs are run democratically. This project has proved that this idea is shared by fans from many clubs all over Europe. We would like to thank Supporters Direct Europe and everybody who has been involved in this project for the fantastic work that they have done. Unsere Kurve has been proud to be a part of this unique Europe wide fan network. But this was just the beginning – we have to keep on fighting!

**Jens Wagner**  
**Unsere Kurve, Germany**

Being part of this project has been very rewarding for SFSU as an organisation and Swedish football supporters in general. Our struggle to keep the 50+1 rule has been successful so far. With the support and exchange of experiences with the other project partners we have gained more energy than ever to keep on fighting for our beliefs. Through this project, it has been obvious that club colours doesn't matter when we come together to keep the democratic ways of football and to improve governance.  
One member - One Vote!

**Lena Wiberg**  
**Svenska Footballsupporterunionen, Sweden**

”

When asked whether ‘a national Club Licensing system would improve the running of football in your country generally’, the results were more mixed. The biggest single response was that supporters didn’t know what effect it would have (36%) perhaps reflecting a lack of knowledge about what a club licensing system is and might contribute, but also perhaps some cynicism about what effect measures such as this will have. However, only 4% said that it would not improve football at all, and 18% said that it would improve governance significantly.

**Table 8: Impact of club licensing**

	Count	Percent
1 (it will improve it a lot)	1,740	18%
2	1,938	20%
3	1,744	18%
4	370	4%
5 (it won't improve it at all)	411	4%
Don't know	3,547	36%
	9,750	100%

**55% said that they were interested in joining a supporters' organisation that worked to get or maintain ownership at their club, illustrating a significant demand that needs to be met**

Finally, we asked supporters whether they were interested in joining a supporters’ organisation that sought to gain or maintain an ownership stake in their club. 14% of respondents said that they were already a member of such an organisation which, given the high levels of responses from Germany and Sweden and the high level of fan ownership in those countries, suggests that the survey on the whole managed to reach supporters who are not members of such organisations.

Most importantly, 55% said that they were interested in joining a supporters’ organisation that worked to get or maintain ownership at their club, illustrating a significant demand that needs to be met. Only 12% were not interested in joining such an organisation although nearly one fifth were undecided, suggesting the need for more information to be provided about what such an organisation might do.

**Table 9: Interest in joining supporters' organisation**

	Count	Percent
Yes	5,316	55%
No	1,141	12%
I am already a member of one	1,383	14%
Don't know	1,864	19%
	9,704	100%

### The Supporter Ownership Effect: Sweden and Germany

We also analysed results to see if there was any marked difference between responses from countries where supporter ownership is embedded in football governance, namely Sweden and Germany, and the rest.

There was much higher membership of club based supporter organisations amongst fans in Sweden and Germany – they were 24% more likely to be members – which is perhaps unsurprising.

Fans in other countries were 14% more likely to say that they were ‘not really involved in the running of football’ than those in Sweden and Germany.

The most marked difference was in satisfaction: fans in Sweden and Germany were 21% more likely to be satisfied or very satisfied with the running of football in their country and 25% more likely to be satisfied or very satisfied with the running of football at their club.

It should also be noted that the majority of responses from Ireland were from fan-owned clubs and that nation’s individual responses were much more in line with Sweden and Germany than the mean of the rest.



## WORKSHOPS AND EVENTS



Photo: Trevor Hallows

A key element of the project work was in staging six events, or workshops, on issues relating to the project as a whole and the circumstances in each of the countries in particular. The German partners, Unsere Kurve did not stage an event due to the high number of events already taking place in German football. Instead representatives of UK attended other events.

Details of the events are provided in the boxed section.

### Ireland



#### **'The Heart of the Game'** Cork, November 10-11th

The Heart of the Game conference in Ireland was opened by project manager Niamh O'Mahony. The event brought together experts, academics and supporters to hear and share best practices and experiences from across the League of Ireland as well as English, Swedish, German and Italian football.

The Irish workshop was supported by Irish President Michael D. Higgins who said: 'I am very encouraged to see football supporters coming together like this for the first time to develop ways of addressing the long-term challenges facing football in Ireland.' His message of support to the club officials and supporters organisations in attendance opened the Heart of the Game football conference in Cork.

Delegates heard from John Kennedy, youth worker and Cork City Board Member, and Phil Frampton of FC United which was followed by discussions around some of the best practices going on in the League of Ireland at the moment. Presentations were also made by Seán Ó Conaill (former CCFC board member/ UCC), AFC Wimbledon and Lena Gustafson Wiberg.

The second day of the conference kicked off with a session on Fan Activism - led by Kevin Rye of Supporters Direct, Kris Stewart from AFC Wimbledon and Phil Frampton. A workshop on Marketing in the League (with Tim Murphy, CEO of Cork City FC, PR consultant Siobhan Meehan, Stephen Ryan of Fota Wildlife Park and the Sunday Independent's John O'Brien) followed, and the two-day event concluded with a presentation from Supporter Direct's SLO consultant, Stuart Dykes.

#### **Key Outcomes:**

- Agreement to begin work towards establishing a national supporters' organisation
- Agreement to engage collectively with football authorities as part of this process
- Agreement for delegates to promote the importance of the Supporter Liaison Office project to their individual clubs
- Agreement to use the Irish Presidency of the Council of the European Union as a method of promoting increased supporter involvement at clubs
- Agreement to share best practices and experience amongst the growing network of organised supporters' groups.

# Portugal



**Why supporter involvement is vital to improving football governance in Portugal**  
(‘Envolver os Adeptos, Melhorar o Futebol’)  
Lisbon, February 16th

Supporters from five Portuguese clubs, along with representatives from many of the game’s key stakeholders, gathered in Lisbon to discuss some of the key issues affecting football in Portugal, and how supporters can be involved in the development of solutions.

The workshop was significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, the variety of supporters represented. As well as Sporting, there were supporters of FC Porto, Benfica, Vitória de Setúbal and Académica de Coimbra present, reflecting the fact that although rivalries on the pitch are important, there are undoubtedly concerns that can act as uniting forces. This is the first time supporters of different clubs have come together. Secondly, the level of engagement from many Portuguese institutions was impressive: the Federação Portuguesa de Futebol, Plano Nacional para Ética no Desporto, and Governo de Portugal were all in attendance, to contribute their thoughts but also to hear what the supporters had to say – surely a positive sign for the future. Thirdly, the range of topics discussed was broad – from the particular finances of Sporting and the other two clubs in the big three, to the failure of the SAD model of club ownership, to examples of supporter ownership in Germany (HSV Hamburger Sport-Verein) and England (FC United of Manchester).

## Key Outcomes:

- Significant steps taken towards increasing the number of democratic, organised supporters’ groups in Portugal from one to five
- Commitment from Government representatives to engage further with these groups in the future
- Supporters to work together to develop and promote alternatives to the SAD model of club structure/ownership
- Supporters to encourage their clubs to recruit and/or publicise further the Supporter Liaison Officer project
- AAS to engage with the Plano Nacional para Etica no Desporto, to ensure that the process involves supporters

# Italy



**The Heart of the Game: the participation of supporters.**  
(‘Il cuore del gioco – La partecipazione dei supporters: una strada percorribile per il calcio’.)  
Rome, March 2nd

Supporters from clubs throughout the pyramid, along with many of Italian football’s key stakeholders, gathered in Rome; accompanied by representatives from Supporters Direct Europe, Federación de Accionistas y Socios del Fútbol Español (FASFE), Unsere Kurve, and the European Commission.

The purpose of the event was to discuss the issues currently facing Italian football, and how democratic supporter involvement in the ownership and governance of clubs can help to address them. The event marked the first time that Italy’s growing network of organised supporters’ groups have engaged with many of the country’s key footballing bodies.

Following introductions from Antonia Hagemann (Head of European Development, Supporters Direct) and Pippo Russo (representing project partners Unione Italiana Sport per Tutti), the event saw a panel discussion, moderated by journalist Fulvio Paglialunga. The panel featured contributions from Marco Brunelli (Direttore Generale, Serie A), Andrea Abodi (Presidente, Serie B), Federico Smanio (Marketing, Serie B), Franco Vianello Moro (Venezia United Supporters’ Trust), Antonia Hagemann, Diego Riva (legal consultant to SD Europe) as well as representatives from FASFE and Unsere Kurve. The Federazione Italiana Giuoco Calcio were also present.

## Key Outcomes:

- Continue with the establishment of a national supporters’ organization: Supporters in Campo
- To build capacity further by expanding the network of democratic, organised supporters’ groups
- Two key stakeholders in Serie A and Serie B commit to engaging directly with supporter representatives
- Serie A and Serie B stress the importance of the Supporter Liaison Officer project, and pledge to implement the requirement comprehensively

# Sweden



**How supporters can lead the fight to preserve the 50+1 rule.**  
(En Medlem, En Röst)  
Malmö, March 9th

Swedish supporters delivered a unanimous display of support for the 50+1 rule in Malmö, all in favour of preserving and protecting the 50+1 rule, the backbone of supporter ownership in Sweden. The rule stipulates that even if clubs (traditionally structured as multi-sport members' associations) separate their professional football sections into limited companies, these must still be majority controlled by the parent association.

The event was organised by Svenska Footballssupporterunionen (SFSU), the umbrella organisation for democratic, not for profit supporters' groups in Sweden. In the preceding fortnight, members of AIK, Djurgarden, Elfsborg, Helsingborg, IFK Göteborg, Malmö FF and Hammarby all put forward motions at the Annual General Meetings of their clubs, which stated unequivocally that the 50+1 rule should be retained; and that moves at national level to remove the rule should not be supported. This has subsequently been followed by the national association confirming that the member ownership rule will be retained, a very significant victory for Swedish fans.

Supporters of those clubs we brought together at the event to discuss recent events, and to share experiences. Ideas were put forward for new joint initiatives, further engagement with Swedish football's key stakeholders, and increasing the organisation's capacity.

#### Key Outcomes:

- SFSU to coordinate the continuing campaign by supporters to preserve Swedish football's democratic foundation via the '50+1' rule
- SFSU to build capacity by offering an increased range of services to members;
- SFSU to further engage with key stakeholders: Government, League Association, and Federation

# Belgium



**Why do supporters need to be involved in football governance.**  
Antwerp, March 23rd

Representatives of SD members Eskabee 1935 FC and the Royal Antwerp umbrella fans group, Federation of Antwerp Supporters (Clubs) were joined at the event by officials of Belgian Pro-League OH Leuven, and representatives from democratic supporters' organisations involved in the governance of clubs including: Supporters Eendracht Aalst, Kaa Ghent, and Supporters KV Mechelen, the first supporters' organisation in Belgian football to take a role in the ownership and governance of their clubs.

The two major national fans organisations – SFP and NSF – were both present, alongside one of the most outspoken supporters of democratic fan involvement in the ownership and governance of clubs across Europe, the Belgian MEP Ivo Belet, who hosted the launch of Supporters Direct Europe's paper in November 2012. The presence of the best and most prolific writer on football finance and governance over the last 40 years, De Standaard's Francois Colin, added to the depth and breadth of the discussions on the day.

#### Key Outcomes:

- Democratic, organised groups to work further towards collective representation on issues relevant to supporters
- Supporters to continue to encourage their clubs to recruit and/or publicise further the importance of the Supporter Liaison Officer project
- Capacity to be developed further by the encouragement and fostering of new groups



## Spain

**The role supporters' groups can play in improving the governance and financial sustainability of Spanish football**

**('Jornadas de Mejora de la Gobernanza del Fútbol a través de la Participación de las Aficiones y la Propiedad Comunitaria')**

**Madrid, January 26th**



At a time of crisis in Spanish football that has seen Deportivo la Coruña enter into administration and the taking into local government ownership of Valencia, senior figures from La Liga, the European Commission, Spanish politics and government joined delegates from supporters' trusts and community owned clubs in Spain for a workshop organised by Federación de Accionistas y Socios del Fútbol Español (FASFE).

The event was the first of its kind in Spanish football, and brought together more than 70 activists from around 20 supporters' trusts, fan organisations and clubs all levels of the pyramid. It provided the opportunity to meet and discuss activism, and the current logjam in implementing the change of law allowing new members' association football clubs in the top two divisions – a change successfully argued for by FASFE several years ago, as well as the specifics of what supporters' trusts should be doing at their clubs.

The project also involved other partners from the project – Jens Wagner from Germany's Unsere Kurve and Niamh O'Mahony from Ireland's Cork City FC's owners, Friends of the Rebel Army Society.

### **Key Outcomes:**

- Recognition of the importance of increased collective action by organised supporters' groups
- Government and League representatives agreed to greater consultation with supporters
- FASFE to build capacity further by offering an increased range of services to member organisations
- FASFE to build capacity further by recruiting groups for whom the event was their first experience of a FASFE event into membership



In terms of overall attendance Substance collected data from five of the events which took place in time to be included in the final report. Event attendance varied but averaged 70 people (over 350 attendees in five events), including significant representation of other supporter organisations.

Table 10: Event attendance

	Response Average	Response Total	Response Count
People in total	70.60	353	5
People from your own organisation	18.00	90	5
People from other supporters' organisations	29.80	149	5
Representatives/employees of clubs	1.60	8	5
Representatives/employees of national associations/leagues	2.60	13	5
Representatives/employees of government	1.20	6	5





## TOOLKITS

As well as strengthening the network of supporter ownership in Europe through the identification and sharing of best practice and lessons learnt, the eight partners undertook the production of a 'toolkit' for their country, in its native language. These documents will provide a key resource for supporters' trusts/groups and mutually owned clubs in the future, and were aimed at fulfilling one of the project's key objectives – capacity building.

It was felt that as well as encouraging the partners to outline their principles and aims for the future, the production of toolkits would also benefit them in terms of providing an 'entry point' into greater engagement with stakeholders, through meetings to discuss the recommendations that each toolkit contains.

Partner Organisation	Title and Date of Publication	Outline	Circulation
A la nantaise	Au Coeur du Jeu: l'Actionnariat Populaire dans le Football Français April 18th 2013	Introduction; Supporters and Reforming French Football; Supporter Ownership in Europe – good practice; French supporters and supporter ownership; Starting a democratic supporters' group; Building a representative body for French supporters; Recommendations; References, Credits, Contacts.	Original plan was to launch the toolkit at an event in the French Sénat. However, this was postponed, and a press conference was held at the Maison de la Bretagne in Paris instead. Full details of the event: <a href="http://www.supporters-direct.org/?news-article=a-la-nantaise-launch-au-coeur-du-jeu-toolkit-and-yes-we-canaris-campaign">http://www.supporters-direct.org/?news-article=a-la-nantaise-launch-au-coeur-du-jeu-toolkit-and-yes-we-canaris-campaign</a>
Associação de Adeptos Sportinguistas	Associações de Adeptos: Fortalecer a voz dos adeptos no futebol Português April 8th 2013	Introduction; The importance of organised supporters' groups; The Portuguese context and European reality; The organisation of football in Portugal and the place of supporters; The role of supporters in the economic life of clubs; Establishing a democratic supporters' group; Day-to-day activities for supporters' groups; Conclusions.	Toolkit launched in Lisbon on April 8th, with a press briefing attended by national press and a Government representative: <a href="http://www.supporters-direct.org/?news-article=portuguese-supporters-launch-landmark-toolkit">http://www.supporters-direct.org/?news-article=portuguese-supporters-launch-landmark-toolkit</a>
Eskabee 1935	TBC June 2013	Introduction; Football in Belgium – popularity, financial problems, supporters; Football club or football company; Democracy and supporters; Philosophy and basic principles of supporters' trusts; Case studies; Creating a supporters' trusts; Running a football club; Survey results; FAQs	The toolkit will be disseminated throughout the Belgian network of organised supporters' groups and beyond
Federación de Accionistas y Socios del Fútbol Español	Guía FASFE para Asociaciones de Aficionados: por qué y cómo los aficionados trabajan para mejorar el fútbol June 2013	Introduction – what is a football club?; The importance of supporters' trusts; activities of supporters' trusts; the role of FASFE; How to establish a supporters' trust; Governance and day-to-day management; Membership; Raising finance; The SAD model; Appendices.	The toolkit will be formally launched with a press conference and roundtable at FASFE's AGM (late May/early June). FASFE have met with Spanish MEPs to discuss their presence, and have also followed up with the football authorities following the Madrid event.

As a result of the project, but also as part of SD Europe's wider work, all partners were provided with a handbook, which set out guidelines on effective communications with officials and other stakeholders.

These communication guidelines were intended to provide assistance to supporters' groups on effective communication with government, sports organisations and the media about their activities. They also set out general information on communication guidelines and offered suggested framework for different types of meetings.

In the context of the project, these guidelines were particularly useful for partners when communicating about and following up on their events, drawing attention to the publication of toolkits, and targeting specific stakeholders to engage with as part of their work on the project.

Partner Organisation	Title and Date of Publication	Outline	Circulation
Friends of the Rebel Army Society	The Heart of the Game July 2013	Introduction; Setting the Scene; Legal guidance for supporters and supporters' groups; Good Governance for supporters' groups and supporter owned clubs; Recommendations.	The toolkit will be distributed throughout the growing network of organised supporters' groups in Ireland, and will also be disseminated by the FAI and political stakeholders. FORAS are also developing links on the European level, with the aim of capitalising on the Irish Presidency.
Svenska Fotbollssupporter-unionen	En Medlem, En Röst June 2013	Introduction; What is the 50+1 rule; Current situation in Sweden; Why is being a member of your club important; Why members are important to clubs; Case studies; Social value of football in Sweden; Recommendations.	PDF to be distributed throughout the SFSU network and to as many Swedish supporters as possible, as part of wider campaign to preserve the 50+1 rule. It will be launched around the time that the preservation of the 50+1 rule is officially confirmed (late May).
Unione Italiana Sport per Tutti	Il Calcio senza tifosi perde la propria anima May 2013	Introduction; The situation in Italy; Setting up a supporters' trust; Running a supporters' trust; Recommendations.	PDF to be circulated throughout the growing network of democratic supporter organisations in Italy, and also to be used as a central part of continuing engagement with authorities. Groups currently formulating plans for a launch event, in conjunction with continuing work in the area of establishing a national organisation.
Unsere Kurve	Mein Verein – perfekter Verein? Wie Fans in ihren Vereinen mitbestimmen können Date: tbc	Introduction; German Football Clubs; Member Associations vs. Corporations; Preserving the member ownership model; Recommendations.	The idea is for the toolkit to be part of a wider Unsere Kurve campaign using 'old school' methods – handouts, choreography at stadia, etc. As they represent approximately 200,000 fans it is hoped that the toolkit will be widely read.

# OUTCOMES FROM THE PROJECT

## Partner Contributions and Volunteering

The most important element of any project is what effect it has. Whilst Section 2 outlined the work that was undertaken – the project outputs – this section details some of the impact the project has had.

To inform this Substance ran a third survey, this time of the eight supporter organisation partners to assist project evaluation at the end of the project.

Each partner was funded to provide a set number of days work to the project. This ranged from 30 contracted days (FASFE, UISP, AAS, Eskabee, FORAS) to 25 days (Unsere Kurve and A la nantaise). In addition each partner had an additional 20 days for a researcher and 5 days technical assistance.

However, the partners were successful in using this to leverage additional contributions from volunteers.

- An additional 69 days (average 8.6 per project) were contributed by the time of writing, with an additional 51 days (average of 6.4) to be committed to the end of the project.
- This make a total of 120 additional days work across the project or an average of 15 per project.
- This equates to an average of 50% additional days' worked compared to what was funded.

If we provide a financial value to this work at an average of €100 per day, this equates to an additional €12,000 of additional value.

In addition, partners managed to sue the project to engage other people in the work of their organisation. This measure is important because one of the main weaknesses of voluntary supporters organisations is the human resource capacity they have, problems of volunteers 'burning out' and problems with succession. As such, involving more people in delivering partner project outcomes is vital.

In total, partners involved 138 additional people working on the project. This averages over 17 per project.

This suggests two things:

- i) That in this project, a significant amount of additional value was leveraged in by partners when given the 'pump priming' of EC funding.
- ii) That funding the work of voluntary supporters' organisations can help generate significant levels of volunteering, something the EU wishes to promote as a core part of 'active citizenship'.

## Raised Profile Of Supporter Interests

A key aim of the project was to help partners raise the profile of their organisation and of supporter issues to assist them in having more influence.

All partners said that the project had raised the profile of their organisation, but also all felt that it had also helped to raise the profile of the need for better governance in football. 7 out of 8 partners said that it had also helped to increase the awareness of supporter interests, although only half felt it had raised the profile of financial problems in football.

Table 11: Raising profile (organisation)

	Response Count	Response Percent
Your organisation	8	100.0%
Supporters' interests	7	87.5%
The need to improve governance	8	100.0%
Financial problems in football	4	50.0%

KEY POINTS:

- Each partner was funded to work a specific amount of days on the project
- According to a second Substance survey, an average of 15 extra days were delivered per partner, creating significant added value
- Workshops attracted representation from a wide variety of stakeholders, which created greater levels of engagement before and after the events
- The establishment of national organisations in Ireland and Italy, as well as the preservation of the 50+1 rule in Sweden, are three key outcomes
- Partner evaluations of the project's effects were overwhelmingly positive

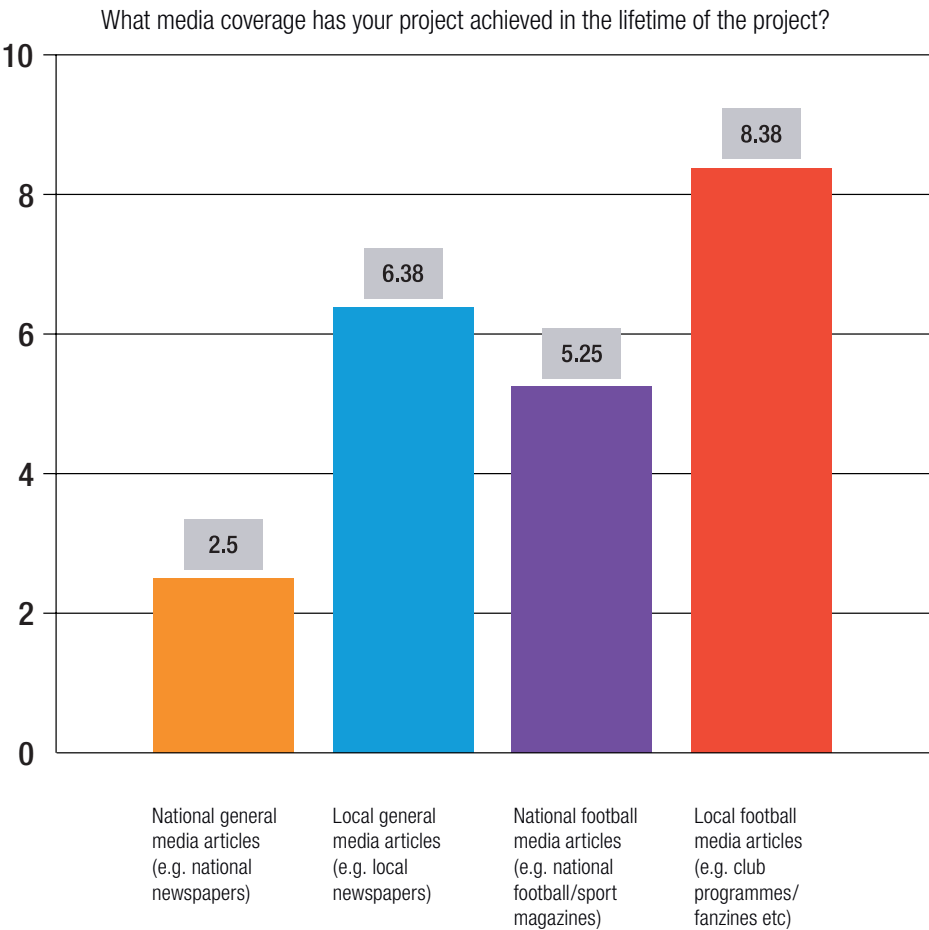
Media Coverage

One other measure of increasing the profile of issues of improving governance and supporter involvement is the media coverage that the project managed to secure. Again, the project was very effective in doing this. Partners generated 20 national media articles about the project in total, averaging 2.5 each. National football magazines covered the project 41 times, an average of more than 5 per project and there was more than twice as much coverage in local press – 51 articles in total; and 67 in local football publications.

Table 12: Media coverage

	Response Average	Response Total	Response Count
National 'general media' articles (e.g. national newspapers)	2.50	20	8
Local 'general media' articles (e.g. local newspapers)	6.38	51	8
National 'football media' articles (eg national football/sport magazines)	5.25	42	8
Local football media articles (eg club programmes, fanzines)	8.38	67	8

Figure1: Media coverage



In terms of website coverage, there were 159 internet articles on the project recorded by the time of reporting (more are expected as the project comes to an end). This is an average of nearly 20 per partner. The distribution of these is shown in the table below.

Table 13: Internet coverage

Partner	Count of Web Articles
FASFE	40
UISP	20
AAS	5
Eskabee	4
SFSU	12
Cork City	37
Unsere Kurve	21
A la Nantaise	20

## Workshop Evaluation

**On average the events attracted a majority of people from outside the partner organisation**

Most significantly, the projects were successful at attracting:

- People from other supporters organisations (149, average of nearly 30 per event)
- National associations and leagues with an average of more than 2 per event

The workshops had less representation from clubs although this varied. In part this was due to the focus of events, which were often concerned with building national networks and raising issues about the governance of the game nationally, but it was also due at times an unwillingness of clubs to engage, despite the efforts of partners.

By the time of reporting five of the seven events had been held. Substance provided a proforma questionnaire for use by partners to record the evaluation by participants of the events. Four partners did this and in three areas we could compare data 'like with like'. Attendees were very positive about the event as a whole, with an average of 66.9% saying that they were 'very satisfied' and 31.8% saying that they were 'satisfied'.

**Table 14: Workshop/event satisfaction**

	Spain	Ireland	Portugal	Italy	Total
1 (very satisfied)	90.6	75	70	32	66.9
2 (satisfied)	9.3	25	25	68	31.8
3 (neither satisfied nor unsatisfied)	0	0	0	0	0
4 (unsatisfied)	0	0	0	0	0
5 (very unsatisfied)	0	0	0	0	0

Partners in four of the countries also asked attendees whether they thought that the workshop meant that they would become more involved in football governance in their clubs and nationally. Although more mixed, the responses were also overwhelmingly positive with 93% saying that they would be more involved at club level and 63.5% at national level.

**Table 15: Future involvement**

	Spain		Ire		Port		Italy		Total		
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No answer
<b>Your club?</b>	96.7%	3.12%	87.5%	12.5%	95%	5%	93%	6%	93.1%	6.7%	0.2%
<b>Your country?</b>	83.9%	16.1%	0%	0%	75%	15%	95%	5%	63.5%	9.0%	30.5%

There was universal agreement amongst attendees across all four workshops that they would attend a similar event again.



## Improving the Representation and Structured Dialogue of Supporters

The project sought to assist supporter organisations in developing networks with other supporters organisations and in representing their views with clubs, national associations and both national and European government representatives.

Highlights of the success the project has had in this respect are:

- A total of 20 meetings were held with MEPs and EU officials across all 8 countries
- 22 meetings were held with government officials or politicians
- 11 meetings were held with national associations or leagues

Also, 45 meetings were held with other supporters groups – showing how this kind of funding can help develop cross-European dialogue and networking. Only in the area of meetings with clubs did partners struggle where, as with attendance at events, despite efforts of partners some were unresponsive – with an average of just two meetings per partner with clubs in their country.

**Table 16: Meetings and communications**

	Average Meetings	Total Meetings	Funding 'helped improve communications'
MEPs/EU officials	2.50	20	6
National government officials /politicians	2.75	22	4
National associations	1.38	11	4
Leagues	1.88	15	6
Clubs	2.00	16	3
Other supporter groups	5.63	45	8

This was also reflected in the responses when partners were asked whether the project had improved communications with these groups. All felt that they had improved communications with other supporters groups and most had improved communications with EU, government and leagues.

Again, clubs is the area where there has been least success although only half the projects reported better communications with national associations.

This improved communication was reflected in statements made by officials in support of the project's work. In total 24 statements were made, with 4 by MEPs, 4 by government.

### Examples of Supportive Statements

"I am very encouraged to see football supporters coming together like this for the first time to develop ways of addressing the long-term challenges facing football in Ireland." – Michael D. Higgins (President of Ireland)

"In times such as these accountability and transparency are required. Football should not be exempt from this idea." – Ramon Barba (Subdirección General de Régimen Jurídico del Deporte, Spain)

"Football is a sport for the community." – Andrea Abodi (President, Serie B)

"Supporters need to have the opportunity to make their voices heard." – Marco Brunelli (Direttore Generale, Serie A)

## National Supporters' Organisations

One of the most significant achievements, given the aims of the project to increase the capacity of supporters organisations and improve the representation of fans' interests is the establishment of two new national supporters organisations. In both Ireland and Italy the first ever national organisation to represent democratic supporters' groups were set up. Given the obstacles poorly resources supporters groups face in doing this, it is a major success and an example of what this sort of funding can help deliver.

**IN ITALY**, representatives from 12 democratic supporters' organisations, representing supporters of clubs from throughout the Italian football pyramid, have as part of the project taken steps towards the formation of a national supporters' network: Supporters in Campo. SD Europe had been active in the country prior to the commencement of the project, which has presented the ideal mechanism with which these groups can increase their capacity, both now and in the future. The establishment of a national network was one of the key outcomes from the 'Il Cuore del Gioco' project workshop in Rome, as part of which the groups held a closed session to discuss the network.

This session covered topics such as the agreement of key principles, criteria for membership, engagement with other key stakeholders, and a timeline of next steps. Supporters in Campo will be an active network from the beginning of the 2013/14 season.



**IN IRELAND**, supporters have also used the project as a natural springboard to further pre-existing discussions about a national network, which would represent both supporters' trusts and supporter owned clubs (such as Cork City, who are owned by Irish project partners Friends of the Rebel Army Society). November's workshop provided the ideal venue to outline key principles and future aims, whilst the project toolkit offers a tool for new groups to join the network, which will represent groups/clubs from both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

## Changes to Policies or Practices

It is perhaps too much to expect that a project of this nature can significantly change policy. Nonetheless two partners felt that government approaches had changed, a further three that the approach of national leagues had changed and four had seen changes at club. In some instances these are changes of approach and practice toward the partner organisation rather than major changes in policy per se. Some comments reflecting this impact are:

- 'There is a higher level of attention to the topic.'
- 'The league association had to change their view on the 50+1 rule. This has a lot to do with lobbying and information spread during the project.'
- 'Other supporters are starting to think of governance. Rest are more open to talk.'
- 'The project has encouraged supporters-run clubs and groups to review and strengthen aspects of their governance and community work.'
- 'Policies have not changed yet, but for the time there seems to be awareness and willingness to change.'

**Perhaps most significantly, the project helped Svenska Footballsupporterunionen (SFSU), the umbrella organisation for democratic, not for profit supporters' groups in Sweden, maintain the 50+1 rule in Sweden. They helped organise a series of votes at the AGMs of member owned clubs including AIK, Djurgarden, Elfsborg, Helsingborg, IFK Göteborg, Malmö FF and Hammarby. These stated unequivocally that the 50+1 rule should be retained and that moves at national level to remove the rule should not be supported. This grassroots campaign bore fruit in late April, when the Svenska Fotbollförbundet confirmed that it would not support any attempts to remove the rule.**

**At the end of May, the decisive vote was held at the country's Sports Association (Riksidrottsförbundet). The result: an overwhelming vote in favour of Swedish football clubs continuing to be owned and controlled by their members, rather than the private interests who had spent a number of years lobbying for the removal of 50+1.**

## Partner Evaluation

A key element of any project evaluation is whether the partners themselves feel that it has achieved its objectives.

Substance asked partners whether the project had been effective in relation to achieving its aims and objectives in relation to their organisation and to rank this from 'very effective' to 'very ineffective'. The results were very positive with only one organisation saying that it was neither effective nor ineffective, six that it was 'effective' and one that it has been 'very effective'.

Substance also asked partner for their evaluation of different aspects of the project and whether the project had had a positive or negative effect or whether it had made no difference in eight areas: increasing capacity, increasing knowledge, involving supporters, improving supporter networks, improving contacts with supporter organisations in other countries and improving dialogue with national bodies and EU institutions.

**Table 17: Partner evaluation**

	1 (very positive)	2 (positive)	3 (no difference)	4 (negative)	5 (very negative)
Increasing your organisation's capacity	1	5	2	0	0
Increasing knowledge about good governance amongst fans	2	6	0	0	0
Involving more supporters in organisations	2	4	2	0	0
Increasing the number of fans' groups in your national network	2	3	3	0	0
Improving your contacts with other supporters groups internationally	7	1	0	0	0
Improving dialogue with national bodies (government, football)	2	4	2	0	0
Improving dialogue with EU and EC (MEPs, officials etc.)	3	5	0	0	0
Other (New dialogue)	1	0	1	0	0

**The biggest area of improvement was in improving dialogue with other support groups internationally.**

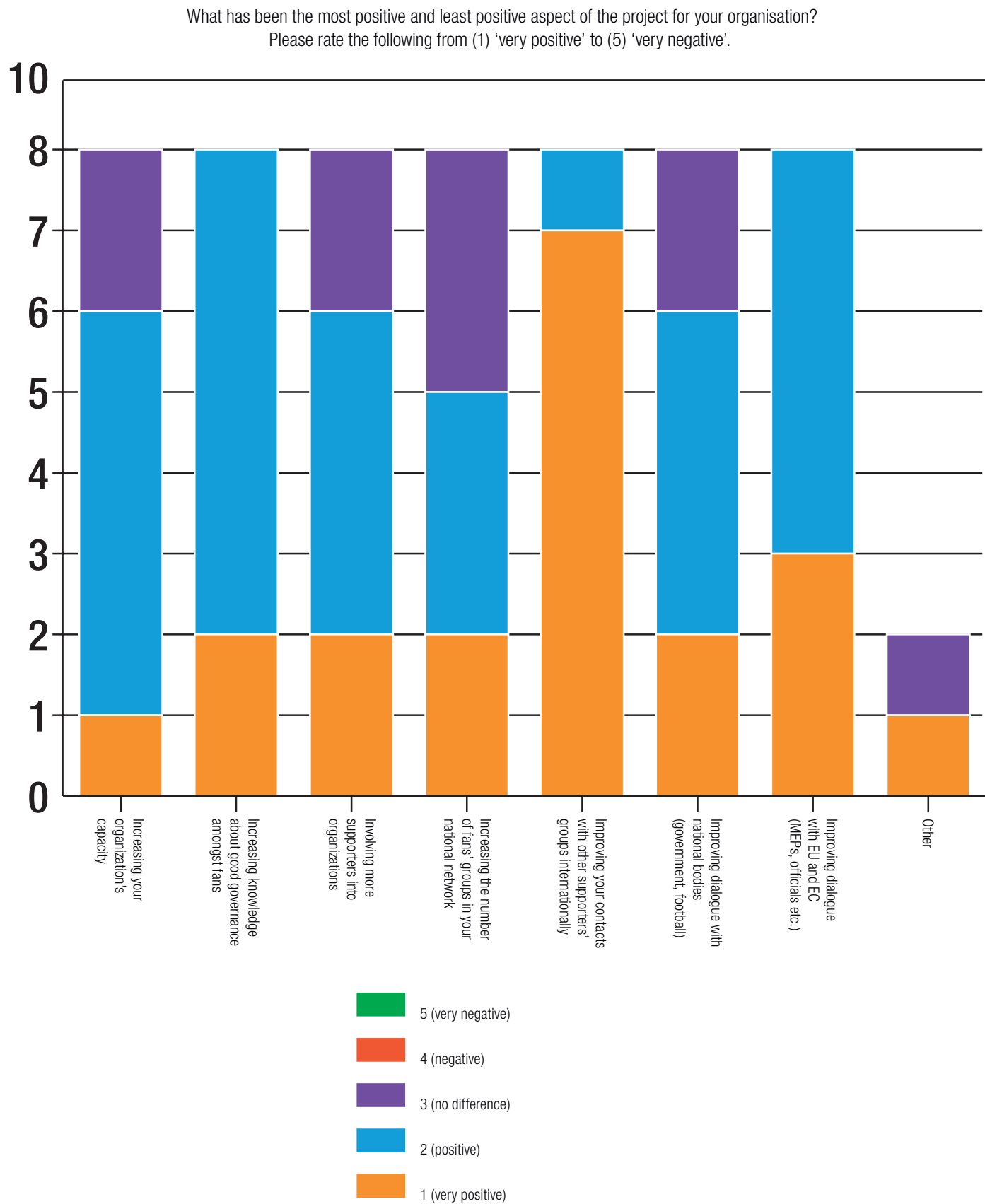
Also notable was that partners felt that it had improved dialogue with the EU, the EC and MEPs (3 'very positive' and 5 'positive'). Given concerns about the democratic deficit in Europe and the need to promote active citizenship and participation in EU structures, this is significant.

Other important results are that the project:

- Improved knowledge about good governance (2 'very positive' and 6 'positive')
- Increased the capacity of partner organisations (1 'very positive' and 5 'positive')

Less successful areas were in increasing the numbers of fans groups in partners' national networks: although this was 'very positive' for two partners and 'positive' for three, it 'made no difference' for another three. It is important to recognise national differences and contexts here – some countries have lots of similar organisations to the partners, others may have no similar organisations.

Figure 2: Most and least positive aspects



## Some of the more qualitative feedback from partners illustrates how these successes have been manifested



### Case Study of Project Impact – Ireland

'The project has started a new type of dialogue around the League of Ireland. For several years now, the language used around the league has been dismal and depressing. This project has shown that clubs and supporters are capable of achieving more and there are now more positive sentiments coming through from people at the grassroots level of the League.'

The Improving Football Governance project has been an excellent piece of work in Ireland for several reasons:

The consequences of clubs and groups coming and working together to achieve something will have lasting benefits for Irish football. It has, in essence, made clubs and supporters' groups realise that they are not alone and there is help, guidance and a support network available.

It has changed the type of language being used around the League in many instances. We are now talking about what is possible - rather than solely about what is wrong - and this fresh approach has received a warm welcome from all stakeholders including our local, national and European representatives.

It has fostered and built on a spirit of co-operation that already existed between Irish supporters' trusts. It has also introduced new faces to the movement, especially at clubs where there had previously been no contact.

Anyone that attended the workshop in Cork will have heard about some of the many issues faced in other countries across Europe, and the realisation that no League or Football Association is getting it absolutely right is an important one for Irish football.

The project has also made Irish clubs and groups more aware of the situation across Europe. We are part of a European-wide network, within which we can both learn and share our experiences and best practices.

Regardless of whether further funding is available, there is now a determination in Ireland to ensure that the good work this project has begun continues beyond the June end date. There is a need for supporters-run clubs and groups to come together in a more organised fashion and to ensure that a sustainable view of football is to the fore of all discussions.

**Niamh O'Mahony, Foras**



### Case Study of Project Impact – Sweden

'A lot of hard work has been done. Our first battle is won regarding the 50+1 rule, the one in SEF. We still have to fight and that is SvFF (the FA) and RF (the General Sports Administration).'

The project partner in Sweden, the Svenska Fotbollssupporterunionen (SFSU), is the umbrella organisation for democratic, not for profit supporters' groups in Sweden.

The project assisted SFSU in coordinating a response to a proposed change to the 50+1 rule, which means, as in Germany, that Swedish clubs must be majority-owned by their members.

Supporters at seven clubs - AIK, Djurgården, Elfsborg, Helsingborg, IFK Göteborg, Malmö FF and Hammarby – organised resolutions at their respective club Annual General Meetings saying that the 50+1 rule should be retained. This 'bottom-up' pressure, supported by SFSU, resulted in the Swedish FA themselves supporting retention of the rule. This is important not just within Sweden, but because it remains one of two examples of best practice in supporter ownership in countries involved in this project, and a beacon for others to follow.

For SFSU, the project offered not only an opportunity to play a role in enshrining supporter ownership for the foreseeable future, but also the occasion to bring new groups into their network, leaving them in a significantly stronger position for the coming years.

**Lena Wiberg, SFSU**



## Supporters' groups need ongoing support in maintaining and developing networks which this project has helped to ignite

### FUNDING

However, whilst new routes for dialogue and meeting have been opened up, they need to be maintained, nurtured and extended:

- Supporters' organisations – those within the project and others – need ongoing financial assistance to maintain and develop these links.
- Democratic supporters' organisations can play a meaningful role in involving citizens in democratic organisations, bridging the democratic deficit and ensuring all stakeholders' views are represented at national and European levels.
- Given the poor resources of supporters' organisations, this benefit will be lost if not financially supported on an ongoing basis

For supporters' organisations to be successful and fully involved in ownership and in structured relationships with their clubs, national associations and leagues, they need to be properly organised, professional and properly funded. This requires national governments, associations and leagues, along with clubs, to work with properly constituted, democratic supporters' organisations in their countries to ensure that they are given the funding and other resources and support they require.

For this to happen on a pan-European basis and for them to have proper representation at the highest levels of the game in Europe, they also need effective coordination. Whilst the project has delivered much and has shown the effect that funding can have, it has also highlighted that this need remains. It will be for European Union institutions and European football's governing body to work with Supporters Direct Europe to ensure that it can not only maintain, but also expand its coordinating role.

### EUROPEAN NETWORKS

The project has perhaps been most successful in improving connections between groups in different European countries, improving cross-cultural exchange and networking between organisations. This has also happened intra-nationally as well as internationally. Developing involvement in democratic supporter organisations is a way for citizens to be more involved in democratic processes, to increasing volunteering, and to bridge national and cultural divides.

Supporters' groups need ongoing support in maintaining and developing networks which this project has helped to ignite. This could include: exchanges of officials from groups to learn from other groups; networking events; networking/advice/best practice websites; support for joint lobbying activities.

### SUPPORTER NEEDS

The project events and supporter survey has illustrated a dissatisfaction with the running of football at club and national level and a lack of involvement of supporters across all partner countries to varying degrees. However, it was also clear that in Germany and Sweden, where there are regulations which embed supporter ownership of clubs, levels of dissatisfaction were lower and involvement was higher. This suggests that there is need for the European Parliament and European Commission to continue to promote improved governance and financial sustainability across Europe and to 'lift up' the standard of supporter ownership and involvement to the level of the best.

The project was set up in response to a series of crises in European football: poor governance, a lack of supporter involvement, over-spending and debt.

The project evaluation shows what impact it has had on:

- Increasing organisations' capacities
- Developing links with other supporters' organisations in both their own country and internationally
- Improving the profile not only of partner organisations but the issues that the project was concerned with
- Improving communications between supporter organisations and both European and national governments as well as with national associations.

Addressing the lack of human resource capacity within voluntary organisations is a perennial problem and this is especially true of football supporter organisations. The work of SD Europe has been to assist organisations with establishing structures, building confidence and developing resources. Through funding of resources, the project funding has allowed some 'meat' to be put on those 'bones'.

In doing so, project has delivered significant added value a significant amount of additional days work (worth in the region of €12,000) and over 130 additional volunteers were brought in to the project because of funding made available.

This shows that investment is a catalyst for a lot more work by projects and organisations – you get back a lot more than you put in.

The project has also had a very successful impact on raising the profile of organisations, some impact on their capacity and has delivered significant improvements in communication and meetings with European politicians and institutions, national government and national associations/leagues.

## RESEARCH

The research possible in this project was limited but still involved nearly 12,000 supporters across Europe, one of the largest surveys of European fans undertaken and the biggest on the subject of football governance. However, there is a need for ongoing research with football supporters to help inform the development of European networks, to support the development of supporters' organisations in individual countries and to evaluate improvements in the governance of football and the social value it can deliver.

## SUPPORTERS DIRECT EUROPE RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the project has helped improve dialogue and open routes for ongoing future discussions, levels of dissatisfaction remain and clubs in particular remain fairly unresponsive. This illustrates the lack of formal and structured involvement for most fans at most clubs that has been demonstrated elsewhere.

- As such, MEPs, national governments and associations and leagues need to encourage clubs more to work with supporters organisations and practically help the development of democratic supporter ownership and involvement through regulation, funding and other support.
- Supporter Liaison Officers need to play a vital role in bridging these gaps and research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of these posts and ensure that they are a meaningful

route to ongoing supporter involvement.

- However, more broadly the project re-emphasises the need for more stringent efforts to ensure there is good governance in football (and sport more generally). It also re-emphasises the proposals made by SD Europe in The Heart of the Game document.
- Most notable in this is that public funds and distributed collective income in football should be conditional and should be withheld from associations, leagues and clubs that do not meet good governance criteria that must include supporter ownership and formal and structured relationships for supporter organisations<sup>4</sup>.

## NEXT STEPS

SD Europe remains committed to providing coordination and assistance to the project partners and will provide some funding to help them to do this. Partners require support in order to capacity build, establish and develop of national organisations, further links with stakeholders and maintain networks.

To indicate its commitment, in the summer of 2013, Supporters Direct Europe will make €30,000 in three equally sized tranches available to its network of democratic supporters' groups, eight of whom have participated in the 'Improving Football Governance through Supporter Involvement and Community Ownership' project. Partners will be asked to apply for the three tranches of €10,000 by producing a 'business plan' for how the money would be used to further the aims of the project. They will also have

to raise €10,000 from within their countries, to match that provided by SD Europe. The application process will be fully transparent, and will involve some of the movement's key stakeholders so that projects can start in the 2013/14 season.

SD Europe is also working to broaden the network of organisations in Europe that are seeking to develop supporter ownership and involvement and whilst SD Europe and project partners continue their commitment to improving governance in football through supporter involvement, they cannot do this alone.

The benefits of supporter ownership for Europe are set out SD Europe's position paper, The Heart of the Game: Why supporters are vital to improving governance in football. This document shows how supporter ownership can help improve governance, develop financial sustainability and deliver key European values and EU aims such as active citizenship, democratic involvement, volunteering and wider social value.

This project has illustrated how relatively small investment in supporters organisations can assist them in achieving these aims as well as create significant added value.

As such, SD Europe will be seeking further support from the EU through funding streams such as Erasmus as well as from the European Commission and UEFA.

## **SUPPORTERS DIRECT PUBLICATIONS**

All of the following publications are available for download from [www.supporters-direct.coop](http://www.supporters-direct.coop)

### **SD Europe Position Paper**

Supporters Direct Europe and Brown, A. (2012) The Heart of the Game: Why supporters are vital to improving governance in football, London: Supporters Direct.

### **SD Feasibility Study 2008**

Supporters Direct and UEFA (2008): What is the Feasibility of a Supporters Direct Europe? Executive Summary, London: SD

### **Social Value of Football**

Brown, A et al. (2010a): The Social and Community Value of Football: Final Report, London, Supporters Direct

### **SD Briefing Papers 2011**

Supporters Direct (2011a) Briefing Paper 1: Developing Public Policy to Encourage Supporter Community Ownership, London: Supporters Direct

Supporters Direct (2011b) Briefing Paper 2: Developing Football Regulation to Encourage Supporter Community Ownership, London: Supporters Direct

Supporters Direct (2011c) Briefing Paper 3: Financing Supporter and Community Ownership, London: Supporters Direct

Supporters Direct (2011d) Briefing Paper 4: Business Advantages of Supporter Community Ownership, London: Supporters Direct

### **Submissions to UK Parliamentary Inquiry 2011**

Supporters Direct (2011e) Football Club Licensing in England: Key Principles, London: Supporters Direct November 2011





## IMPROVING FOOTBALL GOVERNANCE THROUGH SUPPORTER INVOLVEMENT AND COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP



SVENSKA FOTBOLLSSUPPORTERUNIONEN



Federación de Accionistas y  
Socios del Fútbol Español

A project supported by the European Commission through  
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