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Vilnius, 30 September 2013

Improving Football Governance through Supporter Involvement and Community Ownership

1. Background
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Background

Financial models, weak governance and a lack of democratic accountability in the ownership and regulation of football in particular, which weakens the social function of sport

Growing number of supporters' organisations seeking to ensure their clubs have secure and sustainable futures as community focused businesses; growing demand for capacity building on local and national levels

Supporters Direct Europe started in 2007 - now working in over 20 countries

- Lack of democracy, active citizenship and social integration in football
- A clear need for the promotion of democratic supporter involvement to increase opportunities for stakeholders to make meaningful contributions to decision-making processes, good governance and increasing community outreach

Preparatory Action EAC/18/2011

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Improving Football Governance through Supporter Involvement and Community Ownership

- Strengthen the European supporter ownership network;
- 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.

Endorsement from the European Commissioner

"The work of SD Europe shows how fans can help to develop inclusive and sustainable structures at both the grassroots and professional levels"

"…giving life to the concept of active citizenship"

"Supporters are also a vital partner in our collective efforts to reduce discrimination and violence and to combat the growing menace of match-fixing"

"It is for this reason that the voices and ideas of supporters should be listened to carefully by all relevant stakeholders…"

Endorsement from Michel Platini

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"I have always said that fans are a fundamental part of the identity of football clubs and

we are pleased to continue supporting the work of Supporters Direct Europe in bringing good governance to clubs across Europe by encouraging initiatives to involve fans in the ownership and running of their clubs.

It is also particularly pleasing that after our initial support for Supporters Direct Europe, the European institutions have picked up on it as well"

The project has broken new ground

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First ever lobby of European Parliament and European Commission by supporters on governance and financial sustainability (Nov 2012)

Establishment of first national supporters' organisations in Italy and Ireland

First round table discussions between supporters, football stakeholders and politicians in partner countries.

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

Successful coordination of supporter owned clubs in Sweden to retain the 50+1 rule that enshrines supporter ownership

Outputs – partner handbooks

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The project has broken new ground

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Except in just a few countries, supporter ownership is the exception not the norm.

There is an over-riding sense evidenced in the project survey that supporters are very unhappy with how football is being managed and run.

Project has shown what can be achieved with limited investment, but 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.

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.

Highlighted issues that remain

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There is an over-riding sense evidenced in the project survey that supporters are very unhappy with how football is being managed and run.

Lack of resources

Lack of funding

Lack of research

The project has shown what can be achieved with limited investment, but 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.

Continuing need to financially support the development of supporters' organisations in each country

as well as for research to support the development and the coordination of activities across Europe.

Next Steps / Recommendations

Follow-up match funding provided by SD Europe
Looking for further funding opportunities

Continued promotion of good governance and financial sustainability in sport

Maintenance and further development of European networks and follow up projects the project has ignited

Further develop relationships and projects with governing bodies and other stakeholders

Further research

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