



Enhancing the skills of Sport Officials in Europe



# GUIDE FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND QUALITY ASSURANCE STRATEGIES



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Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

▲ I	BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT	4
▲ II	INTRODUCTION TO SUSTAINABILITY AND QUALITY ASSURANCE	10
▲ III	SUSTAINABILITY	12
	A – Introduction to sustainability	13
	B – Expected impact of sustainability of ONSIDE project outputs	13
	C – Dissemination during the ONSIDE project	14
	D – Role of the ONSIDE partners in sustainability	15
	E – ONSIDE legacy partner	16
	F – Promotion and sustainability of ONSIDE published outputs	18
	G – Promotion and sustainability of ONSIDE e-learning modules	18
	H – Uses of the ONSIDE final outputs	19
	I – Gathering feedback	20
▲ IV	SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN	21
▲ V	QUALITY ASSURANCE	27
	A – Introduction to quality assurance	28
	B – Quality assurance in vocational and higher education	28
	C – Quality assurance in continuing education	29
	D – Recommended quality assurance strategies	29
	E – Accreditation and endorsement	31
▲ VI	CONCLUSION	32





## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

## A. THE ONSIDE PROJECT

The ONSIDE project (full title: 'Innovative Education to Enhance the Skills of Sport Officials in Europe') brought together key stakeholders from the world of sport officiating for the first time at the European level to develop a strategic approach to training and development.

Working under the leadership of the European Observatoire of Sport and Employment (EOSE, [www.eose.org](http://www.eose.org)), the ONSIDE partners represent a unique combination of stakeholders dedicated to the advancement of sport officiating – three international/European sport federations, two national sport federations, one national sports council, one national Olympic committee, one university and two national associations of sport officials.

### PARTNERSHIP OF THE ONSIDE PROJECT



#### COORDINATOR OF THE PROJECT

##### France / Europe

European Observatoire  
of Sport and Employment



##### France

Association Française du  
Corps Arbitral Multisports



##### United Kingdom

Sports Officials UK



##### Malta

SportMalta



##### United Kingdom

British Wheelchair  
Basketball



##### Switzerland / Europe

European Athletics



##### Luxembourg / Europe

European Table Tennis Union



##### Austria / Europe

European Handball  
Federation



##### Bulgaria

National Sports  
Academy «Vassil Levski»



##### Romania

Romanian Football  
Federation



##### Netherlands

Dutch Olympic Committee  
\* Dutch Sports Federation

The partners worked together through an intense three-year programme of meetings and activity which culminated in an International Event on Sport Officiating, held online on 20 November 2020, which attracted 250 participants from 39 countries in Europe and beyond.

EOSE and the ONSIDE partners are particularly proud that their efforts have helped establish the International Federation for Sports Officials (IFSO, [www.ifso.sport](http://www.ifso.sport)), founded at The Peace Palace in the city of The Hague (Netherlands) in March 2019. It is the first global membership organisation whose aim is to enhance officiating across all sports and nations. The ONSIDE partners see IFSO as the perfect vehicle to continue to promote the project's outputs to member organisations and the international sport sector on a sustainable basis. It was unanimously agreed, therefore, that IFSO should become the ONSIDE 'Legacy Partner'.



The ONSIDE project officially operated from January 2018 to December 2020 with funding from the Erasmus+ Sport Programme of the European Union, although the partners, along with the legacy partner IFSO, will continue to pursue its aims and promote the implementation of the innovative outputs through an agreed sustainability action plan.

Further information about the project can be found at [www.onside-sport.eu](http://www.onside-sport.eu) and about IFSO at [www.ifso.sport](http://www.ifso.sport)

## B. PROMOTING AND DEVELOPING THE VITAL ROLE OF SPORT OFFICIALS

Sport officials are known by a variety of titles, but whatever they are called; organised sport cannot exist without them. The majority of sport officials work on a voluntary basis or only receive a nominal fee for their services, yet these are the people who keep almost all competitions from grassroots participation to elite level performance happening all year round. The simple message is 'NO SPORT OFFICIAL = NO SPORT' and that applies everywhere.

The sport official's exact title and role will depend on the sport in which they operate. Some of the main examples include:

- |                     |            |                 |
|---------------------|------------|-----------------|
| ▲ Assistant referee | ▲ Marshal  | ▲ Timekeeper    |
| ▲ Commissioner      | ▲ Official | ▲ Touch Judge   |
| ▲ Fourth Official   | ▲ Referee  | ▲ Umpire        |
| ▲ Judge             | ▲ Scorer   | ▲ Video Referee |
| ▲ Linesman          | ▲ Starter  |                 |

Despite the importance of sport officials, they face many challenges. Their vital role is often not given the attention it deserves, and when they are noticed, the degree of respect they receive from competitors, coaches and spectators is rarely equal to the preparation, concentration and effort they put in when working under close scrutiny and huge pressure, often heightened by the increasing use of technology.

Thus, the fundamental work which sport officials do in keeping sporting events going, week by week and year by year, has generally been overlooked, undervalued and sometimes harshly and unfairly criticised. In many sports, their training and development can focus too narrowly on the technical aspects of their sport at the expense of broader competences such as communication, teamwork, conflict management and continuous improvement. They are often isolated within their specific sport and have few, if any, opportunities to learn from relevant practices in other sports.

ONSIDE, therefore, has worked tirelessly to increase the visibility, recognition and development of sport officials through the following activities:

- ▲ Conducting and disseminating reliable and valid research to underpin European sector-wide activity in the area of sport officiating;
- ▲ Boosting the profile of sport officiating to all key stakeholders in the world of sport;
- ▲ Encouraging networking so that officials in different sports can learn from each other;
- ▲ Defining the generic skills, knowledge and competences of sport officials, which are common across all sports and nations;
- ▲ Promoting education in the area of sport officiating and proposing new training pathways and development opportunities for sport officials to enhance their skills through innovative learning methods, including e-learning modules.

Finally, the ONSIDE project also promotes sport officiating as a voluntary activity in sport that enhances social inclusion and equal opportunities for all.

## C. THE LIFELONG LEARNING STRATEGY FOR SPORT – “THE 7 STEP MODEL”

### *A Systematic Approach to Developing Standards and Training Programmes for Sport Officials*

In order to realise its ambitions for sport officiating, the ONSIDE Project has implemented the Lifelong Learning Strategy for Sport, known as the “7 Step Model”<sup>1</sup>. This model was devised by EOSE and has been tried and tested through other similar projects in the sport and physical activity sector.

The model provides a strategic framework which ensures that appropriate education, training and qualifications exist to support the development of the sector’s workforce of paid staff and volunteers. It was developed in response to the main education and employment challenges in the sector and aligns with the main EU policies and tools in the fields of sport, employment and vocational education and training (VET).

Implementing the 7 Step Model within the ONSIDE project has united the worlds of employment and education and built on the expertise of many experienced sport officials from a range of sports to ensure that the innovative education and training provision is fit for purpose and consistent with the needs and expectations of sport officiating.

The project has adopted a generic approach to sport officiating, i.e., it has tried to identify all of the main features of sport officiating, regardless of the individual sport, and identified all of the functions a competent sport official should be able to carry out at any level and in any context.

<sup>1</sup>For an in-depth description of the model, see Gittus, B & Favre, A, *The Lifelong Learning Strategy for the Sector: the 7 Step Model*, in Gouju, JL & Zintz, T (Eds) (2014) *Sport: linking education, training and employment in Europe, an EOSE Network Perspective*. Presses Universitaires de Louvain. See also description of 7 Step Model on EOSE website: <http://eose.org/approach/7-step-model/>

The following steps have been implemented through the ONSIDE project:

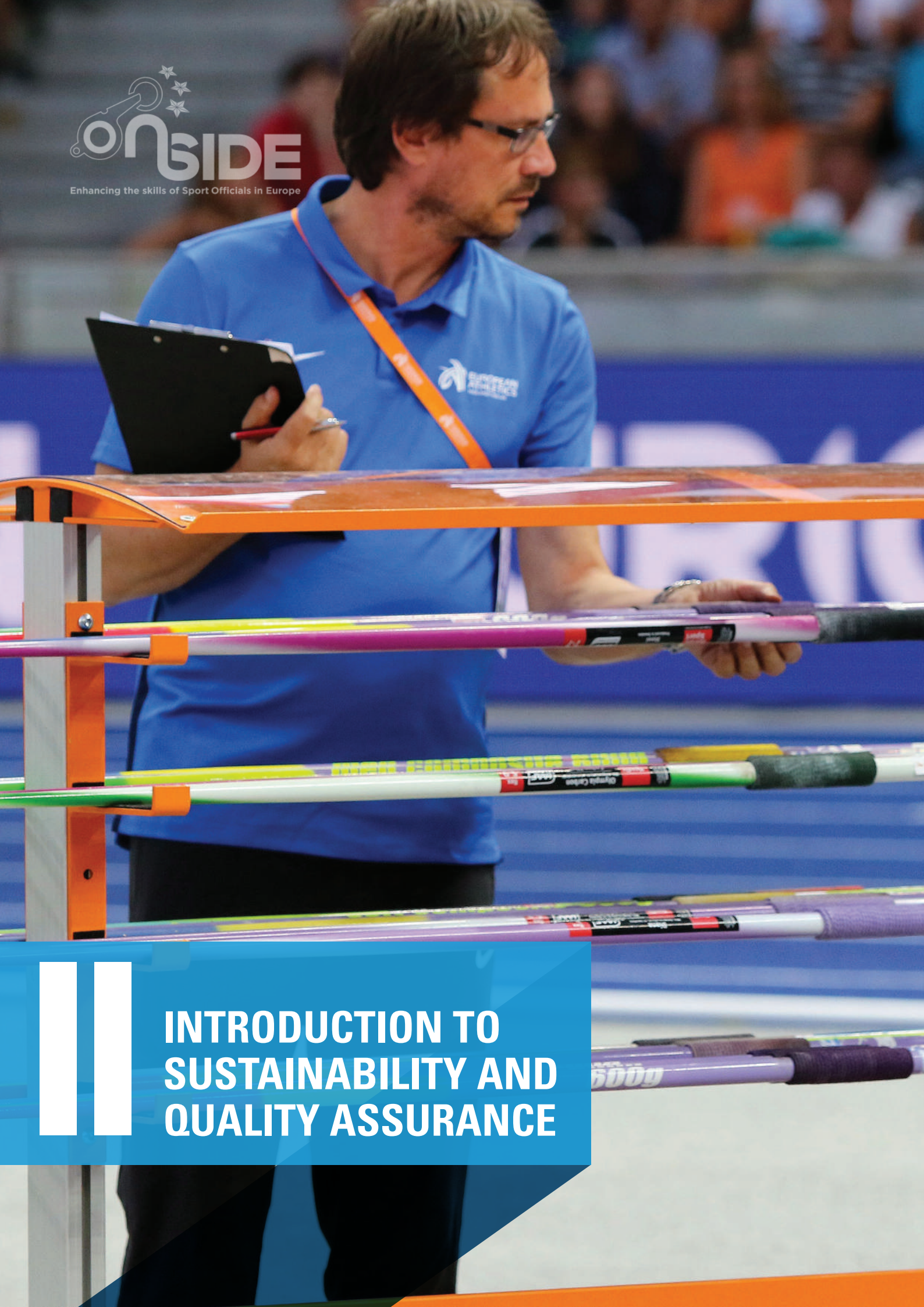
<b>STEP 1</b>	The model began with the collection of <b>Labour Market Information (LMI)</b> by conducting wide desk and primary research into the realities, characteristics and tendencies in sport officiating.
<b>STEP 2</b>	The next step in the model produced an <b>Occupational Map</b> which further expands on the key characteristics of the sport officiating workforce of paid staff and volunteers.
<b>STEP 3</b>	The model then described the different roles in sport officiating and facilitated the development of an <b>Occupational Descriptor</b> for sport officiating.
<b>STEP 4</b>	The project supported the sport officiating employment and education stakeholders and expert partners to develop a <b>Functional Map</b> outlining all of the main functions a competent sport official should be able to carry out.
<b>STEP 5</b>	The stakeholders and expert partners in sport officiating developed the functional map to a greater level of detail to produce <b>Occupational Standards</b> . These standards take each of the functions in the functional map and add performance criteria which will enable an official's performance to be evaluated, and requirements for knowledge and understanding which will be used to underpin future education and training for the sector.
<b>STEP 6</b>	This step requires the development of qualifications and learning outcomes. For ONSIDE, the partners agreed the most appropriate and useful product for sports officials would be a <b>Handbook of Training Modules</b> . This contains 13 generic (i.e., not sport specific) module outlines and learning outcomes based on the occupational standards and knowledge requirements. This Handbook also includes advice to organisations wishing to develop education to support the generic competence-based development of sport officials.
<b>STEP 7</b>	Quality assurance is the final step. To address quality assurance, the project has created a <b>Guide for Sustainability and Quality Assurance Strategies</b> to ensure the occupational standards and training modules are optimally implemented going forward.



# 7STEP<sup>MODEL</sup>

LIFELONG LEARNING STRATEGY FOR SPORT





## INTRODUCTION TO SUSTAINABILITY AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

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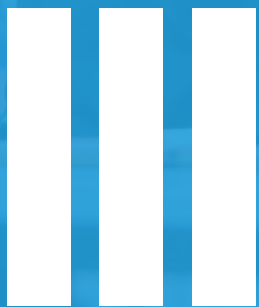
A focus on sustainability enhances the continuity and implementation of the final innovative outputs of the ONSIDE project after the completion of all the steps of the 7 Step Model. Quality assurance processes aim to ensure confidence and trust in the relevancy of educational content, outcomes and certificates from training providers.

Sustainability and quality assurance processes can be considered crucial in order to create the conditions to enhance the efficient implementation of the series of innovative outputs including occupational standards and e-learning courses developed through the ONSIDE project.

The goal of this guide is to discuss sustainability for the ONSIDE project culminating in a Sustainability Strategic Action Plan for the sector outlining fourteen aims with timing, audience activities and responsible organisations. It will also explore relevant quality assurance principles and strategies that might be considered.

Quality assurance is the final step of the 7 Step Model and should ensure that there is confidence and trust that the other steps within the model have been delivered in a consistent and high-quality manner to produce a competent and qualified workforce.





**SUSTAINABILITY**



## A. INTRODUCTION TO SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability in the context of a transnational and ambitious project such as ONSIDE refers to the continuation of a project's goals and principles to achieve desired outcomes beyond the funded period. Ensuring and encouraging sustainability means creating the conditions to make sure the goals of the project continue to be met through ongoing activities that are consistent with the conditions and resources that are available after the official funding period ends. Only through the sustainability of the project's aims and the use of the final outputs can the desired long-term impacts of the project be achieved.

In relation to the ONSIDE project, the legacy and sustainability of the project's innovative outputs can help to achieve the desired benefits to education and workforce development in sport officiating in the medium and long term for the benefit of the whole sport sector.

## B. EXPECTED IMPACT OF SUSTAINABILITY OF ONSIDE PROJECT

One of the aims of the ONSIDE project was to target and therefore impact sport organisations established at various levels in Europe such as sport clubs at local level, sport federations at national level and European/international sport federations. The project's outputs are relevant and implementable at all levels (from competitive to grassroots sport, and from local to international level) as they are based on the analysis of the generic role and functions performed by sport officials and the definition of the knowledge, skills and competences needed to be effective in these roles.

Impact, which has begun to be demonstrated during the project and will continue into the future, can be shown at several levels, starting with the sport sector as a whole and the area of sport officiating in particular before focussing on specific types of organisation.

Main impact on the whole sport sector:

- ▲ Promotion of voluntary activities in sport enhanced by a clearer route into officiating and additional options for training to maintain motivation and retention
- ▲ More competent and better trained sport officials able to facilitate sporting events and competitions and increase opportunities for health-enhancing physical activity, social inclusion and sport for all
- ▲ Sport officials to be seen as key actors to sporting integrity and combatting violence, match fixing and discriminatory behaviour, therefore the training of officials in these areas outside the narrow requirements of their technical role has a beneficial impact on the whole sport sector
- ▲ More widespread use of occupational standards and the learning outcomes approach and their use in skills development and training in sport officiating and the whole sector
- ▲ Common framework based on agreed occupational standards defining what sport official can do (competence), not just what they should know, will help to facilitate learning mobility, trust, and transferability between sports and countries
- ▲ Better understanding and recognition of sport official roles and needs
- ▲ Stronger links in sport between the sport officiating and the world of education and training

Main impact on the area of sport officiating:

- ▲ Improved quality, transparency and standardisation of education and training for sport officials
- ▲ Increased interest for sport official positions and career route
- ▲ Improved recruitment and retention of sport officials
- ▲ A robust platform for the creation of national sport officiating associations
- ▲ Improved recognition for sport officiating and confidence in the training and competence of sport officials
- ▲ Improvements in education due to cross-sport sharing of knowledge and good practice
- ▲ Better understanding of the required generic skills for sport official
- ▲ Enhanced investment in sport officials' training and education from sport stakeholders.

Main impact on sport officials across Europe:

- ▲ Greater opportunity to learn and develop as sport official in areas outside sport-specific technical education and training
- ▲ Opportunities for sport officials to learn from officials in other sports and countries
- ▲ Increased motivation for people to become sport officials
- ▲ A competency-based framework within which sport officials can reflect on their performance and fully engage with continuing professional development
- ▲ The provision of model e-learning modules which will encourage more flexible approaches to the education of sport officials
- ▲ Improved learning and career pathways
- ▲ Enhanced recognition of the role and image of sport officials.

Main impact on sport participants and spectators:

- ▲ Participants' sporting experience will be improved due to better developed sport officials
- ▲ Greater confidence for both competitors and spectators in officiating decisions.

## C. DISSEMINATION DURING THE ONSIDE PROJECT

Significant dissemination activities took place during the ONSIDE project at the International, European, national and local level through the commitment of all project partners.

The main objectives of the dissemination activities carried out during the ONSIDE project were:

- ▲ To make the wide range of stakeholders and individuals from the sector aware of the ONSIDE project and the initiative to focus on the general skills of sport officials
- ▲ To promote the transnational innovative project bringing together key stakeholders from the world of sport officiating and from different sports for the first time at the European level
- ▲ To raise awareness of the research outcomes of European occupational standards and Handbook of Training Modules and e-learning for sport officials

- ▲ To exploit the power and range of the partnership to disseminate across a large mix of stakeholders
- ▲ To encourage interested stakeholders to get in contact with the project and take part in the various consultation and dissemination phases
- ▲ To use the widest possible range of means available to ensure that the sport sector as a whole and the wider audience, including end users, were made aware of the project, its outputs and value to the sector.

The project website [www.onside-sport.eu](http://www.onside-sport.eu) was a main form of dissemination and the website will remain live after the end of the project. Indeed, the website will be the main repository of the final outputs and will be available to all European stakeholders into the future.

Throughout the project, the partners distributed multilingual flyers, regularly presented and disseminated progress with the project, consulted and reached a wide network of stakeholders throughout European sport.

On the 20th of November 2020, the dissemination process reached its peak when an International Event on Sport Officiating was held online gathering 250 participants from 39 countries. The event was organised as the final conference of the ONSIDE project to present the main project outputs related to enhancing the skills of sport officials in Europe, and to discuss the legacy of the project.

Participants in the event represented a range of types of organisations including national and international sport federations, sports clubs, training providers, and other sport organisations. 84% of participants are now or have been in the past an active sport official. There was wide support for the ONSIDE project and outputs with a large majority considering the outputs to be useful for the sector. It was the largest multi-sport conference ever organised in the field of sport officiating in Europe and focusing on training and workforce development.

## D. ROLE OF THE ONSIDE PARTNERS IN SUSTAINABILITY

The ONSIDE consortium which delivered the project gathered partners from a wide variety of stakeholders in the sport sector across Europe, as presented in the introduction of this report.

During the life of the project, each of the partners was encouraged to serve as an ambassador and undertook concrete actions to promote, present and encourage the use of ONSIDE's activities and outputs. This work included writing and publishing articles on different channels (e.g. websites, magazines), speaking at various conferences, seminars and workshops, distributing the project's flyer, promoting and dispatching the invitation to the final event, being active on social media and utilising other networking opportunities – a broad portfolio of actions aimed at raising the profile of the project.

The partners have made a strong and unanimous commitment to continue to advocate for the ONSIDE project outputs after the end of the funded period of the project and to enhance the legacy of the project and support its sustainability. They all agreed that the ONSIDE project should be considered as the starting point of a long journey towards the further development of sport officiating in Europe.

In some cases, this will be through specific actions to implement the ONSIDE outputs in their own organisation. To give an example from one of the partners, the European Handball Federation (EHF) has committed to use the outputs to update their own officials' education through all competitions and show national members how valuable the outcomes of the project are. EHF will implement the outputs of the project in their officiating structure in the future.

Following this impressive lead provided by EHF who will map their own education and training of sport officials to the ONSIDE outputs, ONSIDE partners will continue to advocate and promote the project, and act as a shining light and as exemplar organisations to others in the sector who can learn from their example.

All ONSIDE partners have agreed to promote the e-learning courses and to promote and distribute the final outputs to their wide range of member organisations, sport officials and other relevant stakeholders.

## E. ONSIDE LEGACY PARTNER

During the ONSIDE project, several of the partners assessed the feasibility and the need for establishing an international organisation for sport officials to act as a platform for sharing knowledge, experience and best practice in sport officiating, and to be seen as leaders in the development of the sector and enhancing broad and generic sport officiating competencies across all nations and sports.

Such platform has never existed and the International Federation for Sport Officiating (IFSO) was created during the ONSIDE project. IFSO was created as a direct result of ONSIDE and the collaboration of its partners – in particular AFCAM (Association Française du Corps Arbitral Multisports), Sports Officials UK and the National Olympic Committee NOC\*NSF from the Netherlands. IFSO was founded at The Peace Palace in the city of The Hague in the Netherlands in March 2019. The city of The Hague has provided some financial support to the organisation. It is the first of its kind and has been founded to enhance sports officiating across all sports all over the world.

It is extremely positive to underline that the creation of IFSO was a direct result of the ONSIDE project's realisation that there was a clear case to be more proactive in the promotion and development of sport officiating to tackle the identified realities and challenges.

IFSO's fundamental belief is 'No officials, no sport', a phrase used for several years by the ONSIDE project. Its overarching aim is to support sport federations and other sport bodies in developing sport officiating. IFSO is a membership body for International federations, National Olympic Committees and national associations for sport officials; it aims to expand its membership in all parts of the world.

The main goals of this new international federation are to:

- ▲ Bring together officiating bodies in all sports disciplines
- ▲ Share knowledge and best practices
- ▲ Obtain support and means to develop sports officials
- ▲ Represent our specific body
- ▲ Organise surveys, events and educational activities.



IFSO's main areas of focus are to:

- ▲ Support the recruitment of young people to sport officiating and retain their interest.
- ▲ Support organisations to get more women through their respective development pathways, so that they can officiate at the highest level in their sport.
- ▲ Support the development of sport officials' soft skill training in areas such as communication and management skills.
- ▲ Raise the profile of officiating and, by doing so, gain recognition and respect for sport officials.
- ▲ Look at positive ways to support the coaching of officials in order for them to achieve their own potential.
- ▲ Support organisations with the development of effective career development pathways for sports officials.
- ▲ Offer members the opportunity to access generic and sport specific e-learning programmes to meet the needs of the individual at all levels of the pathway.

ONSIDE partners and others from the sports world agree that such a body will be the ideal platform to demonstrate and convince global sports leaders that sport officials are an important and integral part of sport and should be treated in the same way as other parts of the sport sector such as coaches, players/athletes and managers. Sports Officials are neither athletes nor managers or elected people; they are a specific, indispensable category who are part of the guardians of standards of sport integrity and require protection, recognition and respect.

ONSIDE partners also recognised that the creation of IFSO as a new platform in sport officiating can provide a concrete route towards sustainability, dissemination, promotion and further implementation of the ONSIDE outputs.

During the final year of the ONSIDE project, IFSO was designated the "Legacy Partner" for ONSIDE. It was agreed that IFSO will be the perfect vehicle to continue to further the aims of ONSIDE and promote its outputs to IFSO members and the whole sport sector on an international basis.

In concrete terms, the IFSO will promote the ONSIDE outputs not only in Europe but worldwide to its members and the wider sport officiating community, and will monitor take-up and use of the ONSIDE outputs. IFSO will also have a key role in the promotion of ONSIDE e-learning courses.

The partners believe that appointing an official legacy partner is an example of best practice in sustainability and will ensure that ONSIDE's objectives and outputs will continue into the future on a much broader front.

Further information about IFSO can be found at [www.ifso.sport](http://www.ifso.sport)

## F. PROMOTION AND SUSTAINABILITY OF ONSIDE PUBLISHED OUTPUTS

The professional design and printing of the intellectual outputs of the ONSIDE project will create the conditions towards sustainability and achievement of long-term outcomes. Professional design and layout for the final intellectual outputs of the project aligned with the Graphic Charter and consistency for all outcomes have been achieved. Outputs are also available online (downloadable) as well as in printed format (limited number of hard copies on demand).

The five published outputs produced from the ONSIDE project and now available to the sport sector, in line with the 7-Step Model are:

- ▲ Occupational Map for Sport Officiating in Europe
- ▲ Occupational Descriptor for Sport Officials in Europe
- ▲ Functional Map and Occupational Standards for Sport Officials in Europe
- ▲ Handbook of Training Modules for Sport Officials in Europe
- ▲ Guide for Sustainability and Quality Assurance Strategies

Professional translation of some of the outputs into French will aid on-going awareness and take-up more broadly across Europe and the rest of the world.

As noted earlier, the partners will continue to disseminate and promote the project outputs in their networks and spheres of influence using all possible tools and channels. As within the project itself, this will be done through events, meetings, articles, websites, training sessions, social media and other marketing and promotional initiatives.

## G. PROMOTION AND SUSTAINABILITY OF ONSIDE E-LEARNING MODULES

During the ONSIDE project, six e-learning modules were developed, tested and published online. The modules cover the following topics:

- ▲ Communication
- ▲ Conflict Management
- ▲ Observation and Decision Making under Pressure
- ▲ Honesty, Ethics and Fair Play
- ▲ Personal Brand
- ▲ Teamwork

These innovative e-learning modules will be made available to the sport sector in three main ways.

First, each of the ONSIDE partners has been issued with log in credentials for the e-learning platform so they can use and reference the e-learning in their own work to develop sport officials.

IFSO will also be instrumental in the sustainability of the ONSIDE e-learning. IFSO will work with the owner of the e-learning platform to facilitate ongoing availability and access to the ONSIDE e-learning.

Finally, during the first year after the project is completed (2021), access to the e-learning platform and modules will be available through the ONSIDE website via a dedicated registration page for individuals.

The involvement of ONSIDE project partners and IFSO as legacy partner, as well as consulted stakeholders and other contributors to the project, should ensure that the innovative e-learning courses developed for the ONSIDE project will continue to be made available to the sport sector in future years.

## H. USES OF THE ONSIDE FINAL OUTPUTS

The following table outlines some of the uses of the innovative outputs of the ONSIDE project:

HEADLINE USE	DETAIL	PRIMARY RELEVANT OUTPUTS
<b>Performance Management</b>	Monitor the outcomes of sport officials performance Review and reward performance of sport officials Give structured and constructive feedback to sport officials on their performance and area for improvement	Occupational Standards
<b>Recruitment and Selection</b>	Identify the performance requirement of a sport officiating role/ position Prepare advertisements for sport officiating positions Specify induction and initial training	Occupational Map Functional Map Occupational Standards Occupational Descriptor
<b>Planning the sport officiating workforce</b>	Identify realities, challenges and trends in skill requirements in sport officiating Highlight links and career routes between current and emerging roles/ positions	Occupational Map Functional Map
<b>Identifying Training Needs</b>	Develop a strategic view of future learning requirements in sport officiating Identify individual learning needs Assess level of performance and identify training needs Planning individual learning and development	Occupational Map Occupational Descriptor Functional Map Occupational Standards

<b>Structuring Training/Learning Programmes</b>	<p>Increase the relevance and credibility of training/learning programmes in sport officiating</p> <p>Develop specific learning outcomes in line with identified expectations and needs from sport officials</p> <p>Develop knowledge content for innovative and adapted training</p> <p>Specify learning processes to meet needs and expectations</p>	<p>Occupational Standards</p> <p>Training Handbook</p> <p>E-learning modules</p>
<b>Delivering and Evaluating Training/Learning Programmes</b>	<p>Develop learning resources</p> <p>Select and evaluate delivery methods</p> <p>Provide clear goals for learners linked to learning outcomes</p> <p>Evaluate individual/groups through adapted training programmes</p> <p>Enhance the level of generic skills for sport officials in Europe</p>	<p>Occupational Standards</p> <p>Training Handbook</p> <p>E-learning modules</p>

## I. GATHERING FEEDBACK

EOSE, as coordinator of the ONSIDE project, and a leading Civil Society European organisation in the fields of sport, employment and education will ensure the ongoing availability of the ONSIDE published outputs in conjunction with the ONSIDE legacy partner, IFSO. The ONSIDE website will be maintained and EOSE will continue to carry out and promote actions towards sustainability for a minimum of 12 months after the end of the funded period.

Despite effective dissemination during the project, many stakeholders will discover the outputs for the first time after the project when they are professionally published in a designed and presentational style.

EOSE and IFSO will welcome comments and feedback from all stakeholders; this will be collated and shared with the ONSIDE partnership, who have agreed to maintain connections after the project and regularly exchanges on lessons learned, good practices etc.

At the appropriate point in the future, EOSE will seek funding opportunities to update and revise the content in light of feedback to further refine the products/outputs for sport officiating with the ongoing support of IFSO, as the legacy partner, and the ONSIDE partners. All other stakeholders interested to contribute will also be consulted and their feedback will be taken into consideration to update the outputs in line with the needs, realities and challenges.

As a follow-on from ONSIDE, EOSE has been successful in a bid to Erasmus+ Sport to undertake a new transnational initiative funded by the European Commission and entitled «Raising the Growth and Participation of Female Sport Officials in Europe (WINS)» which will address one of the key findings of the ONSIDE research. The WINS project will start on January 2021 for a duration of 3 years.





# IV

## SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

This section of the guide is concluded by a Sustainability Strategic Action Plan developed and agreed by the ONSIDE partners outlining 14 aims and the timing, audience, methods/ activities and responsible organisations.

TIMING	AIM	AUDIENCE	METHODS / ACTIVITIES	RESPONSIBILITIES
<b>Ongoing</b>	1. Continue to promote the role of sport officiating and its value to the sector	European Commission EU sport network associations EU social partners European/international sport federations International Olympic Committee International Paralympic Committee Global Association of International Sports Federations National governments, sports councils and relevant agencies National sport federations National sport officiating associations Education and training providers Practising sport officials Aspiring sport officials National and European athlete associations	Websites Press releases Conferences and workshops Promotional activities Social media	- EOSE - IFSO - ONSIDE partners
<b>2021 and ongoing</b>	2. Distribute high quality publications of ONSIDE outputs (excepting e-learning modules), including downloads on demand	European Commission EU sport network associations EU social partners European/international sport federations International Olympic Committee International Paralympic Committee Global Association of International Sports Federations National governments, sports councils and relevant agencies National sport federations National sport officiating associations Education and training providers Practising sport officials Aspiring sport officials National and European athlete associations	Distribution of printed copies through networks Press releases Website downloads	- EOSE - IFSO - ONSIDE partners



TIMING	AIM	AUDIENCE	METHODS / ACTIVITIES	RESPONSIBILITIES
2021	3. Develop business plan for managing the sport officiating e-learning platform and support activities	IFSO members ONside partners	Market research Benchmarking Strategic and operational planning activities Financial modelling	- IFSO - Relevant ONside Partners - EOSE
2021	4. Establish and promote the e-learning platform for wider use by the EU sport officiating community	International sport federations European sport federations National sport federations Practising sport officials EU sport network associations National sport officiating associations Education and training providers Aspiring sport officials	Website development Developing a financial plan Staffing Promotional activity	- IFSO - ONside partners
2021	5. Transfer seven remaining generic modules on to the e-learning platform	European sport federations National sport federations Practising sport officials EU sport network associations National sport officiating associations Education and training providers Aspiring sport officials	Development of structure and digital content	- IFSO - Relevant ONside Partners
2023	6. Update and improve generic e-learning modules	International sport federations European sport federations National sport federations Practising sport officials EU sport network associations National sport officiating associations Education and training providers Other individuals active in sport and physical activity	Customer satisfaction surveys Market research Benchmarking Module review Updating of platform and module content	- IFSO - Relevant ONside Partners

<b>TIMING</b>	<b>AIM</b>	<b>AUDIENCE</b>	<b>METHODS / ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES</b>
<b>2022</b>	7. Support stakeholders to customise and/or integrate the generic modules into existing officiating training programmes	European sport federations National sport federations Practising sport officials EU sport network associations National sport officiating associations Education and training providers Other individuals active in sport and physical activity	Research and networking to identify specific sports and sport federation partners Consultancy Mentoring and support Piloting updated sport specific programmes and refinement Showcasing good practice and case studies	- IFSO - Relevant European or national sport federations
<b>2022</b>	8. Repeat the European survey of sport officials	European sport federations National sport federations Practising sport officials EU sport network associations National sport officiating associations Education and training providers Other individuals active in sport and physical activity	Reviewing methodology of previous survey and improving survey Updating survey instruments Distributing survey instruments Analysing and report results	- IFSO - Relevant ONSIDE partners - EOSE
<b>2021 ongoing</b>	9. Stimulate the development of new national sport officiating associations	National sport federations Practising sport officials National governments, sports councils and relevant agencies	Networking Promoting the role and services that can be provided by national officiating organisations Provision of advice and guidance Consultancy, mentoring and support	- IFSO - National sport federations - National governments, sports councils and relevant agencies - Leading sport official across sports
<b>2021 ongoing</b>	10. Promote the value of the ONSIDE occupational descriptors and occupational standards as tools for organisational and personal development to enhance the performance of sport officials	European sport federations National sport federations Practising sport officials EU sport network associations National sport officiating associations	Marketing and promotional activities Benchmarking Advice and guidance materials Consultancy, mentoring and support Updating education courses	- IFSO - ONSIDE partners - EOSE



TIMING	AIM	AUDIENCE	METHODS / ACTIVITIES	RESPONSIBILITIES
<b>2022 ongoing</b>	11. Develop and promote an endorsement / accreditation scheme for sport officiating educational and training programmes	Education and Training Providers International Olympic Committee International Paralympic Committee European sport federations National sport federations Practising sport officials National sport officiating associations	Market research Developing a financial plan Staffing Developing endorsement / accreditation criteria Establishing an endorsement / accreditation framework and quality procedures Promotional activities Monitoring and evaluating endorsed / accredited programmes	- IFSO - Relevant ONSIDE partners
<b>2024 - 2026</b>	12. Review and refresh outputs of the ONSIDE project via 'ONSIDE II': - Occupational map - Occupational Descriptors - Functional Map - Occupational standards	European Commission EU sport network associations EU social partners International Olympic Committee International Paralympic Committee European sport federations National governments, sports councils and relevant agencies National sport federations National sport officiating associations Education and training providers Practising sport officials Aspiring sport officials Other individuals active in sport and physical activity	Identifying new partners Scoping project Preparing bids Undertaking new research and development Publishing and disseminating outputs	- EOSE - IFSO - Existing and new ONSIDE partners

TIMING	AIM	AUDIENCE	METHODS / ACTIVITIES	RESPONSIBILITIES
<b>2021 - 2023</b>	13. Coordinate the WINS project (targeted at recruiting, developing and progressing more female officials – Erasmus+ Sport project starting January 2021)	European Commission EU sport network associations EU social partners International Olympic Committee International Paralympic Committee Global Association of International Sports Federations European sport federations National governments, sports councils and relevant agencies National sport federations National sport officiating associations Education and training providers Practising sport officials Aspiring sport officials Other individuals active in sport and physical activity	Project Coordination	- WINS Partners - EOSE - IFSO
<b>2021 ongoing</b>	14. Monitor and improve sustainability activities	European Commission EU sport network associations EU social partners European/international sport federations International Olympic Committee International Paralympic Committee Global Association of International Sports Federations National governments, sports councils and relevant agencies National sport federations National sport officiating associations Education and training providers Practising sport officials Aspiring sport officials National and European athlete associations	Gathering data on impact of outputs Seeking and gathering feedback on sustainability activities Analysing feedback Tracking progress Adjusting sustainability activities in the light of feedbacks	- EOSE - IFSO - ONSIDE partners



V

QUALITY ASSURANCE



## A. INTRODUCTION TO QUALITY ASSURANCE

Quality assurance is a mechanism which attempts to ensure that education and training meet the requirements for quality that are expected by all the stakeholders in a given sector. Quality assurance includes a wide range of processes and procedures at different levels to ensure that qualifications, assessment, and training programmes meet agreed standards.

In relation to the ONSIDE project, the objective of the quality assurance process is to guarantee that the sport officiating occupational standards provide the link between the worlds of education and the roles of sport officials in sport, and ensure fit for purpose education and training aligned with the expectations and needs of the sector.

## B. QUALITY ASSURANCE IN VOCATIONAL AND HIGHER EDUCATION

### ▲ VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET)

Quality assurance in Vocational Education and Training (VET) has emerged as a key priority at EU level. Quality assurance forms the backbone on which mutual trust and recognition across sectors and across different EU Member States can be established and fostered.

Providers of sport qualifications which include elements of sport officiating should be familiar with the quality assurance requirements for vocational education in their country.

Agreed quality assurance standards are the tools through which increased transparency of VET policy developments between EU Member States can be achieved, supporting the mobility of workers and learners, and lifelong learning within a European dimension<sup>2</sup>.

Quality assurance standards ensure that:

- ▲ The link between education and employment opportunities is maintained
- ▲ There is increased employability of graduates
- ▲ Clear, transparent learning and career pathways are facilitated
- ▲ There are fit for purpose qualifications and training which adhere to common agreed standards
- ▲ There is the development of a workforce with the right skills to succeed in their roles.

Quality assurance in VET is normally the responsibility of an agency at the national level known as a National Qualifications Authority (NQA). Education leaders responsible for vocational qualifications in sport with links to sport officiating can use the ONSIDE outputs in course development and assessment to ensure courses are fit for purpose and meet the needs of the sport sector – delivering skills expected by the sector.

### ▲ HIGHER EDUCATION

Quality assurance is a core element of higher education across the European Union. Universities and other higher education institutions have a key role in providing internal quality assurance through their own systems and processes. External quality assurance is also a key component in the system of HE quality assurance. Most countries in Europe have a quality assurance agency for higher education which oversees the higher education quality system nationally.

<sup>2</sup><http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/lt/events-and-projects/projects/quality-assurance>

One recognised indicator of quality assurance in higher education is the use of external reference points in programme design. The ONSIDE outputs including the Occupational Standards can provide an ideal reference point for higher education programme leaders developing sport programmes with some sport officiating content. The Occupational Standards can inform both content and assessment activities in higher education programmes.

## C. QUALITY ASSURANCE IN CONTINUING EDUCATION

To some extent the European and national guidelines for quality assurance in both the VET and HE sectors relate to formal qualifications, often where assessment of learning outcomes takes place. The focus is on trust and confidence in the learning and also the assessment process.

It has been shown in the ONSIDE project that most learning in sport officiating will not result in a formal qualification certificate and a programme of learning may not have assessment. The majority of sport officiating training is unaccredited and not part of formal qualification systems. Most sport officiating training, especially generic skills training, relates to the concepts of continuing education or continuing professional development (CPD).

Many quality standards and indicators can apply to training courses in a continuing education setting, specific processes that can be relevant to quality assurance in this setting include:

- ▲ Production of learning outcomes
- ▲ Explicit linking of learning outcomes to occupational standards
- ▲ Peer review of teaching material and delivery
- ▲ Participant evaluation
- ▲ Feedback from those who appoint participants to officiate in sport.

These may be the most relevant aspects of quality assurance for the type of training course that could be developed in the area of sport officiating to match the ONSIDE Occupational Standards and are described in the ONSIDE Handbook of Training modules for Sport Officials. These can be explored further in the following section.

## D. RECOMMENDED QUALITY ASSURANCE STRATEGIES

In relation to training courses developed for continuing education in sport officiating which develop generic skills, the ONSIDE partners would recommend the following quality assurance strategies.

### ▲ PRODUCTION OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

Learning outcomes can be defined as “the set of competence, skills and knowledge an individual acquires and/or is able to demonstrate after completion of a learning process” (Cedefop, 2003). Learning outcomes are at the core of any education and training course/programme.

Developing training courses and programmes using defined learning outcomes supports quality assurance in vocational and continuing education as they describe the expected achievements of the learner at the end of the learning experience, in terms of knowledge, skills and understanding.



### ▲ **EXPLICIT LINKING OF LEARNING OUTCOMES TO OCCUPATIONAL STANDARDS**

By describing the skills and knowledge contained in the occupational standards, the learning outcomes act as a bridge between the programme of learning and the measured level of competence identified in each standard.

If education and training, through appropriate learning outcomes, match the occupational standards, then the area of sport officiating will enhance its potential to develop a competent and qualified workforce, enabling the sport to achieve its economic, health, and social potential at the heart of European society.

### ▲ **PEER REVIEW OF TEACHING MATERIAL AND DELIVERY**

It is important for learning outcomes and content of training courses and programmes to be reviewed and tested before being launched. It is best practice for all aspects of course design to be reviewed and commented on by experts from the fields of education and subject matter experts with experience in the sector.

Within the ONSIDE project, the six e-learning modules were fully reviewed by the project partners and pilot tested through four sessions with European practitioners from sport officiating. These four events tested the learning outcomes, content, language and operational aspects of the innovative courses. The review and piloting of the courses was of great benefit and resulted in significant changes and improvements to the courses before they were finalised and launched.

### ▲ **PARTICIPANT EVALUATION**

A key aspect of quality assurance is participant evaluation. At the end of the learning process, participants should have the opportunity to comment and share feedback on different aspects of the course including organisation, content, teaching, ways of improvement and how much it has helped them to develop in their role.

Constructive feedback from participants is crucial to support updates and continuous improvements of such courses in vocational and continuing education. This can be achieved through participant evaluation questionnaires as well as providing opportunities for more qualitative feedback.

### ▲ **FEEDBACK FROM THOSE WHO APPOINT PARTICIPANTS TO OFFICIATE IN SPORT**

A final recommended quality assurance strategy which can be put in place for training courses in generic skills development in sport officiating is to gather feedback from those who are responsible for appointing, developing and assessing sport officials. This could be clubs, leagues or federations. It should be expected that sport officials develop and improve their skills on such training courses and use their enhanced skills in their role as a sport official. Those who appoint them should be given the opportunity to provide feedback if there is a noticeable improvement in skills and practice as a sport official.

Moreover, it is also always useful to keep track of the career progression of those sport officials who have participated in such training courses to be able to measure the efficiency and long-term impact of the training.

## E. ACCREDITATION AND ENDORSEMENT

### ▲ ACCREDITATION

Accreditation is the result of an external assessment of the quality of education providers and education programmes, used to make sure that the whole organisation or a particular training programme adheres to certain quality criteria and standards.

Providers of sport officiating education, particularly if it is being delivered in the context of continuing education, should weigh up the “pros and cons” of accreditation when designing their learning programmes.

Accreditation increases visibility, mutual trust and transferability. Through being recognised by a national authority and being subject to external verification, the programme can gain increased recognition particularly from outside the sport sector. Many learners, especially those working at volunteer level, like to gain a formal certificate for their learning achievements, and a formal qualification may provide them with a launch pad into paid employment. Furthermore, the process of accreditation and the application of external standards and guidelines can bring added value and improvements to a programme of learning.

However, there are other aspects to be considered; accreditation normally requires formal assessment to be included as part of a learning programme. Whereas formal assessment is valuable in confirming the achievement of learning outcomes, it may not best meet the aims of the programme if the purpose is personal competency development. Accreditation also brings a certain amount of bureaucracy which can be a burden in terms of time allocated to verification tasks; this is necessary for qualifications but may not be desirable in a continuing education context. Finally, accreditation through an external body can bring added costs as each organisation in the process requires to be paid for their time.

Accreditation and the resulting quality assurance attached to it is a desirable and necessary part of formal qualifications, whether at vocational or higher education level. In the area of continuing education courses, the benefits and drawbacks of accreditation have to be considered before deciding whether accreditation matches the aims and rationale of the learning experience and will have a positive impact on the education and participants.

### ▲ ENDORSEMENT

Endorsement is similar to accreditation in that it can involve external evaluation or monitoring against criteria or standards. However, endorsement is a less formal type of approval, and does not need to be linked to official qualifications authorities. An organisation from the sport sector such as a federation or national association could endorse training and give its logo and stamp of approval based on some element of review or quality assurance.

Endorsement can take the form of a quality mark for courses and training material, particularly those that fall outside the scope of established accreditation schemes.

Courses bearing the logo of sport organisations are normally deemed to offer an appropriate level of educational quality and relevance to the development of people to work in the sector. Endorsement can relate to more than just full courses with formal assessment and can relate to short courses with less stringent forms of assessment and even seminars, workshops and conferences.

Providers of education in sport officiating should look carefully at the options for accreditation or endorsement, where a full qualification is being developed for delivery accreditation through a national authority could be the best option. However, where the focus is continuing education/ continuing professional development (such as the example courses in the Handbook of Training Modules), endorsement from a relevant sector-based organisation could be more appropriate, if it is available. The choice will depend on the type of educational programme and aims and rationale of the programme.



VI

CONCLUSION

## CONCLUSION

The ONSIDE project was based on the development of European industry-led occupational standards and relevant training material for sport officiating with the ultimate goal of enhancing the skills of sport officials in Europe and to benefit the sport sector as a whole. ONSIDE was the first EU funded project bringing together different sports to develop generic skills of sport officials; through the e-learning courses and other innovative outputs the aim is to produce a cohort of competent and trained sport officials better able to meet the increasing demands placed on sport officials.

Sustainability and quality assurance processes can be considered crucial in order to ensure the efficient implementation of the occupational standards and use of the innovative e-learning courses developed through the ONSIDE project.

Sustainability is the key to any EU funded transnational project such as ONSIDE and this guide has explored sustainability strategies including aims, activities and target audience to create the conditions and enhance the chance towards further use and implementation.

This guide has also discussed quality assurance including recommended quality assurance strategies for continuing education in sport officiating. The concepts of accreditation and endorsement have been presented with the key considerations when deciding on their appropriateness and use in sport officiating.

The ONSIDE partnership hopes this guide can support and enable stakeholders in the European sport sector to use the occupational standards and other outputs in the most appropriate and high-quality manner in line with best practice guidelines and EU policy.

The ONSIDE project focussed on sport officiating which sits at the centre of the future growth and development of sport and can therefore have real impact on the world of sport and the potential of sport to contribute to building European society and tackle the current realities.





Enhancing the skills of Sport Officials in Europe





# ON-SIDE PARTNERSHIP



## COORDINATOR

 [www.eose.org](http://www.eose.org)  
 [eosesec@eose.org](mailto:eosesec@eose.org)



## LEGACY PARTNER

 [www.ifso.sport](http://www.ifso.sport)  
 [info@ifso.sport](mailto:info@ifso.sport)



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