

European Football for



Development Network

EFDN

RESEARCH REPORT

FOOTBALL FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE

How can football clubs support climate action that is good for the fans, their communities, and the planet?



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Think-tank for action on social change

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The “Football for Climate Justice” is a transformative framework for football clubs to shift from traditional sustainability approaches to a climate justice perspective. The aim is to enable clubs to enhance the standard of living of their fans and communities through climate action initiatives.

This report draws on the applied experience of project football partners, - including Bohemian FC, Club Brugge KV, FC St. Pauli, FC Twente, Ferencvárosi TC, FUNDACIÓN LALIGA, Real Betis Balompié and SV Werder Bremen - and the expertise of the Think-tank for Action on Social Change (TASC) and the European Football for Development Network (EFDN) to understand the role of football clubs in delivering a climate transition that prioritises people and reaches the furthest behind first. Rather than keep actions to improve the environment and actions to enhance local communities separate, this report proposes that both should be done simultaneously. Grounded in the principles of a People’s Transition, which include Economic Democracy, Community Wealth Building, and a Just Transition, the aim of this initiative is to strive for equitable distribution of resources, development of sustainable local economies, and a fair and inclusive transition to a low-carbon economy, particularly for vulnerable and marginalised communities.

The report emphasises the importance of localisation and community-led development, highlighting the opportunity for clubs to empower communities to lead and even own the transition process, not simply participate in it. Following a community-wealth building approach, the report explores how clubs can encourage and support the initiatives

like developing community-owned renewable energy projects, the creation of jobs in the low-carbon economy, and enabling their fans and local communities to have a voice in the decision making process on climate action.

It is clear from the fan survey conducted as part of the Football for Climate Justice project all clubs involved in this project have a robust mandate from fans to do this work. Football clubs are seen as an actor with responsibilities; not just to take their own sustainability actions, but to serve as a custodian of their fans and their communities’ future. Football clubs can provide platforms and advocate to enhance the agency of the people who fill our stadiums week in, and week out. Some highlights from the fan survey include:

- Over **75%** of fans felt football clubs should be part of developing climate solutions.
- Over **72%** of fans wanted to be informed about and participate in clubs environmental actions.
- Over **58%** of fans agreed that football clubs should partner with local environmental NGOs and activists to advance this work.
- Over **75%** of fans surveyed felt clubs had a role in supporting and facilitating environmentally friendly transport options on matchday.



Closing the Gap: The current UEFA sustainability strategy underscores the conceptual gap that exists between social sustainability actions and environmental sustainability actions. This disconnect is not unique to football, but it does risk alienating fans from football’s climate action. The ambition of this project is to close the gap between the social action clubs are undertaking to enhance their local communities, and the climate actions clubs are undertaking to look after the planet.



From the Ground Up: *Reconceptualising climate action as an enabler of community development has the potential to improve the quality of life of fans, transform the fans perception of climate action and build an enhanced relationship between clubs and their surrounding communities.*

The report gives an overview of how the clubs participating in this research have found success in various environmental initiatives, such as selective waste collection on match days, participation in local initiatives, and promoting biodiversity protection. These clubs are implementing various strategies, such as using LED lighting and solar panels, implementing waste sorting and recycling initiatives, and promoting the use of public transport and bicycles.

However, the report also highlights challenges, such as the difficulty of engaging fans without the support of first-team players and appropriate communication channels. The research emphasises the importance of aligning sustainability actions more closely with the needs and priorities of fans to achieve greater success. The report emphasises the potential of adopting a people-centred perspective to climate action at football clubs to mobilise fans and help them to act on their own agency.

The transition to a zero-carbon future is not just a necessity, but an opportunity - an opportunity to build a more sustainable, equitable, and resilient world. Football clubs, with their unique position and influence, have the potential to be powerful allies in this transition. By embracing this role, they can help ensure the survival of football, and our planet.

What is Climate Justice?

Climate justice is a powerful and transformative concept that recognises the fact that climate change doesn't affect all people equally.

It's the understanding that those who have contributed the least to climate change, often the most vulnerable and marginalised, are disproportionately affected by its consequences. Moreover, these individuals often struggle to access solutions due to associated costs or the constraints of multidimensional poverty. Climate justice seeks to rectify this imbalance, ensuring that the transition to a sustainable future is not only fair and inclusive but also accessible to all. It's about safeguarding our planet while also promoting equality, human rights, and dignity for all, ensuring that the solutions to climate change are within reach of everyone, regardless of their economic or social status.

What is Community Wealth Building?

Community Wealth Building is an innovative approach to economic development that seeks to strengthen the local economy by focusing on broad-based, inclusive, and locally-rooted ownership. It's about creating a more equitable, sustainable, and democratic economy by redirecting wealth back into the local community.

This approach involves a range of strategies, including the development of cooperatives and employee-owned businesses, the use of local procurement by large institutions like hospitals, universities or football clubs (also known as anchor institutions), and the creation of community development financial institutions and community land trusts.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Football for Climate Justice project envisions a future where football clubs, leagues, and associations act as leaders in the fight for climate justice, utilising their reach and global support to promote sustainable practices that value justice, integrity, inclusion, and education.

The objective of this research project is to understand the scope of actions and best practice at club level that combine social and environmental dimensions – actions that will be good for fans and local communities, as well as the planet.

This research report will help inform other deliverables for the Football for Climate Justice project including a Starter Kit to support clubs in climate action that is good for fans and the planet, a Climate Justice Solutions Hub with community-based solutions that clubs can adapt to their own circumstances, and a quality standard tool to help gauge progress towards people centred solutions.



1.1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Football is more than just a sport; it is a cultural phenomenon that has a significant impact on society. As a sport with an estimated 4 billion fans worldwide, football has a unique opportunity to serve as custodians for their fans and act as an enabler of inclusive climate action and a just transition. The Football for Climate Justice project recognises this potential and aims to transform football clubs from a concern for sustainability into genuine leadership on socially transformative climate action.

Football clubs, leagues, and associations have an opportunity to consider their role and position within their local and global community. Fans, communities and policy makers all pay attention to developments in the world of football. As such, clubs are uniquely positioned to promote the type of social transformation required to secure a safer and fairer world. How can they do this?

- A)** Through the actions they design and implement to promote sustainability, and
- B)** by utilising their reach and ability to inspire generations.

By seeking to go beyond conventional concepts of sustainability, football clubs can pioneer approaches that reduce their environmental impact and

promote inclusive social and economic development simultaneously.

The Football for Climate Justice project is a multi-faceted project that seeks to discover football's potential to advance sustainable practices and become a leading voice in the fight for climate justice. The project aims to draw on experiences from the world of football and beyond to identify existing best

practices from a range of fields and utilise limitless opportunities to advance sustainable practice. In doing so, the project partners can collaborate for wider change.

The role of football in serving as custodians for their fans is crucial. Football has the potential to reach new audiences and inspire generations, and with this comes the responsibility to promote values of integrity, respect, and fairness.

The Football for Climate Justice project recognises the need for urgent action to address climate change. The project partners aim to transform football's potential as a climate champion into genuine climate leadership. By doing so, they can contribute to the fight against environmental collapse and climate change, and realise the potential of football clubs to promote fan and community-led climate action and act as an enabler of a just transition. Football has unparalleled potential to bring about positive global change, and the Football for Climate Justice project is an important step towards the roll-out of empowering and inclusive climate action.

1.2 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE REPORT

The Football for Climate Justice project recognises that football clubs, as integral parts of their local communities, have a responsibility to promote inclusion and education, as well as to prioritise the well-being of their fans and local communities. Through collaboration and sharing of best practices, the project aims to identify potential environmental or climate initiatives that clubs can take that will benefit not only the planet but also the fans and local communities.



This report seeks to establish the best techniques that can be transferred into the implementation of the Football for Climate Justice project. By promoting sustainable practices, education, and values of integrity, football clubs can play a transformative role in the effort to secure a safer and fairer world for the future. The recommendations provided in this report prioritise the well-being of the fans and local communities, while also contributing to the global push for a more sustainable future.

Purpose of the Report:

- To collect and analyse best practices, data, methods, and existing projects related to sustainable practices in European football clubs.
- To establish the best techniques that can be transferred into the implementation of the Football for Climate Justice project.
- To identify the most effective strategies for sustainable practices in European football clubs that benefit not only the environment but also the fans and local communities.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

1. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Conduct a comprehensive literature review to identify the best practices, data, and methods related to sustainable practices in European football clubs. This will involve analysing existing projects, case studies, and academic literature.

2. DATA COLLECTION:

Collect data from project partners, to identify current sustainable practices, initiatives, and projects. Supplement this data collection with additional data collection arising from initiatives identified via literature review.

3. DATA ANALYSIS:

Analyse the collected data to identify the most effective strategies for sustainable practices in European football clubs. This will involve using both qualitative and quantitative methods to analyse the data and identify patterns and themes.

4. BEST PRACTICE IDENTIFICATION:

Establish the best techniques that can be transferred into the implementation of the Football for Climate Justice project. This will involve identifying the most successful initiatives and practices and recommending them for implementation.



5. IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

Evaluate the impact of sustainable practices in European football clubs on the environment, fans, and local communities. This will involve analysing the benefits and challenges of implementing sustainable practices and identifying potential barriers to implementation.

6. RECOMMENDATION DEVELOPMENT:

Develop recommendations for sustainable practices that benefit not only the environment but also the fans and local communities. This will involve prioritising strategies based on their potential impact and feasibility of implementation.

2. THE ROLE OF FOOTBALL IN CLIMATE JUSTICE

Climate justice is a concept that recognises the unequal distribution of the impacts of climate change on vulnerable communities. Climate justice seeks to address the root causes of climate change and ensure that the transition to a more sustainable future is fair and equitable for all.

For football clubs, the concept of climate justice is particularly relevant as they are greatly trusted by their fans and are deeply embedded in their local communities. Football clubs have a opportunity to use their platform to promote human rights, inclusion, education and even economic empowerment through climate action and to prioritise the well-being of their fans and local communities.

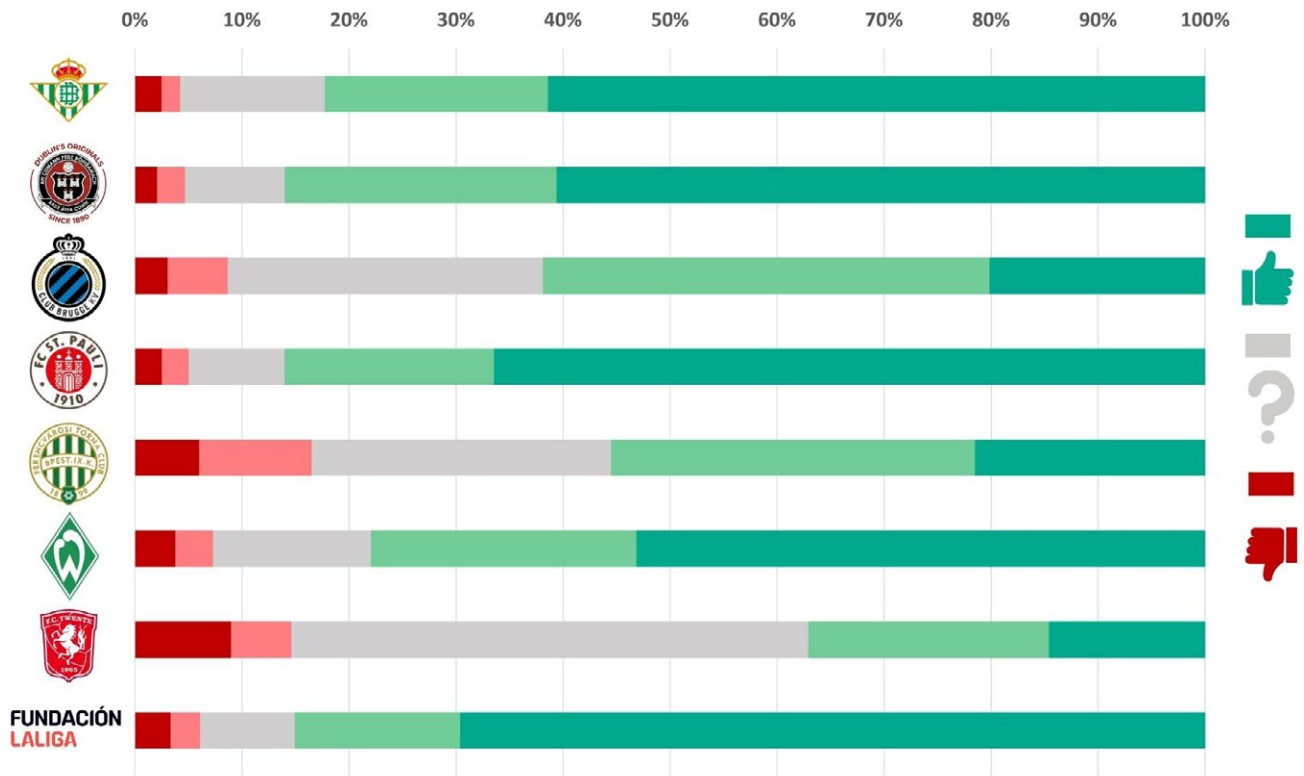
Fans who may be suffering from issues of inequality or marginalisation are often the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, while also not being able to access the kind of climate solutions that would make their lives better – like access to affordable renewable energy, retrofitting or the new jobs created by the transition.

By embracing the principles of climate justice and promoting inclusive climate action, football clubs can play a transformative role in addressing the root causes of climate change and advancing social and environmental justice. This can help to build stronger, more resilient communities and ensure a safer and fairer future for all.



The world of football should take action on climate change in the same way it works on other issues

Figure 1: Fan Survey responses to the question of whether football clubs should act on climate change. Over 75% of total respondents agree that football clubs should be part of climate action.



2.1. FOOTBALL'S POTENTIAL AS A CLIMATE CHAMPION

Football has a unique potential to play a leading role in the fight against climate change. On the one hand, football clubs can significantly reduce their environmental impact by implementing sustainable practices in their operations. This includes reducing energy consumption, waste reduction, and promoting sustainable modes of transport for fans traveling to games. By utilising their platform, football clubs can raise awareness of environmental issues and promote sustainable initiatives to their fans and local communities. They can inspire their fans to embrace sustainable lifestyles, which can also contribute to addressing climate change.

On the other hand, football can serve as a champion of climate justice. By promoting inclusive and empowering climate action,

football can help to address the unequal distribution of the impacts of climate change on vulnerable communities. Football clubs can advocate for policy changes that promote sustainable practices and reduce the negative impacts of climate change. This can include promoting renewable energy sources, tackling environmental degradation, and promoting access to sustainable job opportunities for vulnerable groups.

Furthermore, by promoting values of integrity and education through climate action, football clubs can empower fans to make a positive impact on the environment and advocate for change in their communities. Football can inspire a new generation of fans to embrace sustainable practices and take action on climate change, contributing to a more sustainable future for all.

2.2 THE NEED FOR FOOTBALL TO TAKE A LEADERSHIP ROLE IN CLIMATE ACTION

The need for football to take a leadership role in climate action has never been more pressing. While the world is waking up to the realities of climate change, the sports industry has a long way to go in reducing its environmental impact. Based on the survey responses from fans, football clubs are seen as influential and trusted institutions with a responsibility to lead by example and advocate for sustainable practices.

The move towards climate action is becoming increasingly inevitable through regulation and licencing requirements. As a result, football clubs are now required take proactive steps to reduce their environmental footprint in order to secure licencing. However, beyond the regulations, the trust that fans have in football clubs is a critical factor.

At a time when trust is waning in other sectors, such as politics and the private sector, football clubs have a unique opportunity to build trust and promote values of integrity and sustainability. This can have a significant impact on fan behavior, encouraging them to embrace sustainable lifestyles and promote change in their communities.

As trusted institutions, football clubs can build a greater confidence in the importance of climate action by promoting the type of people-centred initiatives where lives are improved and a greater demand for climate action is catalysed. This can contribute to the broader movement towards a more sustainable future.

2.3 THE PEOPLE'S SPORT, THE PEOPLE'S TRANSITION

The People's Transition report, developed by FEPS-TASC, emphasises the need for a community-led approach to address climate change and ensure a just transition to a sustainable and equitable future. The report presents a comprehensive framework that aims to empower local communities to take ownership of the transition process, ensuring that the benefits are fairly distributed, and the most vulnerable populations are protected.

I would feel happier to attend a match if I knew it was environmentally friendly

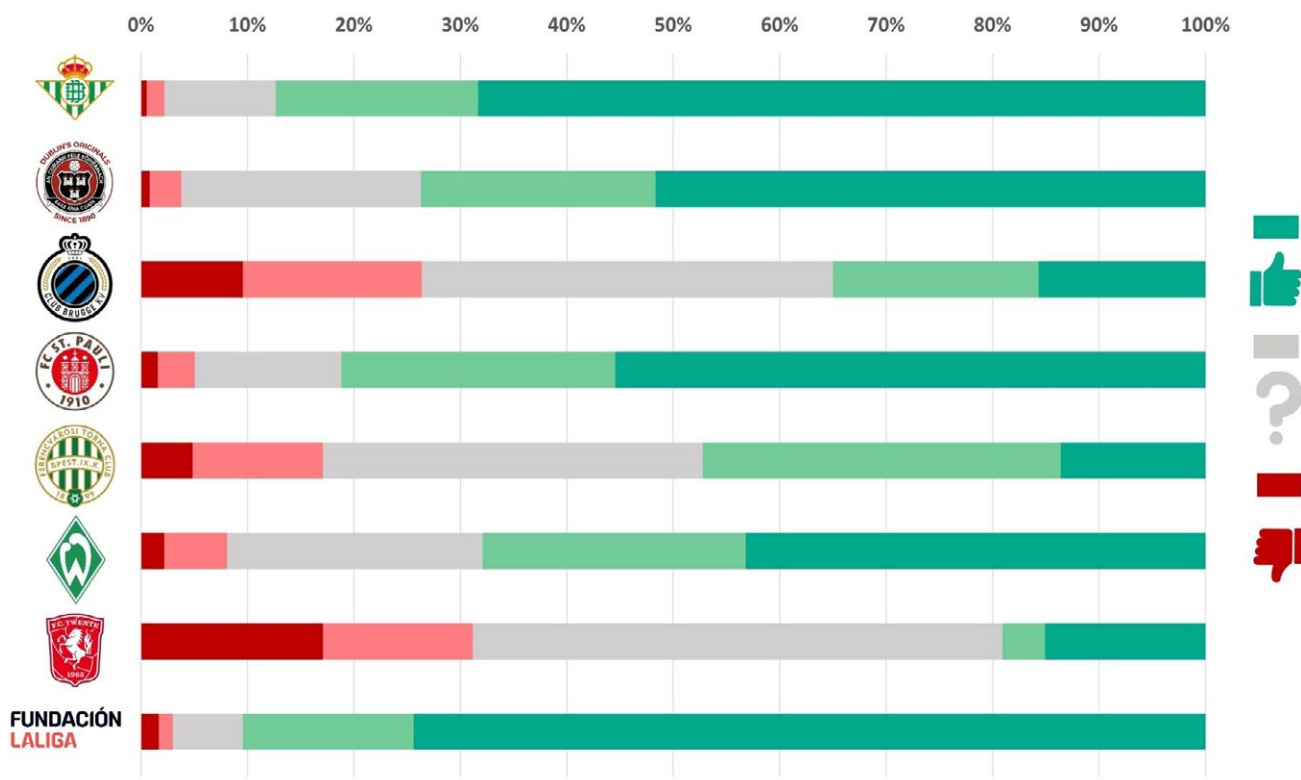


Figure 2: While there is some variation at club level, over 55% of all fans surveyed said they would be happier to attend a match if they knew it was environmentally friendly.

Key takeaways from the report to be included in the Football for Climate Justice report are as follows:

1. PRINCIPLES FOR A PEOPLE'S TRANSITION:

The report outlines three key principles for an inclusive transition:

A) ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY:

Ensuring that decision-making power and resources are distributed equitably among communities.

B) COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING:

Encouraging the development of local, democratic, and sustainable economies.

C) JUST TRANSITION:

Guaranteeing that the transition to a low-carbon economy is fair and inclusive, especially for vulnerable and marginalised communities.

2. LOCALISATION AND COMMUNITY-LED DEVELOPMENT:

The report emphasises the importance of localising climate action and giving communities the tools, resources, and agency to lead the transition process. This includes developing community-owned renewable energy projects, investing in local infrastructure, and fostering participatory decision-making processes.

3. CLIMATE JOBS AND DECENT WORK:

The report highlights the need for creating climate jobs, which are decent and sustainable employment opportunities in the low-carbon economy. These jobs should prioritise the well-being and livelihoods of workers and ensure a just transition for those affected by the shift away from carbon-intensive industries.

4. PUBLIC INVESTMENT AND FINANCE:

The report stresses the crucial role of public investment and finance in driving the transition to a more sustainable and equitable future. This includes providing adequate funding for community-led initiatives, developing innovative financial mechanisms, and supporting public services and infrastructure that enable climate action.

5. CROSS-SECTORAL COLLABORATION:

The report emphasises the importance of collaboration among governments, the private sector, civil society, and local communities in addressing climate change and fostering a just transition. This entails building partnerships and networks that can facilitate knowledge sharing, resource mobilisation, and joint action towards climate justice.



2.4 FOOTBALL CLUBS AS ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS

Football clubs hold a unique and powerful position within their communities and they have the potential to act as anchor institutions or community wealth builders that drive local development and democracy.

As anchor institutions, football clubs can contribute to their communities in numerous ways:

1. Economic Stimulation:

By sourcing goods and services from local suppliers and supporting local businesses, football clubs can help circulate wealth within their communities, contributing to the growth of the local economy. Additionally, clubs can create local employment opportunities and encourage skills development in sectors related to sustainability and community development.

2. Community Empowerment:

Football clubs can engage fans and community members in decision-making processes, ensuring that their voices are heard and their needs are addressed. This can involve establishing fan ownership models, hosting community consultations, and creating spaces for public deliberation on club matters, fostering a more democratic and inclusive environment.

3. Social Inclusion:

By actively working to promote social inclusion and address inequalities within their communities, football clubs can help break down barriers and bring people together. This can involve supporting initiatives that target marginalised groups, offering inclusive programs for fans, and promoting diversity and inclusion within the club's staff and management.

4. Partnership and Collaboration:

By working with local authorities, businesses, community organisations, and other stakeholders, football clubs can forge strong partnerships that facilitate the sharing of resources, expertise, and best practices. This collaborative approach can help clubs address shared challenges and harness their collective power to bring about positive change in their communities.



2.5 REALISING FOOTBALLS COMMUNITY-WEALTH BUILDING POTENTIAL THROUGH CLIMATE ACTION

Realising football's community-wealth building potential through climate action requires clubs to strategically integrate sustainability and climate justice goals within their operations, outreach, and partnerships. By adopting environmentally-friendly practices, football clubs can directly contribute to reducing their carbon footprint while also creating local jobs in the green economy, supporting sustainable businesses, and fostering skill development in sectors such as renewable energy, waste management, and sustainable agriculture. Moreover, by engaging and educating fans on the importance of climate action and the benefits of transitioning to a low-carbon society, clubs can inspire a collective sense of responsibility. Collaborative partnerships with local authorities, businesses, and community organisations can further amplify football clubs' positive impact on their communities, fostering innovation, resource-sharing, and best practice adoption. There are numerous ways that football clubs can undertake climate action that would be of benefit to the planet, the fans and the wider community. Some of these actions include:

1. LOCAL EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

By supporting local businesses and initiatives that contribute to climate action, football clubs can promote community wealth-building. Clubs can create opportunities for skills development and training in areas such as renewable energy, energy efficiency, waste management, and sustainable agriculture. This can lead to increased local employment and contribute to community-led climate action while also addressing the economic dimensions of the climate crisis.

2. LOCAL INVESTMENT AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Football clubs can support local community-led projects and initiatives that focus on sustainability and climate justice. By investing in such projects or establishing partnerships with organisations working on climate action, football clubs can help foster a sense of collective responsibility and demonstrate their commitment to climate justice.

3. INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCE SHARING

Football clubs can utilise their facilities and resources to support community-led climate action projects. This can include offering space for meetings, workshops, or events related to climate action, providing resources such as tools or equipment for

community projects, and helping local organisations access funding or support.

4. SUPPORTING LOCAL SUPPLY CHAINS AND CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Clubs can promote community wealth building by sourcing goods and services from local businesses that prioritise sustainable practices, thereby encouraging the adoption of a circular economy. This approach can create positive social norms around sustainable consumption and production.

5. PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION

Football clubs can help address social inequalities and promote social inclusion by ensuring that community-led climate action initiatives are accessible and inclusive to all, regardless of income, background, or ability. This can involve supporting projects that target marginalised groups or facilitating participation in decision-making processes related to climate action.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND EDUCATION

Football clubs can actively engage with their local communities and educate fans on climate change issues, empowering them to become active participants in the transition to a low-carbon economy. They can organise workshops, seminars, and campaigns to raise awareness and encourage discussions on climate justice and sustainable living practices.

7. SETTING SOCIAL NORMS

As influential institutions, football clubs can play a vital role in reshaping the perception of sustainability and climate action by showcasing their benefits for people and communities. By adopting sustainable practices and demonstrating a commitment to climate justice, football clubs can illustrate how the climate transition can address issues of marginalisation and inequality and contribute to the overall well-being of society.

By adopting an approach to sustainability that uses climate action to deliver social goods, such as job creation, health improvements, and more resilient communities, and by communicating that approach, clubs can inspire fans and local stakeholders, and even policy makers, to see sustainability not only as a necessary response to environmental challenges, but also as a pathway to a more inclusive, equitable, and prosperous future. In turn, this shift in perception can foster greater engagement in climate initiatives and encourage collective action for the betterment of communities and the planet.

3 EMERGING SUSTAINABILITY GUIDELINES FOR FOOTBALL

This section of this report aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the current best practices and existing guidelines for sustainability initiatives in European football. To facilitate a better understanding and ease of comparison across different sources, we have grouped these actions into five distinct categories. These categories not only reflect the various dimensions of sustainability in football but also offer a systematic approach for clubs to adopt and adapt these practices to their unique contexts.

The categories are: (i) Energy and Resource Efficiency (ii) Waste Management (iii) Sustainable Mobility (iv) Collaboration and (v) Fan Engagement.

By categorising best practices and guidelines in this manner, the report offers a comprehensive and structured framework for clubs to assess, compare, and adopt effective sustainability initiatives.

But what guidance is currently coming from authorities? This section briefly explores the various sustainability strategies that are emerging from football authorities.

3.1 UEFA

UEFA, the governing body of football in Europe, has launched a football sustainability strategy that aims to make the sport more environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable. The UEFA strategy, called “Strength through Unity” is a comprehensive plan that aims to address the social and environmental challenges faced by the football community. UEFA’s mission is to inspire, activate, and accelerate collective action to respect human rights and the environment within the context of European football. The strategy is formulated around 11 policies, each supported by a 2030 ambition, targets, and key performance indicators (KPIs), and will be implemented in five areas of action. The issues covered by the policies are interconnected.

The UEFA Football Sustainability Strategy has set the following climate-related targets for 2030:

Circular Economy: UEFA aims to achieve zero plastic waste and food waste within UEFA, across UEFA events, and collaboratively across European football.



Climate and Advocacy: UEFA plans to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 50% by 2030, with a view to achieving net-zero carbon by 2040 within UEFA, across UEFA events, and collaboratively across European football.

Event Sustainability: UEFA aims to continuously improve each UEFA event's sustainability index score to optimize it by 2030.

These targets are part of UEFA's broader sustainability strategy, which includes additional targets related to social issues such as racism, child and youth protection, equality and inclusion, and football for all abilities.

3.2 FUNDACIÓN LALIGA

The Fair Play Social is a unique concept developed by LALIGA and led by the FUNDACIÓN LALIGA. The program aims to integrate Social Responsibility within the business management model of their clubs.

The mission of the program is to legitimize the governance model of the clubs in the eyes of society and contribute to the transformation of their environment. It also seeks to maximize the social impacts of the projects of their Clubs and Foundations, with the goal of being more permeable and closer to social concerns. In essence, the program aims to

“give back to society what society needs.”

Environmental Fair Play (EFP) is a two-year program initiated by LALIGA that aims to improve the environmental performance of the football industry and accelerate the global ecological transition. Recognizing football's unique ability to drive behavioural change and mobilize institutions and individuals, the EFP seeks to address the sport's environmental deficit by promoting environmental culture, performance, and reporting. At the time of writing the programme is approximately halfway to completion.

3.3 BUNDESLIGA

The Bundesliga, Germany's premier football league, has taken significant steps towards sustainability. In December 2021, the Bundesliga and Bundesliga 2 became the first major football leagues to introduce mandatory sustainability criteria into their licensing regulations. The resolution, officially signed in May 2022, covers all 36 teams in the German Football League and introduces minimum criteria in three areas: club management and organisation, environment and resources, and stakeholder groups. This was piloted during the 2022-23 season and will be fully launched in 2023-24.



3.4 OTHER INITIATIVES

There are other EU and Global Initiatives from which our project could draw inspiration, including a number of UN initiatives.

3.4.1 SPORTS FOR CLIMATE ACTION

The Sports for Climate Action initiative is a program by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that aims to support and guide sports organizations in achieving global climate change goals.

The initiative encourages sports organizations to take responsibility for their climate footprint, incentivizing climate action beyond the sports sector and helping to increase global ambition in the face of climate change.

There are two main goals of the initiative (i) achieving a clear trajectory for the global sports community to combat climate change and (ii) using sports as a unifying tool to create solidarity among global citizens for climate action. These goals are supported by these five pillars:

1. Participants in the Sports for Climate Action initiative commit to adhere to a set of five principles:
2. Undertake systematic efforts to promote greater environmental responsibility.
3. Reduce overall climate impact.
4. Educate for climate action.
5. Promote sustainable and responsible consumption.
6. Advocate for climate action through communication.

These principles are incorporated into strategies, policies, and procedures, and mainstreamed within the sports community, setting the stage for a wider dissemination of the message and long-term success. The initiative also sets specific climate goals of halving emissions by 2030 and aiming to achieve net-zero by 2040. All sports are invited to adopt these targets, and all signatories are requested to adhere to a process of pledging, planning, proceeding with action, and reporting.



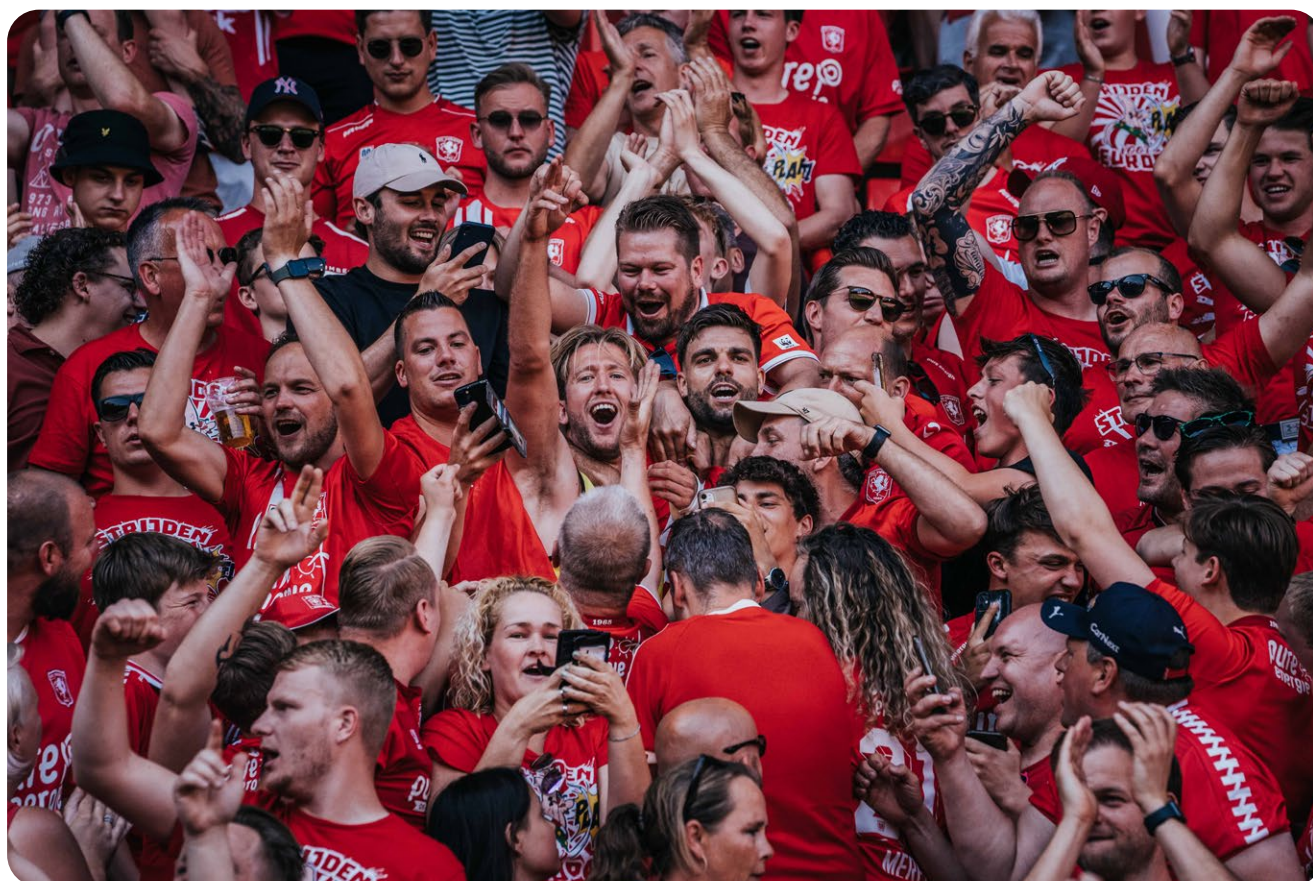
3.4.2 FOOTBALL FOR THE GOALS

Football for the Goals is a United Nations initiative that provides a platform for the global football community to engage with and advocate for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The initiative aims to leverage football's powerful and influential reach to become agents of change by aligning messaging, strategies, and operations with the aspirations of the SDGs. It encourages confederations, national associations, leagues, clubs, players' associations, organized fan groups, as well as media and commercial partners, to develop sustainable practices and to act as champions of the SDGs during the Decade of Action (2020-2030).

Members use their visibility and outreach power via tournaments, players, corporate brand exposure, media, and fan communities to raise the profile of the SDGs through amplification and advocacy. They commit to principles such as sustainability policies and practices, implementing and advocating for the SDGs, a human rights-based approach, equality, and equity, including gender, and climate action.

Clubs participating in the Football for the Goals initiative are required to commit to several principles across their business practices and in their advocacy with stakeholders, as well as media and commercial partners and sponsors. These principles include:

1. **Sustainability policies and practices:** Clubs are expected to implement and advocate for sustainable practices within their operations and management.
2. **Implementing and advocating for the SDGs:** Clubs should actively promote and work towards the SDGs.
3. **A human rights-based approach:** This includes addressing issues of discrimination and avoiding discriminatory practices within the club and its activities.
4. **Equality and equity, including gender:** Clubs should promote and ensure equality and equity in all their activities, including gender equality.
5. **Climate action:** Clubs are expected to take actions that contribute to mitigating climate change and promoting environmental sustainability.



4. WHAT ARE WE DOING? ACTIONS BEING TAKEN BY PROJECT PARTNERS

All participating clubs - Bohemian FC, Club Brugge KV, FC St. Pauli, FC Twente, Ferencvárosi TC, FUNDACIÓN LALIGA, Real Betis Balompíe and SV Werder Bremen – responded to a survey on their progress towards developing internal sustainability strategies. The survey questions aimed to gain insight into the process of developing such strategies and to identify any challenges and lessons learned along the way.

4.1 DEVELOPMENT OF A CLUB SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

The analysis of the survey responses on clubs' experiences in developing sustainability, environmental, or climate policies revealed varying degrees of progress and challenges faced by the clubs. The responses indicate that the development of such policies often involves a cross-functional approach, with participation from different departments, board members, employees, and in some cases, external stakeholders such as environmental consultancy companies or creative agencies.

The development process varied in duration, ranging from several months to more than a year. Some clubs have recently begun their journey in developing their policies,

while others have already established and implemented their policies for some time. Communication and collaboration between departments and stakeholders emerged as a key factor in the policy development process.

Challenges encountered by the clubs included difficulties in benchmarking policies, balancing sustainability efforts with social commitment and economic success, and navigating the structural issues in professional football. Some clubs also faced resource constraints due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which limited the availability of human resources and added financial pressure. Additionally, clubs identified the need for clear processes, responsibilities, and cross-departmental communication to improve their sustainability efforts.

The responses highlight the importance of a holistic approach, combining top-down and bottom-up strategies, while ensuring regular engagement and review of progress. Clubs also emphasised the value of setting ambitious and measurable targets, as well as learning from the experiences of other clubs and organisations within the sector.



4.2 ARE DECISION MAKERS AT YOUR ORGANISATION INVOLVED IN SUSTAINABILITY WORK?

The survey responses indicate that board members and decision-makers from various clubs recognise the importance of sustainability, environmental, and climate initiatives. In many cases, they are actively engaged in supporting and driving these efforts.

At Club Brugge, the sustainability committee meets monthly to discuss progress and develop their policy, highlighting a consistent focus on sustainability from decision-makers. SV Werder Bremen has integrated sustainability into its overall strategy, “Spielplan 2025,” and even appointed a Managing Director for Sport & Sustainability, demonstrating a strong commitment from the club’s leadership.

FUNDACIÓN LALIGA shares its methodology, conclusions, and training materials on their website, which reflects transparency and engagement with stakeholders on sustainability issues.

Real Betis Balompié Foundation indicates that its board of directors was the main driving force behind the Forever Green program, with strong support from the marketing department.

FC St. Pauli’s board members understand and support sustainability efforts from various perspectives, acknowledging potential conflicts and working together to address them. This has resulted in the creation of Not Perfect but Better, a strategy to increase the club’s positive impact on the environment and society. The fan-owned Bohemian Football Club has seen bottom-up initiatives from club members, and the board actively engages in supporting and ensuring the success of these efforts.

4.3 THE NEED FOR CAPACITY BUILDING

The survey responses suggest that there is a recognised need for training and capacity building in sustainability, environmental, and climate-related topics for decision-makers and employees across various clubs. While some clubs have already conducted training or workshops, others are exploring opportunities to develop their expertise in this area.

Club Brugge KV acknowledge that sustainability is a new topic in their context and are considering additional training and skill development. SV Werder Bremen has participated in workshops organised by external organisations and has implemented various training sessions on CSR management and sustainable nutrition. They are also collaborating with external partners to develop workshops for their employees.

FUNDACIÓN LALIGA emphasises the importance of training for clubs and their foundations in relation to environmental matters, focusing on the involvement of employees from different areas. Real Betis Balompié Foundation recognises the need to keep employees and sport athletes informed and trained in various aspects of their projects.

FC St. Pauli has conducted training sessions on barrier-free communication and organised short digital sessions on specific sustainability themes. They note that training should be relevant, short, and provide a clear benefit to decision-makers.



Bohemian Football Club have secured a substantial government grant to develop new training materials in areas of climate action that will be taught for free in the communities surrounding the club. It is anticipated that the development of these training materials will be of benefit to club staff as well as fans and local communities.

4.4 LESSONS LEARNED TO DATE

This section summarises the lessons learned to date from the responses to survey questions on the engagement of participating clubs with their fans, sponsors, and the media. The responses provide insight into what worked, what didn't work, and what changes could be made when developing sustainability strategies. Through these lessons, clubs can gain an understanding of effective ways to engage their stakeholders on sustainability and climate justice, as well as challenges clubs may face in the process.

From fan engagement:

The survey responses reveal various lessons learned from engaging fans in sustainability and environmental initiatives. Key takeaways from the clubs' experiences include:

What worked:

- Selective waste collection on matchdays has been successful, as demonstrated by Club Brugge.
- Participation in local initiatives, such as waste collection drives, can engage fans in environmental activities.
- SV Werder Bremen's bee project with their kids club promotes biodiversity protection and raises awareness among younger fans.
- FUNDACIÓN LALIGA focuses on raising awareness about climate change and promoting a culture of respect for the planet.
- FC St. Pauli finds that bottom-up participation and regular dialog between fans and the board is most effective.

What didn't work or challenges faced:

- Engaging fans can be difficult without the support of first-team players and appropriate communication channels.
- Climate-related topics may not generate as much interest as social projects, such as aid for refugees or the homeless.

What would you change if you were doing it again:

- Engage fans but don't preach.
- Avoid demanding too much from fans, especially on matchdays.
- Use incentives to encourage fan participation, but not solely rely on them.

The survey responses demonstrate the importance of aligning sustainability actions more closely with the needs and priorities of fans in order to achieve greater success. Clubs can enhance their fan engagement strategies by fostering bottom-up participation, maintaining open communication, and leveraging the support of first-team players.

Additionally, focusing on local environmental initiatives that resonate with fans and offering incentives can help drive fan involvement in sustainability efforts. By better understanding and addressing the priorities of their fan base, clubs can more effectively engage their supporters in climate action and environmental initiatives, contributing to a more sustainable future for football.

From sponsor engagement:

The responses indicate that clubs have made progress in engaging sponsors on sustainability initiatives. Methods such as organising webinars, developing purpose-led sponsoring concepts, and identifying dedicated staff for sustainability projects have proven to be effective. Collaboration with sponsors on specific environmental projects, such as waste reduction and tree planting initiatives, helps to strengthen these relationships.

There is a growing trend towards environmental sustainability, with many sponsors and investors seeking clubs that prioritise Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives. Open and transparent communication with sponsors, coupled with maximum participation in the development process of sustainability projects, has worked well for clubs.

Clubs should continue to explore opportunities to collaborate with sponsors on meaningful projects, keeping them informed about their ongoing sustainability efforts. As the demand for CSR and environmental initiatives continues to grow, it is essential for clubs to be proactive in demonstrating their commitment to sustainability and fostering partnerships that align with their values. Overall, it appears that leveraging media channels can be an effective way to raise awareness and engage a wider audience. However, there were no indications of what did not work, or what could be improved in terms of working with the media.

From media engagement:

Based on the responses, it seems that working with the media can be an effective way to increase visibility for sustainability initiatives. Some clubs have established partnerships with media outlets to promote their actions, such as the agreement between FUNDACIÓN LALIGA and Marca. Other clubs use their own social media channels to promote sustainability initiatives and inform their followers about what they are doing. In addition, some clubs send press releases and include information in newsletters to keep members and the media informed about their progress. Overall, it appears that leveraging media channels can be an effective way to raise awareness and engage a wider audience. However, there were no indications of what did not work, or what could be improved in terms of working with the media.

4.5 WHAT ACTIONS ARE PROJECT PARTNERS ALREADY TAKING?

Based on the analysis of the documents provided by clubs, the best practices, and key initiatives in the area of sustainability in football can be categorised into several sections: Energy and Resource Efficiency, Waste Management, Sustainable Mobility,

Collaboration, and Fan and Community Engagement. The following narrative sections present an account of these practices.

A) ENERGY AND RESOURCE EFFICIENCY

Many clubs are focusing on energy and resource efficiency to minimise their environmental impact. Club Brugge is committed to using LED lighting and solar panels to reduce energy consumption. Similarly, FUNDACIÓN LALIGA encourages clubs to implement resource-saving technologies in stadiums and training facilities, such as smart energy management systems and water-saving solutions. Real Betis Balompié has set a goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2030 and is working on efficient resource management initiatives for water, energy, and materials. Bohemians have set a target of zero emissions by 2035 and are establishing a cooperative with institutional and community partners to deliver mitigation actions. FC St. Pauli is also striving to reduce energy, water, and material consumption at the stadium and club facilities.

In addition, SV Werder Bremen has installed a 1,000 kWp photovoltaic system at their Weser Stadium and uses 100% green electricity from local provider SWB to further reduce their energy consumption. FC Twente has, since 2015, been using 100% sustainable wind energy for all of its locations.

B) WASTE MANAGEMENT

Waste management plays a significant role in clubs' sustainability strategies. Club Brugge KV is implementing waste sorting and recycling initiatives to minimise waste production. FC St. Pauli is focusing on waste prevention and recycling, incorporating strategies that promote reusability and the responsible disposal of materials. FUNDACIÓN LaLiga encourages clubs to adopt waste reduction and recycling initiatives as part of their sustainability efforts. SV Werder Bremen uses ecological methods for pitch maintenance, such as minimising the use of chemicals, recycling rainwater, and employing energy-efficient irrigation systems. FC Twente is already taking several actions to reduce its impact on the environment. 95% of all waste from FC Twente is being re-used, to minimize the impact on the environment.

C) SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY

Sustainable mobility is an essential aspect of clubs' environmental initiatives. Club Brugge KV promotes the use of public transport and bicycles to reduce CO2 emissions and traffic congestion. FC St. Pauli encourages sustainable transport options for fans and employees, including cycling and public transport. FUNDACIÓN LALIGA also urges clubs to support sustainable transport by encouraging fans to use eco-friendly modes of transportation.

Bohemians partner with Dublin Bus to promote sustainable transport through club activations like the ball carrying mini-bus. SV Werder Bremen offers free public transport tickets on matchdays, encourages cycling by providing bicycle parking facilities at the stadium, and supports sustainable transportation alternatives for fans.

Clubs should reduce energy consumption

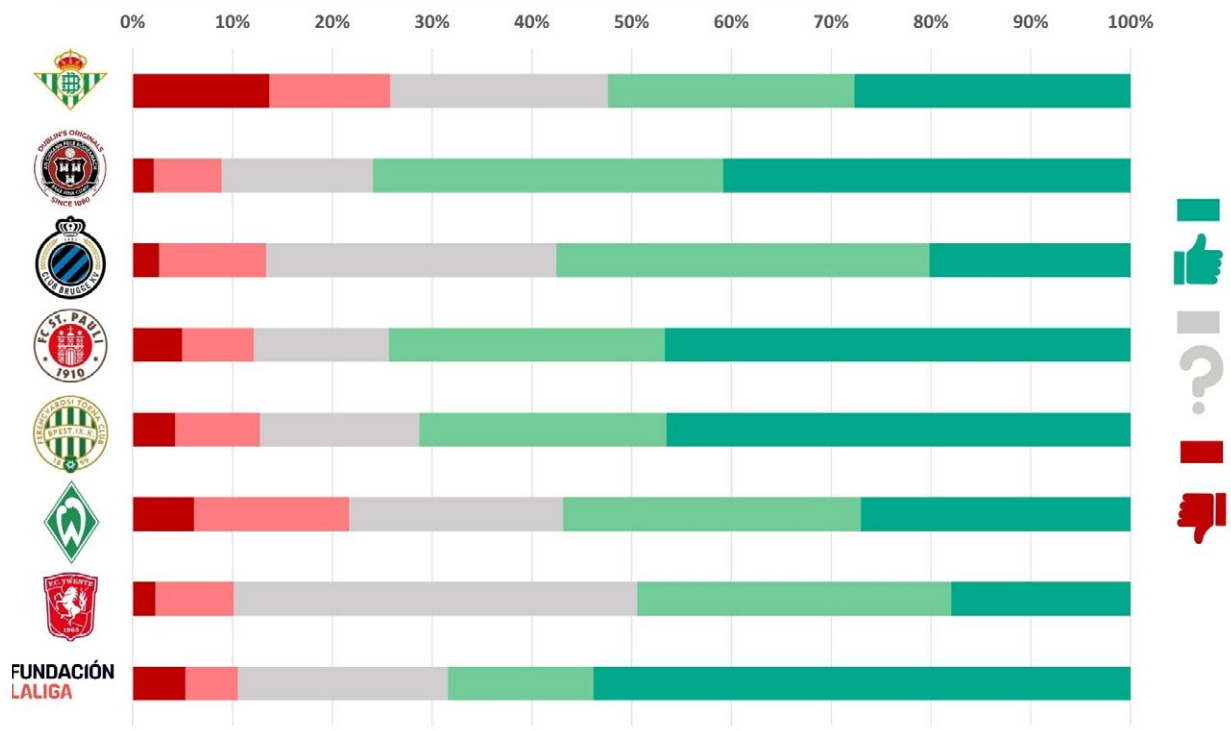


Figure 3: In response to the Fan Survey, the majority of fans (63%) were supportive of actions to reduce energy consumption.

Clubs should reduce waste

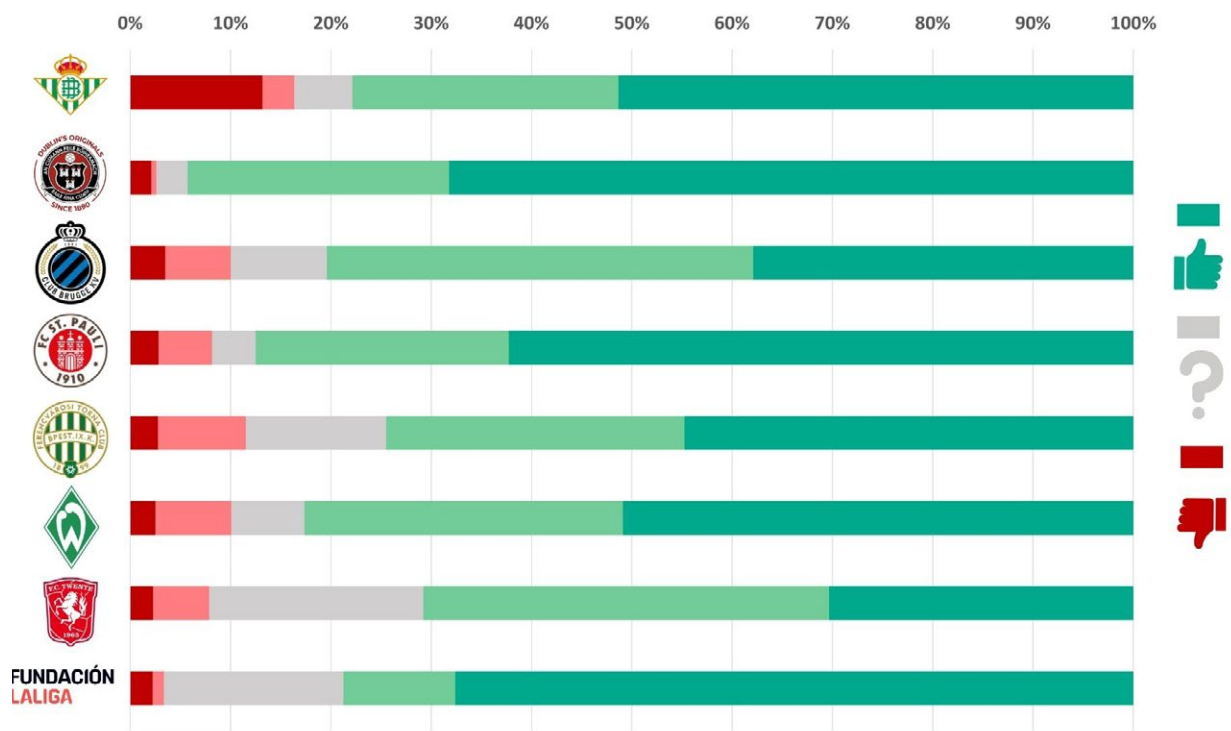


Figure 4: The fan survey reveals that most football fans surveyed (63%) supported efforts to reduce waste production.

D) Collaboration

Collaboration among clubs, stakeholders, and partners is vital for driving sustainable practices across the football industry. FUNDACIÓN LALIGA is working to establish a network of clubs and partners that share best practices and promote sustainability. Real Betis Balompié is developing the Forever Green platform, which connects companies and organisations to foster eco-friendly practices.

Bohemians FC collaborates with local organisations and stakeholders to advance sustainability and climate justice efforts such as the Bohemian Environmental Justice Film Festival, critical mass cycles for bike week or the local canal clean-up. SV Werder Bremen participates in local environmental initiatives, such as tree planting and river clean-up campaigns, contributing to a greener community. FC St. Pauli, situated in a very developed setting, have been working in collaboration with the city of Hamburg to support the rewilding of urban areas.

FUNDACIÓN LALIGA promotes sustainability education and eco-friendly actions among fans through campaigns and other communications. Real Betis Balompié involves fans in the sustainability process and promotes eco-friendly practices. FC St. Pauli strengthens social engagement by working closely with local communities on sustainability initiatives.

Bohemians FC emphasises the importance of climate justice, involving fans in climate action, and fostering environmental education among fans and the local community. They have organised a film festival focused on climate justice and established the Bohemian Way, a creative climate action project that uses music and art to signpost local community-led climate and environmental action initiatives for fans to join. SV Werder Bremen actively engages with its fans and community through the “Werder Bewegt” program, which focuses on environmental and social sustainability, setting a positive example for others to follow.

E) Fan and Community Engagement

Clubs recognise the importance of engaging fans and local communities in their sustainability initiatives. Club Brugge KV aims to raise awareness and educate fans about sustainability initiatives while encouraging them to adopt eco-friendly habits.

Would you cycle to football games more often if bicycle parking was available at the stadium?

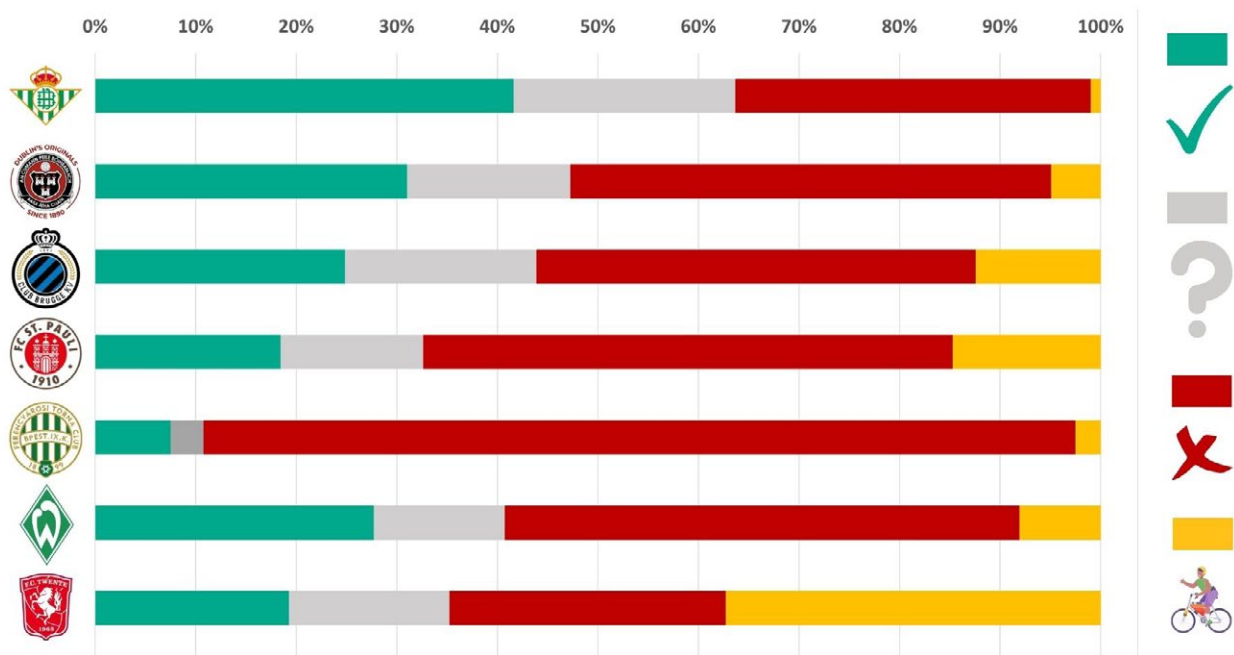


Figure 5: In response to the question of cycling to games, one quarter of respondents said they would cycle to games if the facilities were available. 49% of fans said they would not cycle to games, potentially reflecting the distances fans are travelling is not suitable to cycling. It is clear that Dutch club FC Twente are already leaders in this area, with 37% of fans cycling to games.

Clubs should support and facilitate environmentally friendly means of transport to the stadium

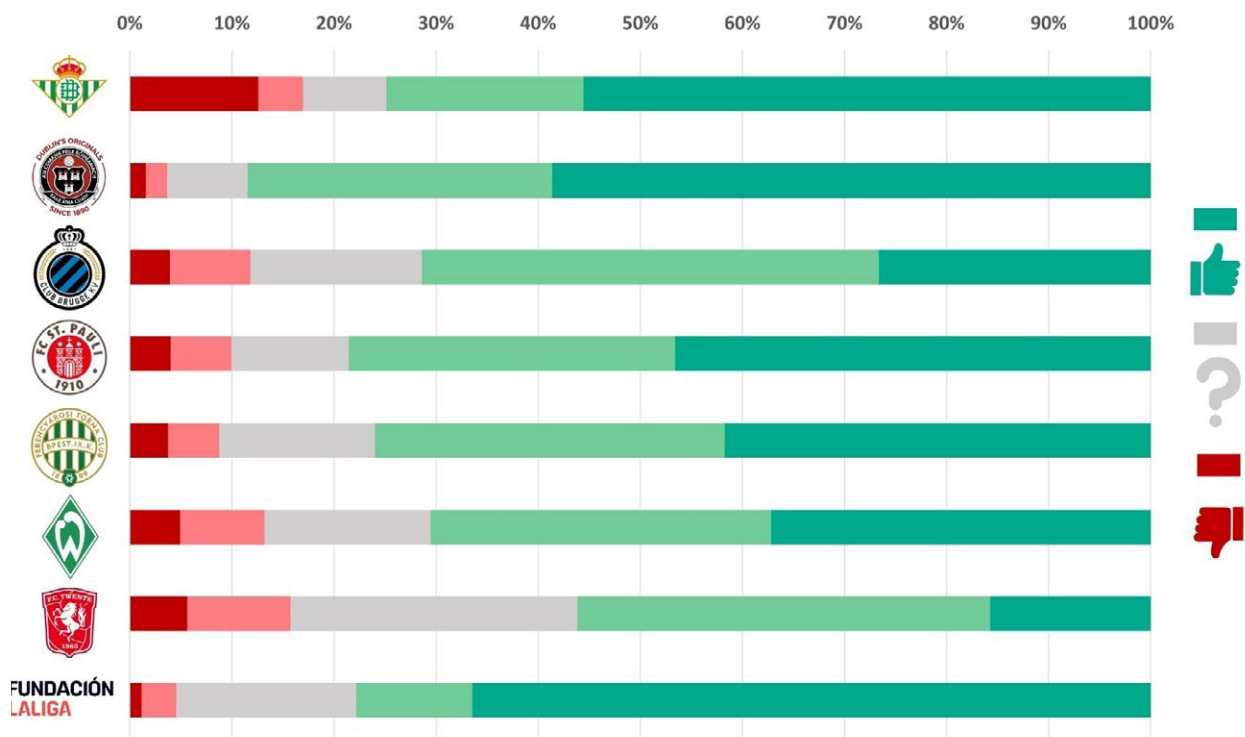


Figure 6: Over 75% of fans surveyed felt clubs had a role in supporting and facilitating environmentally friendly transport options on matchday.

Clubs should partner with local Environmental NGO's or Activists

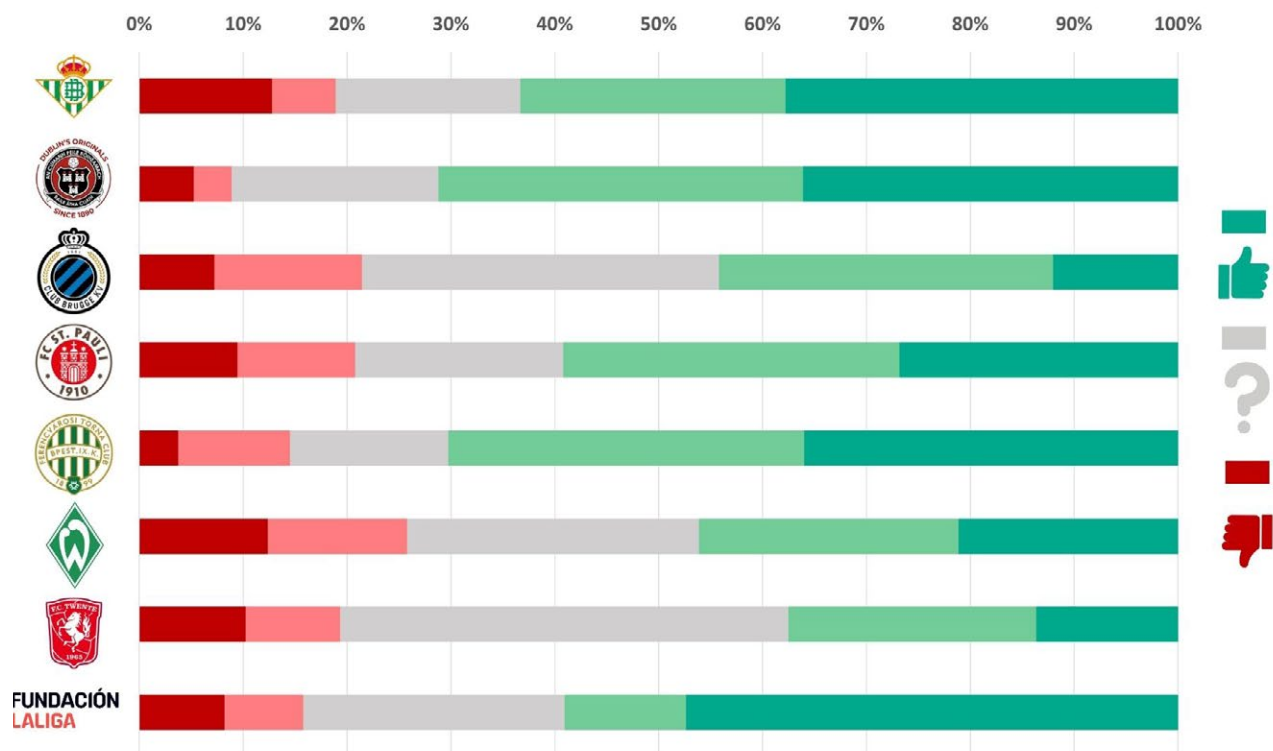


Figure 7: There is strong support in the fan survey for clubs partnering with local environmental NGOs or activists, indicating that this may be a good starting point for clubs working in this area. In total, 58% of respondents agreed while only 9% strongly disagreed.

I want to know about and participate in my clubs environmental actions

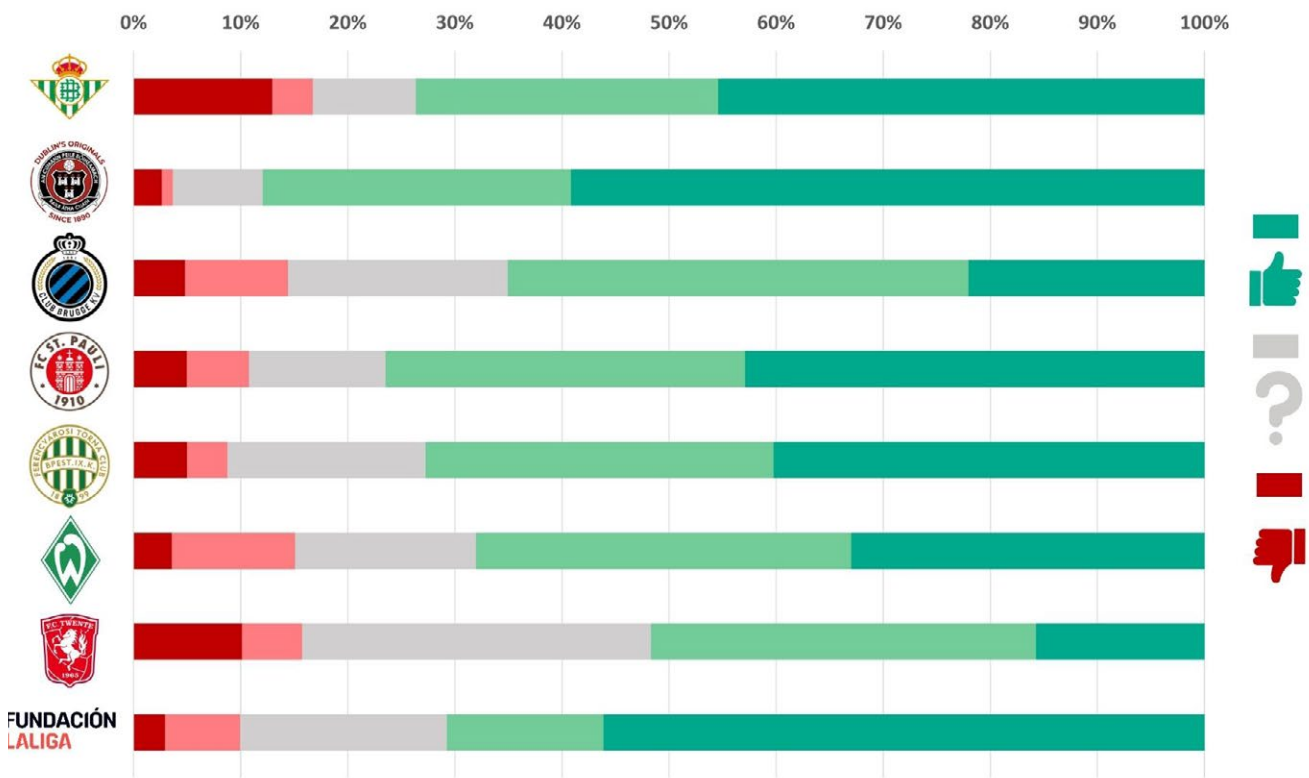


Figure 8: Across the board fans want to hear about and be included in environmental actions and initiatives, with over 72% responding positively in the fan survey.



5. CONCLUSION

Football clubs have the potential to not only implement sustainable practices within their own operations but also to inspire and support fans and communities in the transition. From promoting sustainable transport to games, enabling waste reduction and recycling, to the creation of initiatives that enable fans to access renewable energy solutions or even find jobs in the green economy, football clubs can make the zero-carbon transition tangible and achievable for their fans.

Moreover, football clubs can leverage their platforms to educate fans about climate change and the importance of a zero-carbon future. Through campaigns, initiatives, and partnerships, they can raise awareness about the urgency of climate action and the practical steps individuals can take in their own lives.

Football clubs can play a crucial role in advancing for climate justice.

They can ensure that the transition to a zero-carbon future is fair and inclusive, that it benefits the most vulnerable, and that no one is left behind. They can use their influence to call for policies and investments that make low-carbon options accessible and affordable for all fans, and they can use their own climate action to create opportunities for their fans and the communities surrounding their stadiums and facilities.

The Football for Climate Justice Research Report has explored the unique position of football clubs as influential community anchors and the significant role they can play in the transition to a zero-carbon future. As we conclude, it is clear that football clubs, with their vast reach and deep community roots, have an unprecedented opportunity to lead the way in this critical journey.





FOOTBALL FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE

How can football clubs support climate action that is good for the fans, their communities, and the planet?



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