

**UEFA Supporter Liaison
Officer Handbook**
English version (2011 Edition)

Foreword

FOREWORD – UEFA President

Supporters are the lifeblood at the very heart of professional football. Without its supporters, professional football would not be very different from an amateur sport or pastime. While most players and coaches change clubs during their career, supporters retain their commitment through thick and thin and remain faithful to their team, forming the bedrock or foundation of their club. Of course, when times are good, support for and interest in a club can rise, but when clubs fall on troubled times, it is the loyal supporters who tend to be there picking up the pieces.

We believe that this handbook will prove to be a significant step in ensuring better communication between clubs and their supporters. In the ever changing and confusing world of top level club football, we believe this is needed more than ever, for the benefit of both supporters and football clubs. We have witnessed many clubs all across Europe becoming notably more conscious of the need to work together with their supporters and there are many good examples of progressive initiatives that have been introduced. However, a massive amount still needs doing in this area and that is why supporter liaison officer (SLO) requirements have been introduced into the UEFA club licensing platform, which covers more than a thousand professional clubs and is the most important platform for club football governance.

The SLO requirement centres on improving communication and providing a focal point



for supporters to organise themselves better and make their voice heard. Better organised supporters can be nothing but positive in terms of projecting the positive side of supporter behaviour as a counterpoint to the widely reported negative elements.

This handbook is one part of the initiative, an introduction. The level of success of the project will eventually depend on the attitude of both supporters and clubs in constructively engaging with the project and each other. There is no question that the role of an SLO is a very challenging one and difficulties can be expected, as you will realise on reading this handbook. UEFA does not expect the introduction of the SLO requirement to be perfect and plain sailing throughout, but most things worth doing are not easy. However, with the commitment of supporters, club management and club owners, with the continued valuable assistance from Supporters Direct and support and training from the national associations and leagues, we are sure that, over time, the SLO requirement will become an important and integral part of the club football landscape.

Michel Platini
UEFA President

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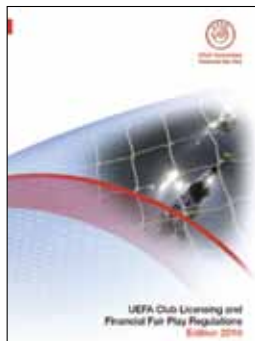
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SLO Basics

1. Introduction

The recommendations in this handbook are based on Article 35 of the 2010 UEFA Club Licensing and Financial Fair Play Regulations. Under Article 35, clubs across Europe will be required before the beginning of the 2012/13 season to appoint a supporter liaison officer (SLO) to ensure proper and constructive discourse between them and their fans. The introduction of this UEFA licensing requirement constitutes a new landmark in club-supporter relations and emphasises the importance UEFA attaches to dialogue and communication between clubs and fans.

Article 35 is the result of detailed talks between European football's governing body and Supporters Direct. During the development phase, the SLO concept was discussed at the 2009 European Football Fans Congress held by Football Supporters Europe (FSE) in Hamburg. The SLO concept gained full approval in 2009/10 from the national associations represented on the UEFA Club Licensing Committee and was drawn up in close cooperation with Supporters Direct.



An expert group comprising FSE and SLOs from governing bodies and clubs was set up to support UEFA and Supporters Direct in the implementation of the project.

Fans and national associations were informed about the project and asked for their feedback, which has been integrated into this handbook.

Article 35 - Supporter Liaison Officer

1. The licence applicant must have appointed a liaison officer to act as a key contact point for supporters.
2. The supporter liaison officer must regularly attend meetings with the club's management and must collaborate with the security officer on safety and security-related matters.

In general, the staffing and administrative criteria in UEFA's Club Licensing and Financial Fair Play Regulations are intended to improve the way football clubs are run (good governance). A key objective of the SLO clause is to achieve transparency and improved communications between the parties involved.

This SLO project acknowledges that supporters are not defined by their role as consumers in the professional football system and that it is in everyone's interests to make ever greater strides to build consensual and harmonious relationships between the clubs and their supporters.

The majority of reasonable, responsible supporters should be taken more seriously because they are the major long-term 'cultural investors'. Involving them and their feedback in decision-making processes will help clubs make better choices.

The evidence shows that if fans have a say in the way they are treated, they will behave better, whereas exclusion and repression demonstrably do not work very well. Rather than being seen as potential troublemakers, fans should be considered as people capable of making an active contribution to the wider agenda of their clubs. Club SLOs can help enable supporters to become more responsible partners and also improve the quality and utility of the dialogue.

Objectives of Article 35

Article 35 pursues the following aims:

- To establish networks of SLOs at a national and European level to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and best practice and to improve the relationships between the various stakeholders, in

particular the relationship between supporters and club directors/owners/ safety and security organisations.

- To provide some guarantee that a minimum level of communication flow occurs between clubs and their supporters and hence reduce the likelihood of supporters becoming disenfranchised.
- To better align the ability of supporters to feed into club decision-making with their massive importance to the club.
- To provide incentives for largely unorganised club supporter bases to come together and voice their beliefs. A better organised fan base will have added power to its voice and the SLO will provide an improved opportunity for this voice to be heard. ▶



SLO Origins

Supported by fans

In recent years fan representatives across Europe have highlighted the need for improved communications between supporters, clubs, governing bodies and the police and they eventually proposed the implementation of SLOs after intensive discussion at national and European levels.

Supported by UEFA and national associations

UEFA believes such dialogue better reflects the nature of football as a game with a

variety of interest groups whose views need to be considered. Football fans were for a long time ignored in this dialogue, but are now considered valued stakeholders/members of the football family.

In a survey conducted by Supporters Direct on behalf of UEFA in 2007, the majority of the member associations consulted expressed the view that the dialogue between supporters and associations and between supporters and clubs is worth improving because it enables supporters to become more serious and responsible partners.



Having acknowledged fans as major stakeholders in the game, and by backing the pan-European fan organisations Supporters Direct (SD) and Football Supporters Europe (FSE) and the work of Football Against Racism in Europe (FARE) and the Centre for Access to Football in Europe (CAFE), UEFA is helping to set standards for fan groups.

The UEFA President, Michel Platini, reiterated UEFA's approach towards the fans when he said: "The supporters are the lifeblood of professional football – they are the identity of the clubs. Owners, coaches and players change but supporters always remain. At UEFA we try to incorporate the views of the fans into what we do."

About this handbook

The handbook should serve newcomers to the job as well as those already experienced in working with fans. It is a baseline document based on feedback from supporter groups, national associations, clubs and other stakeholders that aims to set out best practice minimum standards and recommendations. Together with various online resources that UEFA is developing, this handbook is designed to give context to the SLO project as well as set out minimum requirements and recommendations.

Governing bodies, clubs and fans should continue to develop national guidelines together, taking into consideration the different structures and variances across UEFA member associations and the key concerns that exist in each country.

Following on from meetings with supporters,

SLOs and governing bodies, Supporters Direct and UEFA convened a group of specialists from the field to help develop this handbook and outline the job description, the qualifications required and the minimum requirements for SLOs, clubs and governing bodies.

The handbook will be accompanied by online resources that will be updated on a regular basis, taking on board developments in the professional game in an ongoing attempt to develop and improve the relationship between fans and their clubs. Training workshops will also be organised for national association and club SLOs.



SLO definition

2. SLO standard definition and target audience

2.1. Standard definition of an SLO

To ensure we all mean the same thing when we refer to SLOs, we have come up with the following standard definition of their role:

- Supporter liaison officers (SLOs) are a bridge between the fans and the club and help to improve the dialogue between the two sides.
- Their work is dependent on the information they receive from both sides and the credibility they enjoy with both parties.
- The SLO informs fans about relevant decisions made by the club management and, in the other direction, communicates the points of view of fans to the club management.
- The SLO builds relationships not just with various fan groups and initiatives but also with the police and security officers.
- The SLO engages with SLOs of other clubs before matches to contribute to supporters behaving in accordance with security guidelines.

As the name suggests, a supporter liaison officer is someone who liaises – they are a mediator between the fans and the club, the national association and the league. The SLO also serves as a link between other parties involved in football, such as the police and stewards.

Ideally employed by the club in order to

liaise with the fans, the SLO is an advocate of both sides, representing the interests of the club (or national association/league) AND those of the supporters.

“I’ve been hired by the fans and the club. The club just pays the fans’ contribution to my wages.”

(Patrick Vestphael, SLO Brøndby IF)

To do the job properly, the SLO needs to receive good information from all sides. It is therefore essential that the SLO is credible and has the respect and acceptance of everyone involved, i.e. the club, the fans, the national association, the league, the police, the stewards, etc.

When it comes to decisions made by the club management, it may often be preferable for these decisions to be communicated to the fans by the SLO rather than fans simply reading about them in the newspaper or on the club website. At the same time, the fans can put their suggestions to the club via the SLO. In this process the SLO can help the club make better decisions by communicating the views, needs and concerns of the fans to the club management. SLOs therefore have an active role to play in shaping club policy and processes and are not simply there to provide a service.

Building relationships with the various stakeholders, then, is a key part of the SLO’s job. This involves talking not only to fans but also to the police and the organisations responsible for crowd control. One way of doing this is at a pre-match



security meeting, where potential problems associated with that particular game can be discussed. The SLO can play an important role in this by communicating the mood among supporters to the police and stewards.

It is in everyone's interest for matches to pass off peacefully. Providing fans with reliable information helps to achieve this. SLOs know their own fans, their own cities and their own special fan culture and so can exchange valuable information, such as how to get to the stadium, where fans can park, which pub away supporters can use safely, what fans are allowed to take inside the stadium, whether supporters have been involved in trouble recently, etc. In addition, fans know that in the SLO they have someone who will communicate with

police and stewards on their behalf.

For the home club, this exchange of information between SLOs means they know what to expect from the away fans and can prepare accordingly. They know whether some elements of the visiting supporters have a reputation for trouble, for example, and they know how supporters will be travelling to the ground. This allows clubs to differentiate, rather than treating all away fans in the same way, and thus it means fans are treated better. The establishment of a network of SLOs across Europe will be a key factor in this process and is one aim of the project.

What does this mean in practice?

It is important to understand that we are at the beginning of a process and that ►

SLO in practice



this process can only involve minimum requirements in the beginning. The SLO is not a recognised job as such – everyone knows what a taxi driver is and does, but few understand the role of the SLO. It will therefore require a lot of learning by doing in the initial period in addition to the basic training to be provided by the governing bodies in association with Supporters Direct and UEFA. Networks at national and European level will also help SLOs to exchange experience, learn from each other and further raise standards.

In liaising between the club on the one side and the fans on the other, the role of the SLO has been likened to trying to ride two horses at the same time. The SLO has to make sure they stay close together. If the SLO puts too much weight on only one horse, i.e. representing the interests of one

side more than the other, they are not doing their job properly and will not be effective. The two sides will drift apart.

Another important thing to understand is that the SLO is a communicator, not a ‘firefighter’. One task of the SLO is to try to prevent trouble from happening. The SLO does this by educating, communicating, informing, persuading and engaging with fans. The aim is to encourage supporters to take responsibility for their own actions. Self-regulation by fans will always be the best form of prevention, and modern police strategies as laid down in the EU Handbook for Police Cooperation now recognise the urgent need to develop close links and engage in dialogue with supporter groups and, of course, with SLOs. But if violence does occur, then it is too late – the intervention of the SLO is over and they

have to hand over to the police or stewards. Prevention and self-regulation are the key words here. This involves making violence a taboo and promoting respect and tolerance for other fans and for minorities who attend football matches. Encouraging fans to write and commit to a code of conduct is one way of approaching this task.

The SLO is better placed than the security officer to achieve self-regulation among fans as they are one of them. Supporters are far more likely to trust and listen to the SLO. To maintain this trust, the SLO has to treat sensitive information about fans confidentially, and clubs should understand that the SLO will not be able to tell them everything that comes to their attention. In addition, whereas the security officer may only see the crime, the SLO sees the process that may lead to that crime. This is why we believe the SLO and the security

officer should be two separate roles, as set out in Article 35. This is also why credibility is so important.

These days, however, an SLO is much more than a mediator between club and fans. As part of their role, the SLO sometimes takes on tasks that fit more the profile of a travel agent, a customer relations manager or a counsellor, for example.

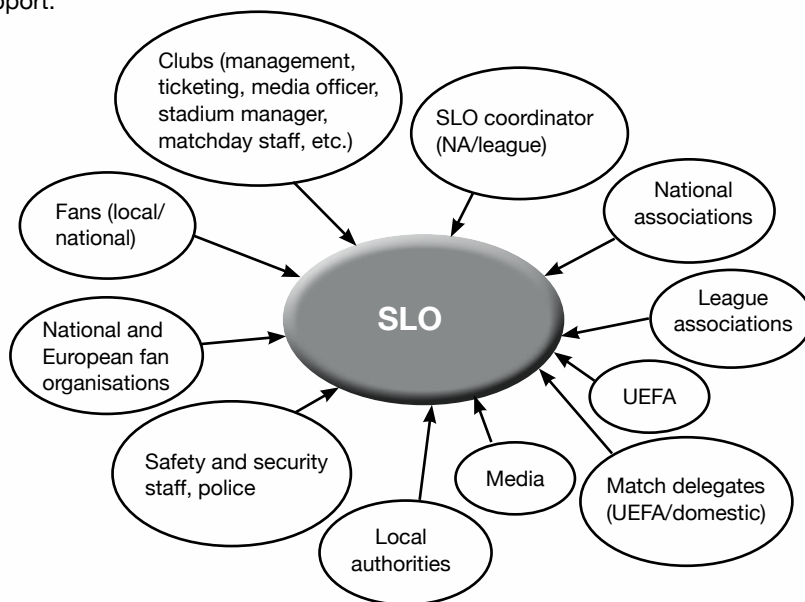
This is precisely why the SLO should be chosen from among the supporters whenever possible. The SLO must be present among the fans. The SLO must know them and be known and accepted by them. Only then can they assess the mood among supporters. Only then can they understand the problems fans may face and their needs and wants. It is a difficult job that demands a lot of resilience and hard work. We therefore recommend the appointment of a genuine supporter.



Target audience

2.2. Target audience

In the performance of their duties SLOs will come into contact with various interest groups with often conflicting needs and expectations, all of whom will demand differing types of support.



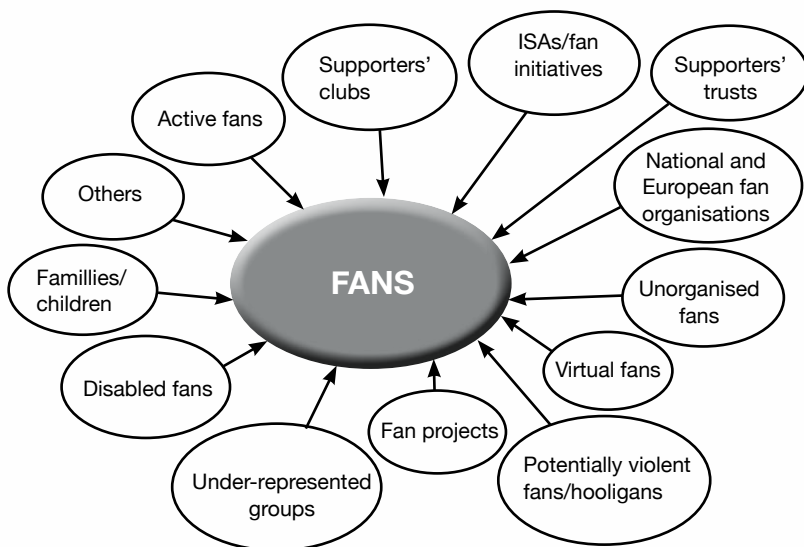
2.2.1. Fans

As the job title suggests, supporters are the main target group of the SLO. Football fans have an emotional and personal commitment to the clubs they support, but they are not a homogenous group and have very differing needs and expectations, which SLOs have to address in their day-to-day work. The SLOs at clubs and national associations aim to build a bridge between themselves and the fans. But who are the fans?

To a certain extent football is a mirror of society and the communities in which the clubs are embedded. There are many reasons why people go to the stadium to

watch a match, and they are influenced by cultural, historical, social and even psychological factors that interact with each other and change constantly. There is no such thing as a typical fan. On the contrary, we encounter a diverse fan culture at each club. It is therefore impossible to place fans in rigid categories. Instead, we can only sketch an outline of whom SLOs should target in their work.

The fan base comprises various groups with whom SLOs need to engage. These groups will vary depending on the local structures and culture and will not all exist in every country.



Active fans (home and away)

By this we mean those supporters who generate the atmosphere in the stadium, visually and acoustically, e.g. ultras. Although there are various groups with different philosophies, they all have in common a hugely emotional relationship with the club. Their creativity and passion sometimes collide with safety and security requirements inside the stadium and can lead to misunderstandings with the police. The SLO should strive to reduce the negative perceptions of each other held by the various parties by establishing dialogue between the active fans, safety and security officers, stewards and the police.

Supporters' clubs

The SLO has to communicate with the organised fan groups (e.g. supporters' clubs) to be able to represent supporters' interests at the club. An established and respected dialogue is indispensable and can be developed with representatives or spokespersons of these groups, for example.

Independent supporter associations (ISAs)/fan initiatives

Arise when supporters organise themselves to campaign for a particular cause, such as kick-off times, ticket prices, anti-discrimination, for example, and are another form of fan representation. ▶

Target audience

Supporters' trusts

Supporters' trusts represent fans through not-for-profit, democratic cooperatives known as supporters' trusts that attempt to acquire a shareholding and representation on the governing boards of their clubs. They promote democracy and transparency in the way clubs are run and stronger ties to the communities they serve.

National and European fan organisations

The SLO should also liaise with national and European fan organisations such as Football Supporters Europe (FSE) and Supporters Direct (SD) as well as NGOs such as Football Against Racism in Europe (FARE), the European Gay & Lesbian Sports Federation (EGLSF) and the Centre for Access to Football in Europe (CAFE). Further information on these organisations can be found in section 9.

Unorganised fans

While SLOs will spend most of their time working with organised groups of supporters, it is important not to neglect the majority of match-going fans of all ages who are not represented by any particular group.

Virtual fans

Monitoring the mood of fans on internet message boards and engaging in dialogue with them where appropriate is another important aspect of the SLO's job. Increasingly, SLOs are also making use of social media tools such as Facebook and Twitter as part of their communications work.

Potentially violent fans/hooligans

Groups of football fans often include a small minority intent on seeking violent conflict with opposing supporters, often at pre-arranged locations. Other fans who are not normally considered hooligans may resort to violence if they feel they are being unfairly or disproportionately treated by police or stewards, for example.

While SLOs will not be able to eliminate violence from football for good, it is essential for them to have access to these groups if they are to contribute to a reduction in violence using approaches based on prevention and de-escalation.

Fan projects

Fan projects have been set up in various countries and concentrate primarily on social work involving cultural and education projects designed to prevent violence among young supporters. One of their major tasks is to provide a permanent line of communication between supporters (hooligans, ultras, etc.) and the club, to improve mutual understanding and thus to initiate sustainable and positive structural and ideological changes on both sides.

Disabled supporters

Disabled supporters may have various additional access needs to enable them to enjoy the game and support their team. The SLO should help to improve access to stadiums and to set, maintain and improve standards in cooperation with the club's access (disability) officer. It is anticipated that the SLO will work closely with the



access officer and it might be that one person fulfils both roles at some clubs. Where this is the case, the SLO should be familiar with disability and access legislation and building regulations, and have a good understanding of inclusive design with respect to facilities and services.

Under-represented groups

Ethnic minorities, women, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) supporters, for example, are traditionally under-represented and/or discriminated against at football grounds across Europe, and the SLO should seek to encourage greater participation of these groups by integrating them at all levels and ensuring the stadium is open and welcoming to all members of the community. The SLO should be aware of the different forms of discrimination in the stadium and have available practices to respond to them, as well as working closely with and seeking guidance from supporter associations who represent these minorities.

Families and children

Adequate provision must be made for families in modern-day stadiums. Junior supporters' or kids clubs should not merely be seen as recruiting grounds for future fans, however. Educational measures aimed at fostering respect and tolerance can also form part of the SLO's work here.

Others

SLOs should seek to provide a service for all fans in the stadium. To do so, they need to understand the various groups and



the developments within them. SLOs can use specific approaches to support target groups such as pensioners, for example. ▶

Target audience

2.2.2. Club management and departments

As the SLO is employed or appointed by the club, they are subject to the directives of the club management. A close relationship with the fans is important to every club. Increasing the fan base serves both the financial objectives and the social responsibilities of the club. A safe matchday environment is also a priority, and the SLO can help to achieve these goals by liaising closely with the various club departments during the week and on matchdays.

2.2.3. Safety and security staff, police

Safety and security in and around football grounds on matchdays are issues of prime importance. The SLOs should therefore be in constant communication with the safety and security officer at the club, the police and stewards, and transport companies,

etc. They should also debrief with safety and security staff after matchdays to identify problems/trends and collect feedback on positive/negative incidents. For the avoidance of doubt, SLOs will take on no responsibility for safety and security but can play a support role (if requested and appropriate).

2.2.4. SLOs of other clubs

A good relationship with the SLOs at other clubs is crucial to understanding and communicating the needs and wants of the respective sets of fans. The SLOs of all clubs should exchange information on travel arrangements, stadium regulations and local dos and don'ts, for example, and develop plans to help ensure a great matchday experience for all.

“Good governance is about protecting the fans.” (Steve Coppell, former Manchester United and England winger and coach of several English clubs)



2.2.5. National associations and leagues

Governing bodies strive to run the game professionally with the involvement of all the various stakeholders. The relationship between fans and their clubs plays an important role in this environment. The national association or the league – whichever is the licensor for the UEFA club licensing system – must appoint someone responsible for the SLO project, a project manager with the job of communicating the project and the project requirements during the implementation phase and managing

the project once it is up and running. They should aim to increase the qualifications and expertise of club SLOs by organising regular training workshops and providing additional support. In addition, national associations may find it very useful to introduce the concept of an active SLO to play the key role of developing relationships with national fan organisations and supporters of the national team. Given the similar environment and motivations required to be the project manager and the national association SLO, this may well be the same person.

2.2.6. UEFA

UEFA believes supporters form the essential core of the football community they represent.

Furthermore, one of the objectives of UEFA, as set out in Article 2(j) of the UEFA Statutes, is to “ensure that the needs of different stakeholders in European football (leagues, clubs, players, supporters) are properly taken into account.” By improving dialogue between all stakeholders, UEFA aims to improve governance in football while seeking to ensure safe environments for its competitions. UEFA will establish and support a European network of SLOs to help ensure both better governance and increased matchday safety. Working in close consultation with UEFA, Supporters Direct will also provide training and general support for the SLOs of governing bodies and clubs.



Benefits

3. Benefits

It is important for clubs and fans to work together on the introduction of SLOs to ensure all sides enjoy maximum benefit. Based on the experience in countries that already have SLOs in place, we have identified the following potential benefits for clubs, national associations, leagues and supporters:

- direct line of communication between clubs, national associations/leagues and supporters;
 - improved relationship with fans (national team supporters' club, national fan organisations, relevant fan groups at club level);
 - greater insight into supporter viewpoints
- and structures, providing further scope for problem-solving;
- better organised supporters;
 - greater transparency on both sides, leading to better feedback, improved decision-making and fewer misunderstandings;
 - improved dialogue between fans of different clubs;
 - less violence/better conflict management;
 - better atmosphere;
 - financial benefits through bigger crowds, higher merchandise sales and sponsorship revenue, closer identification of fans with the club/national team.





UEFA believe that clubs should get out far more than they put in, which means the SLO is a very cost-effective tool. SLOs possess invaluable expertise that cannot otherwise be bought on the marketplace. While SLOs principally act as a conduit between supporters and club management, improving the information flow, they can also serve as a buffer between club officials and supporters, offering a fixed point of contact at the club for fans who may otherwise bombard the director of sport, press officer or security officer with requests for information. For fans they offer an opportunity to ensure their views are heard and not simply ignored. Supporters feel their needs and wants are being taken seriously, and the standing of the club among fans is enhanced. The rapport between clubs and fans thus enjoys substantial improvement.

Clubs and national associations should also

benefit from better organised supporter groups and, as a result, better lines of communication with fixed contact partners. Dealing with a few established supporter organisations rather than many unorganised groups of fans means that clubs have more reliable partners, improved procedures and a greater influence on the dialogue. The role of the SLO at English Premier League club Arsenal, for example, is to pull the supporters' clubs together (approximately 120 branches). In this process it is important to let supporters' clubs retain their independence. Clubs should recognise them, while asking them to follow certain guidelines, but otherwise give them a free rein. Improved transparency should also result, as the SLO is better able to communicate decisions by the club management, for example, on ticket pricing. Consulting fans in this process can also improve the ►

Benefits



quality of the decisions made and help to avoid costly mistakes. It is always advisable for fans to have the reasons for decisions explained to them rather than decisions simply being imposed from above.

The SLO system should also lead to improved dialogue and cooperation between fans of different clubs. Discussions between SLOs before a game are an example of this, where the home SLO provides the away SLO with information on a wide variety of subjects. UEFA Champions League information sheets as sent to fans with their tickets are another example. Fans may also take responsibility for reducing antagonism by meeting before games to discuss any potential problems and passing on relevant information to police and security officers.

Another side effect should be a reduction in violence, as has been demonstrated in Germany over the last 18 years despite a threefold increase in attendances. All the measures described in this handbook ultimately serve to isolate the small minority of troublemakers from the genuine fans, i.e. the vast majority of supporters. This is the main reason why the Portuguese professional football league, for example, decided to appoint a supporter ombudsman. It did so because it believes that reducing violence through improved relationships with reasonable and responsible supporters is an effective way of attracting more families and ordinary fans back to the stadiums.

Clubs should also see an improvement in the atmosphere, as the SLO can be used

to communicate with supporters in all areas. The SLO can work with ultra groups to arrange choreographies, for example, or organise singing areas and ticket sales for the most loyal sections of the club's support, etc.

We also take the view that improved relationships with fans will lead to financial benefits such as higher ticket, catering, merchandise and sponsorship revenues as attendances increase. The club's marketing department can consult the SLO to find out what kind of products supporters would be likely to buy. Fans who feel their needs and wants are being taken seriously will identify more closely with their team and are thus more likely to spend money at the stadium.

Finally, the key pillar on which Article 35 is based, namely the importance of consultation and communication in improving organisation, is nothing new – they are proven concepts within football. Who can forget the scenes at the 2006 FIFA World Cup in Germany or UEFA EURO 2008 in Austria and Switzerland, where fans mingled and celebrated together in the fan zones and fan parks, watching games together on the big screens? All this was possible because the safety and security concepts introduced in Germany in 1992 with regard to fan liaison and support were integrated in the fan hosting and security concept for these major international competitions. This is the best endorsement for the fan liaison concept described in this handbook.



Selecting the SLO

4. Selecting the SLO

Responsibility for selecting an SLO lies with the club management. Selecting the right person for the job is no easy task, but candidates will often suggest themselves through previous work in supporter organisations at their club. Owing to the many different tasks involved, not every fan can become an SLO. The main overarching prerequisites are for the SLO to be well known among the fans of the club, to enjoy widespread acceptance and to understand the target groups very well.

Preferably, the SLO should be employed by the club on a full-time basis. In some of the larger leagues, clubs may find it necessary to appoint more than one SLO in view of the heavy workload involved. Elsewhere, clubs may not have the financial resources

to employ a full-time SLO. In these cases, consideration should be given to employing an SLO on a part-time basis or combining the SLO function with another role inside the club. At smaller clubs, the SLO can operate on a voluntary basis, with only expenses such as telephone costs being reimbursed, either directly by the club or collectively through the governing body, as in Austria.

If it is not possible to take on a supporter in the role, then an internal appointment can be made. In this case, though, it is important, to achieve the maximum benefit, that the person chosen should have a thorough understanding of supporters and also travel and stand/sit with them at matches. Some clubs may be tempted to nominate an SLO who is not a supporter (a former player, for example), but they should be aware



that where this has been done in the past, the person concerned often resigns quite quickly in view of the demanding nature of the job and the expertise required. Below we list a set of desirable attributes to help clubs select an appropriate SLO.

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

- Experience of positive people management
- Experience and contact with key supporter networks (for example supporters' clubs, ultras and hooligans) at local and national levels
- Vocational or technical qualification or academic degree
- Basic educational, psychological and sociological skills in dealing with people, especially with regard to group dynamics
- Basic knowledge of English (for European matches)
- Sound understanding of new media/ technologies (desktop business applications, internet, etc.)
- Political neutrality
- Commitment to key values such as anti-discrimination and the rejection of violence

PERSONAL SKILLS

- Good communication and conflict-resolution skills
- Ability to work in a team
- Willingness to learn
- High degree of commitment, motivation, reliability and flexibility
- Ability to communicate, in particular in groups and in public
- Service-oriented thinking and behaviour
- Assured negotiating skills and assertiveness
- Appropriate life experience and experience of dealing with fans; knowledge of and contacts within the club's fan base
- Flexibility (time-wise), especially at weekends, and personal resilience
- Professional manner according to the situation
- Calming, de-escalating, de-emotionalising professional conduct in stress and conflict situations

Requirements for SLOs

5. Fan liaison and support

To facilitate the implementation of Article 35 in the initial phase, UEFA in cooperation with Supporters Direct has set down a number of minimum requirements to be met by SLOs, clubs and governing bodies, and also outlined various recommendations designed to take the work forward in the next few years. A more detailed breakdown of the day-to-day tasks involved is provided in section 6.

5.1 Organisational matters

The SLO should be employed by the club, where possible, and thus included in the club's organisation chart. If this is not possible, the following conditions should apply accordingly:

- The SLO answers to the club management and is subject to their instructions.
- Their duties and powers are to be specified in a work plan. The SLO should have a large degree of freedom and discretion in the organisation of their work.
- The SLO should report to the club management on a regular basis.
- The club management should hear the SLO on all matters specifically relating to fans and grant him or her a right of address on request.
- The club should provide an email address for the SLO and identify this on the club website, together with a link to this handbook and a brief description of the project.
- National employment law should be observed, in particular with regard to working hours.

5.2 Minimum requirements for SLOs

SLOs should meet the following minimum requirements:

- The SLO must be available as the main point of contact at the club for supporters.
- The SLO manages the information flow/communications/dialogue between the fans and the club.
- The SLO liaises and builds relationships with the various supporter groups, other liaison officers, the football association, league, police, etc.
- The SLO must be credible with fans and therefore should have experience and contact with the networks in the club's fan base.
- The SLO gathers feedback, and monitors and evaluates the project.

Recommendations for SLOs

With the interests of the club at heart, SLOs should strive to maintain and increase core support in everything they do, promoting attendance (diversity and volume), at both home

and away matches. They should actively encourage supporter involvement at the club in all areas.

In particular, the SLO should attempt to ensure good dialogue between fans, police and stewards from an early stage, appropriately representing the interests of fans in their interaction with the police and the interests of the police and stewards in their interaction with fans.

On non-matchdays the SLO should attempt to:

- organise/attend meetings to inform fans about the latest developments at the club/deal with fan-related requests and concerns;
- initiate meetings between supporters and club representatives (players, coaches, board members, officials, stadium manager, etc.) and institutional representatives (police, stewards, public transport companies, the local authorities, etc.), for example, with the aim of improving dialogue between the various parties and their understanding of each other's roles and points of view;
- organise events aimed at fans (football tournaments, parties, etc.);
- attend supporter club meetings;
- participate in discussions on supporter websites (message boards, etc.) and make use of social media offerings to promote a positive supporter culture;
- work with media representatives, paying special attention to ensuring that supporter liaison work and fans in general are accurately portrayed in the media;
- contact the SLO of the other club before a game to:
 - exchange information of relevance to fans,
 - counteract negative attitudes and prejudices and prevent conflict (the organisation of joint events such as fan football matches, fan zones, etc. may help in this respect).

On matchdays (before, during and after matches) the SLO should:

- be present among the fans;
- encourage support for the team by positively influencing fans and seeking to defuse recognisable tendencies towards violence;
- after the match, summarise any complaints from fans who attended the match and try to establish the circumstances and underlying reasons for these complaints and any other issues that arose on matchday.

Requirements for Clubs

5.3 Minimum requirements for clubs

Clubs should meet the following minimum requirements:

- appoint an SLO and ensure they attend SLO courses organised by the licensor;
- provide adequate resources (office, equipment, accreditation, etc.);
- stage regular meetings between the club management and the SLO;
- make provision for regular meetings between the SLO and the various fan groups;
- consult the SLO on matters of relevance to fans.

Recommendations for clubs

Over and above these minimum requirements, clubs should try to support the SLO to the best of their ability, bearing in mind that the SLO has a difficult mediatory role to play as an advocate of the fans, on the one hand, and the representative of the club, on the other.

There are several things a club can do to help the SLO perform their duties as effectively as possible, such as:

- provide a dedicated office with the relevant equipment (landline and mobile phone, fax, computer, internet, printer, etc.) in the club's administrative building and access to relevant club networks (media and agency contacts, etc.);
- make the club infrastructure available for use (meeting rooms, technical equipment, etc.);
- provide access to a vehicle to allow the SLO to visit the relevant target groups;
- provide an annual budget for supporter liaison work;
- provide merchandise (autograph cards, posters, badges, T-shirts, etc.) for distribution to fans and a contingent of free tickets, where possible;
- provide assistance in writing and producing supporter-related publications;
- organise internal training sessions to ensure club staff know who the SLO is and understand the role;
- help to establish contact between supporters' clubs and players, coaches and officials of the club;
- assist in the organisation and staging of events by and for fans (e.g. football tournaments, travel to away matches);
- provide training and instruction;
- ensure information on the club is widely and quickly available;

- ensure transparency by explaining the rationale behind decisions;
- establish a formal procedure for administering stadium bans, communicating decisions to supporters and considering subsequent appeals, ensuring the SLO is heard at all stages of the process;
- provide club stewards to accompany fans on away trips;
- share information with other clubs;
- provide pitchside accreditation for the away team SLO.



Support from NAs/Leagues

5.4. Support from the national association/league

Governing bodies should strive to meet the following minimum requirements:

- develop, coordinate and promote the supporter liaison work undertaken by clubs;
- stage SLO training events in order to:
 - set out best practice with regard to supporter-related issues and the supporter liaison work conducted by clubs,
 - formulate standard procedures and ensure common objectives,
 - facilitate an exchange of information and experience;
- maintain a database containing the contact details of SLOs as submitted by the clubs as part of the licensing process;
- assess whether clubs are meeting the SLO requirements under Article 35 of the UEFA Club Licensing and Financial Fair Play Regulations and penalise clubs accordingly if the criteria are not being met;
- provide SLOs with reporting and feedback tools.

It is therefore recommended that governing bodies set up their own supporter contact point, overseen by the project manager, and employ an SLO to run it and thus meet the minimum requirements outlined above.

To assist SLOs in their dealings with the various parties involved in football, governing bodies may wish to consider issuing SLOs with accreditation granting them general access to all stadiums in the country.



5.5 Communication tools

A range of options are open to clubs for communicating and improving their relationship with their fans, and the SLO can play a useful role in bringing them all together. They include:

- supporter charters, i.e. agreements setting out common objectives and the club's obligations towards its supporters and vice-versa and clearly defining each party's rights and obligations;
- fan forums (regular [two-monthly or quarterly] meetings attended by club and supporter representatives, with minutes posted on the club website, for example);
- supporter panels or consultation groups for gathering feedback from fans;
- fan satisfaction surveys/fan feedback forms;
- fan clinics or surgeries (informal meetings where fans have a chance to air views to club personnel);
- complaints procedures;
- section dedicated to supporters on the club website, including a 'have your say' section and a message board;
- newsletters and similar publications;
- social media offerings (Facebook, Twitter, etc.);
- junior supporters' clubs/kids' clubs;
- matchday volunteers who assist supporters with a wide range of issues;
- fan zones;
- fans embassies (e.g. at European matches);
- open training days
- supporter events (e.g. at Christmas or pre-season) with autograph signing sessions.

SLO tasks

6. What kind of tasks does an SLO perform?

6.1. Club SLO

Below we list some of the tasks an SLO can perform in the area of fan liaison. These tasks are broken down into day-to-day work on non-matchdays and liaison work at home and away matches, both before, during and after the game. In view of the amount of work involved, it may be expedient for the club to appoint a team of SLOs, to cover for the head SLO when they are absent, for example. The work of the SLO will, of course, vary from country to country, depending on the local culture and the structures in place. There is no “one size fits all”. This list therefore serves as a guide only.

a) Day-to-day work

Routine tasks

Correspondence with fans (making club policy transparent)

Answering, forwarding or writing emails/ letters

- direct or personal enquiries
- general enquiries

Telephone calls/internet

- answering and forwarding incoming enquiries
- communicating with fans
- visiting internet message boards and, where applicable, joining in the discussion

Data management

- supporter club database administration
- updating the supporters’ website

Information gathering (on the club, supporters’ clubs, supporter issues, etc.)

Potential sources:

- media
- internet
- media conferences
- training sessions
- personal contacts
- existing club CRM (customer relationship management) systems

Potential recipients:

- supporters
- club officials
- internal departments
- media (independent media work on supporter issues only)

Participating in working groups/ attending of meetings on supporter-related issues

Issues of interest to fans (general updates from the club management, catering, meetings with sponsors, events for members, ticketing and anti-discrimination campaigns, etc.).

Attending of security and/or pre-match planning meetings

- pre-season
- before and, where applicable, after home matches
- as necessary

Input during imposition of stadium bans

- dialogue with club management and fans concerned
- contact with the away club

Ticketing (especially for away matches)

- allocating the ticket contingent, where applicable

- checking the ticket contingent
- keeping back a supply of tickets for 'emergency cases'

b) Medium and long term tasks

Organising communications between players and supporters

- player evenings
- Q&A sessions for members/supporters' clubs
- regional supporters' club meetings with players
- visiting supporters' club parties with players
- autograph signings
- visiting football tournaments

Organising supporter travel (where not done independently by supporters)

Liaising with club travel agency or appointed representatives for:

- away travel (domestic and European)
- friendly matches
- training camps
- national team matches

Communications work/networking

- SLOs of other clubs
- local and national supporter organisations

Training and exchange of information/expertise

- mandatory attendance of SLO meetings organised by the national association/league and meetings organised by the SLOs themselves (several times a year as applicable)
- attendance of supporter-related events and conferences

- organisation of meetings with other SLOs
- attendance at security meetings
- maintenance of contact with the national association
- national association/league training courses and seminars
- completing matchday reports on behalf of the licensor

c) Matchday-related activities

Away matches

Information gathering (situation at the home club)

- travel information, arrangements, routes
- dos and don'ts in the city/town/country being visited and at the club
- meeting places for away fans
- contact with the home team's SLO
- contact with the security officer
- contact with police and stewards and, if appropriate, exchange of information
- ahead of European away matches, contact with home club to identify contact points and people who speak the language of the visiting team, or at least English

Communication

- information on club website
- newsletters, emails to supporters' clubs or individual fans
- if applicable, directly by email or telephone

Travel to the game

- on organised supporter train or coach
- independently by car/train/plane

Before the game

- presence and communication with fans ▶

SLO tasks

outside the visitors' section (possibly using a club vehicle as a contact point for supporters)

- presence and communication with fans in pubs and supporter meeting places
- brief meetings with colleagues (home team SLO, security officer, police, stewards), e.g. 45 minutes before kick-off

During the game

- presence in own supporters' section (away standing or seating areas)
- if necessary, temporary presence pitchside in order to exert a calming, de-escalating influence on fans (the SLO should not assume crowd control duties, however)
- mediation between stewards and fans in the event of problems
- communication with fans at half-time
- communication with crowd control managers, police, stewards and colleagues

After the game

- presence near the visitors' section exit
- communication with fans after the game
- monitoring of fan departures
- presence in the town or local area (depending on the venue and as necessary according to the situation)
- attendance of fan meetings in pubs in the town and, if applicable, parties and events organised by the fan liaison team and supporters' clubs

Return journey

- independent return journey

Home matches

Supporter activities/choreographies

- consultation with the supporter organisations concerned
- coordination of procedures with the marketing/stadium organisation team
- notification of security managers and liaison



Forwarding of information

- dos and don'ts
- contact with the SLO
- contact with the security officer
- supporter meeting point/drop-in centre
- contact with police and stewards and, if applicable, exchange of information

Communication

- information on club website
- newsletters, emails to supporters' clubs
- if applicable, directly by email or telephone

Preparing presentation ceremonies and on-pitch activities

- on-pitch supporters' club presentations
- appearances by supporters' clubs or young fans
- organising player escorts /ball boys/girls
- birthday announcements, etc.

Before the game

- presence and, if applicable, communication with away fans and representatives outside the visitors' section
- presence and communication with home fans inside the stadium and at supporter meeting places
- brief meetings with colleagues (away team SLO, security officer, police, stewards), e.g. 45 minutes before kick-off

During the game

- presence in own supporters' section (standing or seating areas)
- if necessary, temporary presence pitchside in order to exert a calming,

de-escalating influence on fans (the SLO should not assume crowd control duties, however)

- mediation between stewards and fans in the event of problems
- communication with fans at half-time
- communication with crowd control managers, police, stewards and colleagues

After the game

- presence in the vicinity of the information point (or similar contact place) and communication with fans there
- attendance of fan meetings in pubs in the town and, if applicable, at parties and events organised by the fan liaison team or supporters' clubs



NA/league tasks

6.2. National association/league

SLO coordinator

- SLO coordinators will be responsible for overseeing the SLO project during the implementation phase, organising training and developing standard procedures, and monitoring the fan liaison work done by clubs. Developing positive relationships with individual fans and nationwide supporter organisations is another key task. Some associations may also have a national team supporters' club, with all the organisational responsibility this involves. The role will vary according to the domestic situation. Here are some suggestions for activities that can be performed at national level:

Project management

Development and training

- formulation and establishment of uniform standards and procedures
- organisation of SLO training courses and meetings (including joint sessions with club security officers, where appropriate)
- work on relevant national association committees

Monitoring of the fan liaison work done at clubs

- matchday reporting and evaluation to identify weaknesses and ensure the system is working
- assessment of the SLO situation at clubs (e.g. with checklist on matchday visits) and regular monitoring

- suggestions for improvements
- monitoring of SLO appointments for suitability

Communication

- gathering of information from clubs, SLOs, supporter organisations, specialist magazines, internet, etc.
- processing and passing of information to relevant people/bodies
- cooperation with police, academics and other relevant organisations
- contact with corresponding foreign institutions

Fan liaison at league level

Point of contact for clubs

- provision of information on all supporter-related issues
- assistance with SLO selection criteria and introductory training
- general help with problems

Point of contact for club SLOs, nationwide supporter organisations (where these exist), and supporters in general

- information and service point
- regular communications
- help with problems
- organisation of meetings with supporter representatives (meetings with the national association, fan forum, fan congress, etc., where applicable)
- attendance of workshops, round-table discussions, SLO and other supporter-organised meetings as the official national association/league representative
- preparation of a supporter liaison



handbook with fans

- preparation of fan guides (e.g. for major tournaments) with fans
- involvement in campaign work (anti-discrimination, violence prevention, etc.)
- organisation of supporter-relevant projects, as appropriate

National team activities

Some national associations may also find it useful to have their SLO coordinator oversee the activities of the national team supporters' club (where this exists). This could involve the following tasks:

Fan liaison (home matches)

- coordination of the deployment of local SLOs
- coordination of liaison and support services for disabled fans in cooperation with the club's access (disability) officer
- general interface role (fans, national team supporter club, SLOs, national football association, stewards, stadium

management, police, etc.)

- maintenance of contact with supporters' club staff, SLOs, regular match-going fans, volunteers
- presence in the supporters' section/singing area: mediation, answering questions, exchanging information, noting suggestions, helping with problems, etc.

Fan liaison (away matches)

- coordination of fan liaison and support services (as appropriate)
 - SLO team
 - supporter club staff
 - fan embassy
- general interface role (national association security and ticketing departments, safety and security organisations, home national association, police, SLOs, supporters' club, fan embassy, other supporters, etc.)
- general presence in the away supporters' section (see home matches)

Outlook and implementation

7. Outlook and implementation

A general consensus seems to have been reached on the importance of involving supporters in the European football dialogue, not only between fans and clubs and/or associations but also among the fans themselves. Modern policing strategies also focus on the need to engage with supporters in order to create a safe environment in which to watch football. The SLO project is another step to ensuring supporters are recognised as serious and responsible partners in this interaction, while improving the quality and utility of the dialogue.

One overall aim of the project is to establish networks of SLOs at both national and European level. Recent incidents at UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League matches have highlighted problems that might possibly have been avoided had a dialogue involving SLOs taken place in the run-up to these games.

Regular surveys of SLOs at club and national level and of supporter groups will offer a means of identifying areas in need of improvement in the work done by SLOs and allow this handbook to be updated in accordance with the latest findings.

What next?

To implement the new requirements, a network of SLO project contacts from each national governing body across Europe has been created to help explain the project to clubs and supporter groups. Once implemented, UEFA and the national associations will remain the point of contact

for SLO enquiries from clubs and club SLOs, while Supporters Direct will be the main point of contact for general enquiries from supporter groups or supporters looking to get actively involved in the project at their club.

For the 2011/12 season, 591 clubs applied for a UEFA licence, with more than 700 others applying for domestic licences based on the same or similar principles. This explains the broad scope and significance of the SLO project. Like the licensing system itself, the implementation and development of SLOs will be a tool to raise minimum standards – a dynamic system changing over time, and focusing on developing and improving the dialogue between fans and clubs.

Each club will be expected to have appointed an SLO by the time they are assessed in the spring of 2012 for a club licence for the UEFA 2012/13 competition season.

Training for national associations and clubs

Training is crucial. National associations should organise annual workshops to allow SLOs to evaluate the work being done in their country, exchange information and agree on national standards and procedures. Where possible, fan representatives should be involved in some parts of the training to ensure their needs and requests are heard and taken into consideration.

In the initial implementation phase, UEFA drawing on the knowledge of people already experienced in SLO work and in cooperation



with Supporters Direct, will help governing bodies to develop training workshops for their clubs and the SLOs at these clubs. To assist with the implementation of the SLO project and realising that the concept is new in some countries, various videos have been prepared for training purposes and will be made available first to national associations and then to clubs on the UEFA website and other internal communication platforms (e.g. KISS platform). These video training tools provide instruction and examples from club SLOs and governing bodies that have already introduced SLOs. As the project develops additional best practice examples and case studies will be continually added.

The development of software to enable national associations to evaluate the supporter liaison work being done at club level is also being considered.

At national level, we recommend that the licensor take responsibility for translating this handbook or key extracts into their national language for distribution to each club. Licensors may also want to add to or adapt the handbook to reflect any national specificities and objectives.

UEFA will continue to highlight the importance of the new SLO requirement and bring this to the attention of the national top executives as well as other key football stakeholders (clubs through European Club Association, the Association of European Professional Football Leagues, FIFPro, the EU etc.).

Collecting feedback

It is vital to continue collecting feedback from fans, clubs and governing bodies to identify not only best practice examples but also challenges and requirements, in an attempt to improve the services offered and make improvements to the handbook. Supporters Direct and the network of national governing bodies will ensure UEFA is able to do this.



8. Case studies

8.1 Brøndby IF, Denmark

8.1.1 Introduction to the situation at Brøndby

Brøndby are one of Denmark's most successful clubs, having won ten national championships and six domestic cups since their formation in 1964. Former players include Michael Laudrup, Kim Vilfort, John Jensen and Peter Schmeichel. Brøndby fans are known for their creative and passionate support, both visual and vocal, though they also have a reputation for violence. In an attempt to cultivate a better relationship with the club's fans, and having consulted a number of experts in the field, the Brøndby board decided to become proactive and appoint a full-time SLO, Patrick Vestphael, in November 2010. Supporters Direct spoke to the then chief executive officer of Brøndby IF, Ole Palmå, on 18 January 2011, to find out why the club had taken this step well in advance of the introduction of Article 35 of the UEFA Club Licensing and Financial Fair Play Regulations for the 2012/13 season.

8.1.2. Interview with Ole Palmå, CEO of Brøndby IF

Ole, why did you decide to appoint an SLO early, some 18 months before being required to do so by Article 35?

We were under a lot of pressure because our results were bad and the team wasn't performing and there was disquiet among the management due to the negative focus on the club. The fans were disappointed

and seeking answers as to why the club they love was losing its attraction. Fans have a feeling of ownership and of love and passion for the club. But there was a lot of frustration and the reaction from the fans was mixed. On the positive side was the tifo support for the club. On the negative side there was vandalism, hooliganism and rioting (against the club).

But we were under pressure not only from people associated with the club, but also from the FA and our sponsors. On the one hand there was an old school of thought demanding action in the form of fines and stadium bans, etc. On the other there was the media, who have such an important effect on things. They sometimes exaggerate, of course, and often focus on the negative aspects and on trouble.

The [management of the] club was frustrated for the above reasons. We had to do something now and appointing an SLO was the right thing to do. We wanted to build a bridge between the fans and the club. We wanted to confront the problems. We wanted to change the focus from the negative to the positive and we wanted to change the agenda.

Who are your fans?

We have had a dialogue with the fans for years. The whole concept of football support in Denmark started at Brøndby after its origins in the national team in the 1980s. Brøndby supporters are creative and pro-active; they set standards. They also have a strong feeling of independence. They



don't want to be controlled by the club and it's important to recognise that.

The beauty of football is that normally in business you have a product and you try to sell it. You listen to the customers. But football is different. The fans, who are also the consumers, are a part of the product. When we sell sponsorship the most important aspect is the atmosphere. This has been demonstrated by two studies we have conducted. Fans are part of the product, they don't just buy it. So fans have to be involved when you're making decisions. They have to be listened to and understood. In both the good and the bad!

Apart from promoting a positive fan culture, why else is it important for you to have an SLO?

People have to be able to come to a game and feel safe. We want fans to go to the limit – but not beyond it. We don't mind if they push boundaries, but we say no to violence. There have to be certain rules and regulations. We had tried to have a dialogue

in the past, we held meetings, but it was sometimes difficult to understand each other. Were the fans listening to us? Did they understand us?

Ultimately we all have the same objectives. We want to come to the stadium and live out our feelings. We want to scream and shout. We love our club. But communication is sometimes difficult. Do we speak the same language? Do we want the same thing? That's why we feel a supporter liaison officer is important.

Patrick can't stop people lighting flares but maybe he can help us improve our understanding and change things. We might not always be able to explain things to the fans, but Patrick is close to the club, he knows what's happening, and so it's easier for him to communicate. The number one thing for us is that this is a signal from the club. It's the recognition that dialogue is the only way to solve negative issues and to improve the situation for fans and the club. There are two ways of doing things – either we talk more or we impose more punishment. ▶

Case studies

We come under a lot of pressure from politicians and the police. There's competition for budgets and many other things going on. It's easy for people to say "fix the problem". But do they genuinely want to help?

So appointing an SLO represents a big change for the club. We understand the fans' frustration. There had been an "if you don't like it, leave" attitude. It's a symbol of change and it's really important for us but it's going to take time.

What do you do to improve relations between supporters and Brøndby IF?

We staged a fans conference in late November [2010]. We wanted as many different groups there as possible, including the police, the Danish Football Association (DBU), the club association, fans of other clubs, university academics and the safety officer of Cardiff City. The DBU and the club association began by saying: "It's your problem, you have to fix it. If you don't, we will." We told them we wanted to fix it, but that we didn't agree with them on how to fix it. We had examined case studies from the UK and saw that the police took a very different approach. So now we have what we call event police. We spoke to fans to find out what they wanted and they said they wanted a fan march starting from a bar, for example. Together with the police we said we would help them. This ranged from blocking the traffic for the march to letting them pee discreetly on the street along the way. It worked! It was about bending the rules a little.

Away travel was another issue. The Danish train company used to have problems with vandalism when taking fans to away matches. It was costing them eight million crowns a year, and there were demands for the club to pay. So now we organise fan trains. There are three rules: no use of drugs, no sale of drugs and no vandalism. The trips are based on trust, not every ticket is checked. They are now so popular that railway staff actually ask if they can work on these fan trains! The cost of damage has fallen to 200-300,000 crowns, which is about what you would expect normally. It's all about communication, understanding, and give and take. The fans conference showed that there were different ways to solve problems. At Brøndby we believe in dialogue in conjunction with a supporter liaison officer.

Do you stage pre-match security meetings?

We don't have security meetings before every game at the moment. We have a maximum of five "high-risk" matches. Our intention is to hold such meetings in the future, however. We will speak to the police and decide how to go about it and Patrick will be there.

What were your selection criteria when appointing the SLO?

First of all, we agreed that the SLO had to be a person who was backed and respected by all the fans. That was the main criterion. An internal appointment would have had

no credibility. We also contacted some academics who had done some research into the subject in order to learn more about what was required.

Second, we needed someone with a good head and broad shoulders. Empathy and communication skills are important because the SLO will be placed in very difficult situations. The SLO has to be able to work in the current political atmosphere. He or she needs to be able to communicate with angry fans and with police officers. They have to speak in the right manner and have the right kind of personality. Though still quite young, Patrick is experienced and he met all the criteria.

The next phase is about proving it can work. Patrick needs to design his own role. He has to decide how he goes about his job and what his tasks are. This is very important. It's also about trust. We need to trust Patrick, but we also understand that he won't tell us everything. He needs to have the trust of the fans. He won't change his story just to make the fans happy or indeed to make the club happy.

Do you think the SLO concept will work at Brøndby?

It will take time. It will evolve! One thing that is important to understand is that Patrick is independent. He is not under the security officer, he answers to me. He's free because he's in between.



8.1.3. Interview with Patrick Vestphael, SLO at Brøndby IF

Patrick, you've been in your job for a few months now. How are you getting on?

I'm getting on just fine, thanks. I'm really enjoying life as an SLO. When I started there were no real expectations on me or on the club because it was a totally new position, not just at Brøndby but also in Denmark as a whole. I'm able to work really well within the environment of the club – it's perfect.

What are your main tasks?

My main task is to strengthen the dialogue between the club and the supporters. That's really what the job is all about. But while the emphasis is on dialogue, I also work on lots of projects on behalf of fans on a daily basis. One project I'm working on at the moment, for example, is the fan congress being held by Football Supporters Europe at Brøndby in summer.

I'm also helping the club consider how we can make the stadium a better place to visit. As an example of this we staged a hip-hop concert underneath the stand where the hardcore Brøndby support gather. The concert was organised in close cooperation with some of the season-ticket holders there and took place at the first game of the second half of the 2010/11 season. There are lots of different things we've been doing on an ad hoc basis. ▶

Case studies

How is the work developing with the various departments within the club and other stakeholders such as the police and stewards?

I work very closely with all the departments within the club. For the communications department I write fan-related pieces for the official Brøndby website, for example. In the marketing department I've been advising them how they should advertise to fans. It's important that fans don't get the impression that they are being treated simply as a source of cash by the club. They need to feel their needs and wants are being taken seriously. Recently the ultras decided to organise a spontaneous choreography involving all the fans and appealed for everyone to bring a scarf to the match so they could form a wall of scarves. I talked to the marketing department and they decided that the club shop would sell scarves at a 50% discount on the day of the game. It went really well and everyone was happy.

Turning to the second part of the question, I'm in contact with the stewards at every

game. They know me from my time as a fan and we have an excellent relationship. They know they can trust me, not least because I'm an employee of the club, and I know I can trust them. As for the police, I've had an introductory meeting with them to ensure they know who I am and what my role is. Over the next six months I hope to extend the cooperation with the police. There has to be input from both sides so we can see how well we're doing our respective jobs.

In introducing Article 35, UEFA is trying to promote good governance at clubs. Why do you think it so important for clubs to engage with their fans?

That's an easy question to answer. The fans are the club. They're the ones who keep the club going. If you look at it in commercial terms and say fans are consumers or customers, then you also have to listen to what your customers want. Without the fans there's no one to buy your products. Players, coaches and directors come and go, but the fans stay. So it makes sense to talk to them



and find out what they want. Clubs need to see fans as part of the solution rather than part of the problem. If you give fans something, you'll get it back times two. If the fans are happy, everything's fine. If the fans are unhappy, you've got 15,000 angry customers.

What is your background in the Brøndby fan base?

My dad grew up in the area near the stadium and so I've been a fan since I was a young child. I became an active supporter when I was 15 or 16. I used to do choreos for the Brøndby tifo supporters group and then I helped to found Alpha Brøndby, the biggest ultra group at the club. I was very active in shaping the fan culture at Brøndby for about seven years, so I know lots of people in the fan base and have a good network of contacts.

How have the Brøndby fans reacted to your appointment?

I was lucky in that when the club created the SLO position they sought the advice of some academics with good connections to the Brøndby fans. They advised the club to take a proactive, progressive approach to dealing with supporters and recommended that they appoint an SLO. So through them the club asked the fans what they wanted. There were discussions and I was asked if I was interested in the job. I said if the fans thought I was the right person for the job then of course I was interested. It turned out I had broad support from all sections of the fan base and in the end I was the only

genuine candidate. I had done nothing in the past to rule me out and so I was interviewed for the post and given the job. I'm really grateful to everyone for the trust they have shown in me.

What advice would you give to other clubs in Denmark with regard to appointing an SLO?

I would say that if a club wants to engage in dialogue with its supporters, appointing an SLO is the best way. But the club has to really want that dialogue. They have to be serious about inviting fans inside the club. I refer back to the previous question about good governance. Fans are major stakeholders in the game and so clubs need to hear what they have to say. And it's no good simply taking someone from the marketing department and calling them the new SLO. It has to be someone from the fan base.

How would you summarise the work so far?

I would say it's going very well. The club has been very open-minded in dealing with my suggestions in various matters. They are really keen to get my views and make the most of the position rather than giving me an office in the cellar and forgetting about me. At our meetings inside the club I'm able to put across the views of the fans. I would say it's been a very positive experience so far, most definitely.

Case studies

8.2 Germany

8.2.1. Introduction to the situation in Germany

Anyone wishing to know more about the history of the supporter liaison officer role has to look at Germany. SLOs were first introduced in Germany in 1992 as part of the National Concept for Sport and Security (NKSS). Like many other European countries, Germany had suffered from problems of hooliganism and violence throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The German Football Association (DFB), the German Sports Confederation (DSB) and politicians from the ministries of the interior and sport at both regional and federal level therefore decided to agree on a joint course of action aimed at tackling the problem. This led to the development of the NKSS, which comprises the components of fan liaison and support (fan projects and SLOs), stadium safety and security, stadium regulations and the coordination of all the stakeholders involved.

The work proved so successful that the supporter liaison officer role was eventually included in the licensing requirements set by the German Football League (DFL).

As outlined above, one important aspect of the role in Germany, in addition to good governance, is prevention. To learn more about the interaction between SLOs and club safety and security officers, we spoke to Volker Fürderer, the security officer at FC Schalke 04.



8.2.2. Interview with Volker Fürderer, security officer at FC Schalke 04

Article 35 of the 2010 UEFA Club licensing and

Financial Fair Play Regulations calls for close cooperation between supporter liaison and security officers. What are the advantages of such a cooperation for you as the security officer at Schalke?

First, through the supporter liaison officers I have a direct line of communication to the fans. Through them I can familiarise myself with the structures within the fan base. Second, my work with the SLOs gives me an opportunity to promote mutual understanding between the various parties involved, such as ultras and hooligans on the one side, for example, and the police on the other. Third, it allows me to identify trends within the fan base and get a feel for the mood among the supporters.

What form does this cooperation take in practice?

I work very closely with the SLOs when it comes to stadium bans, for example. At Schalke we developed and introduced a hearing system where supporters accused of committing a misdemeanour are given a chance to give their side of the story. After that we discuss the facts of the case and then decide whether a stadium ban is appropriate and should be imposed or not.

We also work together on a day-to-day basis in the run-up to games. For home matches I have a direct line of communication to the away club through the SLOs. Any choreo requests by away fans are channelled through them to me, for example. We also liaise with regard to the number of away supporters to be expected, their preferred method of travel and their breakdown into ordinary fans and potential troublemakers. All this information then flows into the pre-match security meeting. Before away matches, both at home in Europe, I work very closely with the SLO team to ensure things run as smoothly as possible, for

example getting to and from the stadium, and I also liaise with the local police.

It is also a great help to be able to communicate security and safety-related information to fans via the SLOs. The SLOs can explain to fans why it is necessary to keep aisles and staircases clear, for example, and why we have had to put nets up behind the goal. We don't do these things simply because we want to mess fans about. We do them for safety reasons and the SLOs can explain the rationale behind these measures better than a security officer can.

Finally, we hold regular meetings together to exchange information and improve our ▶



Case studies

understanding of our respective roles. Our national meetings, for example, are held separately but at the same venue, with one joint session together to discuss issues of relevance to our work.

Do you think it makes sense to separate the role of supporter liaison officer from that of the security officer?

Yes, most definitely, because of the conflict of interests inherent in our different jobs. The issue of pyrotechnics illustrates this very well. SLOs would lose their credibility in the fan base very quickly if they were seen as merely an extended arm of the security officer. Fans want to be able to use flares and smoke bombs etc. to create a better atmosphere. As the law stands, however,

they cannot. The SLOs can explain to fans why they are not able to use these things but it is my job to ensure they do not. On other issues, too, I have to play a completely different role from the SLOs. I personally see myself as a link between the fans and the police and between the club and the fire brigade or the stewards. But there are certain basic rules I have to abide by. The relationship between the ultras and the police is a very difficult one and sometimes non-existent, but one of my tasks is to try and bring the two sides together and the SLOs help me to do this.



Difference between the security officer and the supporter liaison officer

As outlined in Article 35 of the UEFA Club Licensing and Financial Fair Play Regulations, UEFA takes the view that these two areas of responsibility should be treated separately at club and national association level.

Experience shows that there are significant conflicts of interest between the key responsibilities of a safety and security officer (SSO) and those of a supporter liaison officer (SLO).

The SSO's main responsibility is to coordinate security efforts and communicate with local police, fire and medical services and emergency management. The stadium security officer also collaborates with the relevant agencies to conduct venue and event-specific risk assessments in order to determine threats and vulnerabilities. The SLO, on the other hand, while liaising with the aforementioned groups on a regular basis, focuses on building a relationship of trust with supporters and exerting a positive influence on them in order to promote self-regulation and the elimination of undesirable behaviour. Unifying both roles in one person could have negative implications for meeting the quality standards required for both positions.

Fan-cultural and administrative background

Fans are particularly sensitive to the issue of security, mostly based on negative experiences in the past. Ultra groups and

a large number of organised fans represent the dominant groups inside the stadium and are therefore to be considered major target groups of the SLO.

In the past scope existed to manage supporters via security processes, with fans often being seen solely as a potential security risk, by both clubs and the police. Within clubs and national associations this role has largely been filled by the safety and security officer.

SLOs are mediators between the fans and the club and/or the national association. Their work is therefore dependent on the information received from both sides, the credibility they enjoy with both parties and a certain degree of trust.

Mixing the two roles (SLO and SSO) makes the job of the SLO more difficult while suggesting to fans that establishing a dialogue with them is seen as a security matter. As a consequence, fans will tend not to accept the SLO as a reliable and credible point of contact. It is vital that SLOs are not seen as another arm of crowd control.

Apart from these conflicts of interest between the two roles (SSO and SLO), it is also a matter of time management to keep both areas of work separate. The duties of SSOs and SLOs, when performed diligently and to the extent required by the minimum standards, are to be considered full-time responsibilities. Nevertheless, the SSO and SLO should be in regular contact to discuss any matters that would benefit the realisation of their respective tasks.

Case studies

8.3 FC Slovan Liberec, Czech Republic

8.3.1. Introduction to the situation at FC Slovan Liberec

Founded in 1958, FC Slovan Liberec have enjoyed some recent success, becoming the first team from outside Prague to win the Czech league title in 2002, a feat they repeated in 2006. They won the domestic cup competition in 2000 and also reached the quarter-finals of the UEFA Cup in 2002. As a mid-sized club in the Czech league, Slovan do not have unlimited financial resources with which to employ a full-time SLO. The solution they found was to employ a former active fan, Tomáš Čarnogurský, in the marketing department and hand him responsibility for developing the club's relationship with the supporters.

8.3.2. Interview with the SLO at FC Slovan Liberec, Tomáš Čarnogurský



Tomáš, how many hours a week do you spend on your supporter liaison officer job?

It's difficult to say. Officially I'm an employee of the marketing department and I spend most of my time working on PR and merchandising tasks, but I can devote some time to supporter issues as well, as necessary, and I'm also responsible for this area. Usually it's about a third of my working time during the

week, but around the matches I concentrate totally on supporter liaison.

What are your main duties?

As the supporter liaison officer I am mainly responsible for communications between the fans, the club and other institutions, organising away travel (plus ticketing), fan meetings and fan tournaments, running the official supporters' club and arranging participation in international campaigns (FARE action weeks, etc.). I'm also responsible for managing the fan project rooms in the stadium, which are open to the active fan base as required (at least twice a week and during home games). They're mainly used by the ultras.

Do you also go to away matches and, if so, do you travel alone or with the fans?

Yes, I travel to every away match with the fans, mainly on the coach trips organised by the club in association with the supporters. I stand with the fans both home and away.

Do you have fixed points of contact in the fan base?

The active fan base is not that large, so we all know each other. But the most important points of contact are the unofficial leaders of the active supporter groups.

As the SLO do you also attend security meetings with the police and the stewarding company?

Yes, I do, but not always. I'm usually in contact with the police, the stewarding company and the representatives of the

other club before away games and high-risk matches. At the stadium I then help to solve any problems that may arise.

What is the situation like in the rest of the Czech Republic? Have any other clubs appointed or employed an SLO?

There are no SLOs in the genuine sense of the term at the other clubs in the Czech Republic yet. In most cases, club officials whose main duties are in other areas are responsible for communicating with the fan base. At the larger clubs it is usually people from the marketing or PR departments, while at smaller clubs it may even be the directors, so the supporter liaison work is usually arbitrary and often underestimated, too. You have to consider that at least a third of the clubs in the first division have a relatively small active fan base, low attendances and hardly any supporters who travel away.

How is the relationship between the club and the fans in general?

The active fan base in the Czech Republic is still shaped and influenced by small groups of hooligans. Ultras are stronger at only a few clubs and ultra and hooligan groups are often intermingled. The lack of a supporter policy at the various clubs and the absence of systematic fan work does not improve the current situation either. We need to do more to create and facilitate the development of attractive alternatives to the hooligans for supporters. Increasing repression of hooliganism also suppresses other forms of active support.

What experience do you have to be an SLO?

While I was studying at university (sociology and social policy) I began working as a volunteer at the local fan project [social work with fans], which was founded by fans for fans. The areas of work gradually increased. When I graduated we looked for a way into the future with the club. The answer was for me to join the club on a full-time basis, with the work with fans representing an important part of this.

The concept we developed is unique in the Czech Republic and combines fan liaison and support with work similar to that done by fan projects. The concept may not be ideal and cannot be compared with the highly developed fan work done in Germany, but it was the only chance to create some kind of systematic fan work under Czech conditions at our small club. I am able to use the experience gained in working at the fan embassies at international tournaments and knowledge of the social fan work concepts.



9. Resources/contacts/links

European supporter organisations and football NGOs

Football Supporters Europe (FSE)

The Football Supporters Europe network is an independent, representative and democratically organised grassroots network of football fans in Europe with members in 36 countries, representing more than two million football supporters across the continent.

FSE acts upon issues such as ticketing, kick-off times, fan culture, discrimination, good hosting and safety and security in football, and organises the annual European Football Fans Congress (EFFC).

<http://fanseurope.org>

info@footballsupporterseurope.org

Supporters Direct (SD)

Supporters Direct campaigns for wider recognition of the social, cultural and economic value of sports clubs and liaises with UEFA, the European Commission and other pan-European bodies, leagues and national football associations.



Supporters Direct advises groups of supporters in over 20 countries on how to represent their fans through not-for-profit, democratic supporter cooperatives known as supporter trusts, which seek to acquire a shareholding and representation on the governing boards of their clubs.

<http://www.supporters-direct.coop>
enquiries@supporters-direct.coop

Football Against Racism in Europe (FARE)

The FARE network aims to tackle discrimination and encourage activities on social inclusion by combining the resources of organisations across Europe. It helps to support and nurture groups and coordinates efforts on a European scale. By working together, FARE helps organisations share good practice and present a united front against discrimination in football. Today the network has active partners in more than 37 countries and is working across the game with fans, players, migrant and ethnic minority organisations, and governing bodies, including UEFA and FIFA. It also includes members from within football such as professional clubs and players unions.

<http://www.farenet.org>
enquiries@farenet.org

European Gay & Lesbian Sport Federation (EGLSF)

The European Gay & Lesbian Sport Federation was founded in 1989. Its aims are to:

- fight against discrimination in sport on grounds of sexual preference
- stimulate integration in sport and emancipation of lesbians and gays
- enable and support the coming out of gay and lesbian sports men and women
- exchange information and enable co-ordination between European sport groups and tournaments
- support the founding of new gay/lesbian/bisexual/straight/transgendered and mixed sport groups

**<http://www.eglsf.info/>
eglsf@eglsf.info/**

Centre for Access to Football in Europe (CAFE)

The Centre for Access to Football in Europe acts as a consultant and partner to all stakeholders, sharing good practice and providing disability and access advice and guidance. These stakeholders include the European Commission (through the European Committee for Standardisation, CEN), UEFA as the governing body of European football, UEFA's 53 national member football associations and their leagues and member clubs, European Football Championship host countries, disabled fans, other national and European diversity and supporter networks, disability NGOs and other interested organisations.

**<http://www.cafefootball.eu>
info@cafefootball.eu**

Online resources

A library of documents of relevance to supporter liaison officers, such as good practice guides, regulations, reports, studies, etc., will be created and made available on UEFA.com.

Credits/acknowledgments

Expert group

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