



## **Project IMPACT**

Developing Communities of Practice to Maximise the Usability and  
Impact of Clean Sport Education in Europe

*A Practical Guide for the Development, Monitoring, and Evaluation of  
Communities of Practice for Clean Sport Education*

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## **Preface**

Project IMPACT (Developing Communities of Practice to Maximise the Usability and Impact of Clean Sport Education in Europe) was financially supported through the Erasmus+ Sport funding programme of the European Commission between January 2019 and December 2021. The main objective of the project was to utilise the concept of "Communities of Practice" to tackle clean sport education, an important aspect of anti-doping efforts globally. The present guide presents a practical way to develop, monitor, and evaluate communities of practice for clean sport education.

The present report<sup>1</sup> was developed in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the successful completion and delivery of Intellectual Output (IO) 3 for project IMPACT.

## **Disclaimer Notice**

The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

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<sup>1</sup> The present report is written in English but is also available, upon request, in the languages of partner organisations. Please contact the project coordinator: [L.Lazuras@shu.ac.uk](mailto:L.Lazuras@shu.ac.uk)

## **Practical Steps in Developing a Clean Sport Education CoP**

There are different ways to describe how CoPs are formed, developed, monitored, and evaluated. The following approach provides a simple, jargon-free, and practical guide that aims to help NADOs and sport governing bodies with a clean sport education remit to develop their own clean sport education CoPs. A schematic representation of the Life Cycle of a Clean Sport Education CoP is presented in Figure 1.

### **Step 1 - Forming the CoP**

This is the first step in developing a CoP and involves identifying and recruiting relevant partners/community members. Although the specific objectives of the community are decided in the next step, still the initiator/leader of the community should have a clear direction in mind as to the main purpose of the CoP. For example, if your goal is to increase your organisation's knowledge about clean sport education in fitness sport, then it is essential that the partners/members of the community represent this population (e.g., personal trainers, fitness industry representatives, fitness industry associations etc.). Therefore, specifying the overall purpose of the CoP is crucial for determining the community members' characteristics.

Community size is another matter of concern at this step. Usually, larger groups are better than smaller groups, but if a community is too large then it is harder to monitor and coordinate. Ideally, the same principles that apply in other areas (e.g., task group or team formation) also apply here. Although there is no gold standard for a CoP size, usually a community with up to 10-12 members can function effectively.

After identification and recruitment of the community members, it is recommended that an early assessment is performed with respect to the expectations of the members: Why did they join the community? What do they want to achieve and at a personal or organisational level? How do they envisage their participation? This process will allow you to better understand the motivations and aspirations of community members and, accordingly decide if you want to develop this community further.

The last step in the Forming process involves the community's first meeting. This meeting is essential because it allows all members of the community meet together for the first time as a group (either physically or online), and to openly discuss their goals, motivations, and aspirations for the community. Usually, this first meeting provides all members with an idea of where the community is headed and how a mutual collaboration can develop between community members.

Housekeeping of the CoP: It is important that all members understand the key rules for maintaining the CoP and for turning it into an enabler (and not a barrier) to clean sport education. This includes:

- *Accountability.* All members are accountable for their participation in the CoP meetings and operations.
- *Teamwork.* The CoP outcomes and results reflect the collective effort of its members, and not an individual's sole endeavours.
- *Mutual trust.* The CoP can operate more effectively when members trust each other and communicate in an honest and open way.
- *Bottom-up.* Instead of top-down hierarchies, CoPs operate as a bottom-up entity with a flat (or nearly flat) structure. Although some members may assume more leading/coordinating roles, the CoP is based on the equal and fair contribution of each members.
- *Dynamic learning.* Learning is not fixed, even more so in a dynamically evolving field, such as clean sport education. As such, CoP members should be open to new learning opportunities, ways of thinking, and alternative approaches.

## **Step 2 - Deciding the objectives of the CoP**

Following the first meeting of the Community, members are "tasked" with reflecting upon what was discussed and, accordingly, consider the specific objectives of the CoP. The more SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-based) the goals are, the more likely it is to have a clear direction for the CoP. Typically, this involves answering questions, such as "*what does this community want to achieve?*" or "*where would we like to be as a community in 12 months from now?*". The timeframe of the community will determine the SMART features of the goals, especially the Attainability, Relevance, and Timeliness of the set goals. So, if the CoP has a limited lifetime (e.g., 12 months) then the goals should be attainable within this timeframe. A useful and practical exercise for this stage is a SWOT analysis, where community members consider the goals and action plan of the CoP within the framework of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. This will allow CoP members to have an early understanding of the potential threats and challenges that may lie ahead, so that they can develop relevant contingency plans. Lastly, at this stage the CoP members decide the action plan of the CoP and delegate roles and tasks to each member. Usually, this involves a discussion about what each member is expected to contribute to the community, and the quality standards that may apply.

### **Step 3 - Monitoring the progress of the CoP**

This is an important step because it will determine the entire course of the CoP and also allows members to realise whether a change is needed in the way's the CoP operates. The monitoring of the CoP progress is relevant to the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the CoP operations.

The *quantitative* aspects reflect the number of meetings completed, the number of attendees in each meeting, as well as a monitoring of whether the set deadlines are met, and whether the short-term goals of the CoP are met within the those deadlines. In this respect, CoP monitoring does not differ so much from typical project management.

The *qualitative* aspects of the CoP progress refer to the quality and standards of the community's operation and related outcomes and results. For instance, do CoP members actively engage in the community operations and meetings, or are they simply present because they feel obliged to? Relatedly, are CoP members underperforming or does their contribution meet the minimum expected standards?

The monitoring of the CoP can be recorded through the completion of structured surveys by all CoP members, and/or one-to-one or group discussions about the community's progress.

### **Step 4 - Evaluating the CoP outcomes**

Evaluating the outcomes of the CoP is an essential marker of the community's success. Tangible outcomes and results (e.g., a report on how to implement and evaluate a clean sport education program in certain sport disciplines, or the development of an education policy as per WADA's ISE) are usually easier to evaluate, compared to intangible ones (e.g., discussions about the next frontiers or challenges in clean sport education). However, the type of the result to be evaluated is determined by the set goals of the community. Essentially, the outcome evaluation processes reflects whether the community's goals were fulfilled as expected. If some (or all) of the goals are not met, then this presents an opportunity for reflection and learning how to improve the operation of a clean sport education CoP. One of the advantages of a CoP is that all outcomes (even apparent "failures") are beneficial for its members because they present a learning opportunity.

With regards to the practical aspects of the outcome evaluation, the set goals, task, and expected outputs of the CoP will determine the evaluation methods to be used. For example, if the expectation was to develop an evaluation framework for clean sport education programs in secondary schools, then the final output can be evaluated in terms of its quality and high standards by the members of the CoP, as well as relevant external advisors - in

this case a small group (3-4) of educators with expertise in sport and physical activity, or health education.

### **Step 5 - Deciding future direction**

Following the evaluation of the CoP's results and outcomes, members may decide whether they intent to extend the lifetime of their community to serve the same purpose or to diversify the goals and objectives and address a new area or topic in clean sport education. For example, if the initial goal of the CoP was to develop resources about values-based education and clean sport, after this goal is achieved the CoP members may decide to further extend their work, or switch to another area, such as promoting whistleblowing against ADRVs in sport. Of course, CoP members may as well decide that the CoP will be adjourned.

**Figure 1.** Schematic representation of the Life Cycle of Clean Sport Education CoP

