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# International Federations Sustainability Study 2014

An Assessment of the Initiatives, Trends and Needs  
by Geert Hendriks (Head of Projects,)

# APPLIED RESEARCH

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## Foreword

**Dr. Claude Stricker,**  
Executive Director

The word “Sustainability” is often used when we speak about environmental or “green” practices and initiatives. Yet, it is a word that encompasses much more than this. Sustainability involves the concept of social equity and economic soundness – in addition to environmental integrity. It is in this context why Sustainability is such a critical issue to our industry. It is why IOC President, Thomas Bach, identified it as core focus area for Olympic Agenda 2020. And, it is the reason why the AISTS have undertaken a Sustainability Study of International Federations since 2008. The AISTS IF Sustainability Study, now in its 4th edition, aims to provide an in-depth look at the opinions, needs, current state of

thinking and Sustainability practices of IFs worldwide. In essence, the Study aims to understand best practices and what could be done better.

I invite you to read the findings from the 2014 IF Sustainability Study contained in this report. The results are in part encouraging, however, you will see that there is still much more to be done to ensure that sustainability in sports is seen as top priority – not just as a concept but in everyday practice.

Feel free to share your comments, thoughts and feedback with myself and the rest of the AISTS team at [info@aists.org](mailto:info@aists.org)



Dr. Claude Stricker

## **About the IF Sustainability Study**

*The goal of the AISTS International Federations Sustainability Study (IF Study) is to get a pulse on the level of integration, trends and needs within the sport and sustainability area.*

*The IF Study, an initiative from the AISTS Sustainable Sport and Event Toolkit, was sent to all 112 International Federations (IFs) that are SportAccord Members as well as to four other major international sports organisations.*

*This 4th edition of the IF Study had a total of 41 respondents (response rate: 37%). Respondents included 54% of all Olympic Summer Federations. Previous editions received a response of respectively 18 (2010), 26 (2009) and 19 (2008). 79% of respondents who completed the survey possessed either an executive (e.g. CEO, President, Director-General) or mid-management function (e.g. Sports Director, Project Manager, Competitions Manager).*

## **Sustainable Sport and Events**

### ***Environmentally Sound + Socially Equitable + Economically Sound***

Sustainability aims to satisfy the needs of the **present generation** without compromising the chance for **future generations** to satisfy theirs (Our Common Future, The Brundtland Report, 1987).

A sport (event) is sustainable when it meets the needs of today's sports community while contributing to the improvement of future sport opportunities for all and the improvement of the integrity of the natural and social environment on which it depends (Green and Gold, 2007).

## **Sustainability Strategy and Stakeholders**

### ***Embedded in Corporate Strategy but Limited Involvement of Stakeholders.***

This 4th edition of the IF Study has used a significantly updated and extended questionnaire compared to the previous three editions. While this reduces the possibilities to make comparisons with previous IF Studies, it allows a better assessment of the current level of sustainability among IFs.

# 15%

## Percentage of IFs that considers sustainability as low or no priority.

The 2010 IF Study showed exactly the same situation.

A large majority of IFs are able to list specific examples of initiatives by their organisation on both environmental, social as well as economic sustainability.

71% of all IFs indicated to have sustainability incorporated in their organisation's corporate policies or strategy (an increase of 33% compared to 2008). However, six IFs consider sustainability as low or no priority.

IFs primarily promote sustainability extensively within their internal administrative body and at their events. However, promoting sustainability with key external stakeholders such as athletes, spectators, and sponsors is still in its early stages.

*“FIS has a Bring Children to the Snow campaign which aims to make snow sports accessible to youth all over the world, including those living in city environments.”*

*Jenny Wiedeke, FIS Communications Manager*

## Pain Points, Levers and Educational Tools

### **Limited Resource but Great Potential Leverage through engagement of IFs External Stakeholders.**

Almost 60% of the IFs stated that 'lack of resources' or 'other priorities' are the key hindrances in their attempt to implement sustainability initiatives. Frequently mentioned other "pain points" include the 'absence of standardised reporting or impact measurement' and 'language and local differences with Local Organising Committees (LOC)'. In only a few IFs, 'internal resistance' (5%), and 'lack of knowledge' (7%) or 'lack of training or educational tools' (9%) prevents the implementation of sustainability.



**Figure 1 - Levers for successful implemented sustainability initiatives (n=39)**

When asked what the most important levers used are for a successful implemented sustainability initiative, most IFs responded with 'Best practices from other organisations' (24%), 'Top-down support' (18%) and 'Engagement of athletes' (17%). However, 'Media pressure' and 'Partnerships with hosting cities or NGOs' is not seen as effective by IFs to support their initiatives.

An educational tool such as the AISTS Sustainable Sport and Event Toolkit is considered helpful by most of the respondents (86%) but not vital to help the IF to move forward (3%).

***"There is no lack of tools!"***

***Summer Olympic Federation (anonymous)***

In 2010 the IFs mostly needed support in the area of "Venue & Office Management" in relation to their sustainability initiatives. When asked the same question in 2014, all operational areas such as Venue & Office Management, Site Selection, Food & Beverage, and Transportation, are considered as less important. Toolkits, such as the Sustainable Sport and Events Toolkit, are mostly needed to support IFs in the area of 'Creating a sustainability strategy', Marketing & Communication, Athlete and fan engagement, and Impact Assessment.

For the Olympic Federations, the most important areas are: Athlete and Public Engagement and Impact Assessment.

## Impact Measurement and Reporting

*IFs report on sustainability without using clear performance indicators.*

**68%**

Percentage of IFs that either does not know how to measure their (environmental, social or economic) impact or does consider it as not important.

The majority of IFs do not know how to measure the impact of their sustainability initiatives (60%) or do not consider it as important (8%) and only two Olympic Federations indicated that they have clearly defined Performance Indicators to measure the impact of their initiatives.

ISO 20121, an international management standard for sustainable events, is not perceived by respondents to contribute much to improve their sustainability initiatives. Although known by more than half of the IFs, only 6% considered using it.

Almost half of the IFs (46%) report on their sustainability initiatives but mainly internally (i.e. within their own organisation). One in every four IFs share their report with either their Member Federations or a broader audience.

A majority of Olympic Federations (69%) indicated that they do not keep their sustainability report internally but share it with either their Member Federations or a broad audience.



**Figure 2 - Olympic Federations that shares sustainability report (n=35)**

## **AISTS Sustainable Sport and Events Centre (SSE Centre)**

*The SSE Centre is a worldwide recognised centre of expertise for sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR) for sport events. It engages and empowers the sport sector with knowledge and tools to incorporate sustainability and convene successful and sustainable sport events.*

*Working alongside partners, including the International Olympic Committee, SportAccord, European Athletics, the City of Lausanne, Event Scotland and the City of Richmond on initiatives such as the SSE Toolkit and an e-learning module, the Centre offers the following resources:*

***SPORT SUSTAINABILITY E-LEARNING**, an online course to equip participants with necessary knowledge to initiate, manage and report on sustainable sport events. The course consists of four modules: The Business Case for Sustainability, ISO 20121 Management System, Reporting and Impact Assessment.*

***SSE TOOLKIT**, a practical “how to guide” for organisers of domestic and international sports events as well as cities and sports federations.*

***CSR AND SUSTAINABILITY OPEN MODULE**, a two day educational module which takes place on the EPFL campus in Lausanne (Switzerland). The Open Module provides participants with insight in best practices and trends as well as hands-on experience through groupwork on a case study.*

***RESEARCH & CASE STUDIES** covers a wider range of topics such as Sustainability, CSR, Youth & Sport, and Sport for Development.*

*For more information, visit [www.aists.org/sse](http://www.aists.org/sse)*



EPFL | Innovation Park, Bâtiment C

1015 Lausanne | Switzerland

Telephone: +41 (0) 21 693 85 93

Email: [info@aists.org](mailto:info@aists.org)

Website: [www.aists.org](http://www.aists.org)