OofS

Olympics of Sustainability

The OofS E-Paper

"Sports Practices and Sustainability Trends Among Young People in Partner Countries"

WP2

Deliverable 2.1

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Executive Summary

This e-Paper presents the findings of the first research phase of the Olympics of Sustainability (OofS) project, an Erasmus+ Sport initiative that integrates environmental sustainability challenges into youth sport competitions across Europe. The document consolidates two complementary research activities: a state-of-the-art desk research (T2.1) mapping youth sport practices and sustainability trends across Portugal, Finland, Slovenia and Spain; and a stakeholder consultation (T2.2) comprising 62 survey responses and 20 in-depth interviews with municipalities, sports clubs, federations, youth organisations, educational institutions and environmental organisations across the four partner countries.

The research confirms the central premise of the OofS project: while environmental awareness among European youth is high, there is a persistent gap between awareness and action. At the same time, youth sport participation faces structural challenges, from gender disparities and urban-rural access gaps to declining participation in organised sport following the COVID-19 pandemic. Existing initiatives that bridge sport and sustainability are fragmented, mostly concentrated at elite or federation level, and rarely target grassroots youth sport. No common or standardised methodology for integrating sustainability into youth sport competitions was identified in any of the partner countries, highlighting the need for the OofS model.

Key findings from the stakeholder research include:

- The OofS concept received strong support in Portugal, Finland and Slovenia, where most respondents rated it positively, and a more mixed reception in Spain, where approximately half of respondents rated it 4 or 5 out of 5.
- Waste collection races, tree-planting challenges, upcycling workshops and nature-based orienteering were identified as the most engaging sustainability challenges for young people, with the specific mix varying by country.
- The integration of both sport performance and sustainability-related achievements within the competition framework was widely supported.
- The main barriers to implementation are limited knowledge or expertise in sustainability, lack of funding and competing organisational priorities, challenges that the Green Playbook is specifically designed to address.
- The 30% inclusion target was considered realistic but likely to require deliberate effort, particularly through school partnerships, mixed-gender

team requirements, free or affordable participation, transport support and inclusive planning measures that reduce barriers to participation for underrepresented groups.

- Interest in long-term adoption was expressed across the consortium, with several municipalities indicating willingness to sign letters of support or Memoranda of Understanding to support future implementation.
- Simplicity was consistently identified as the most critical success factor. The model should be easy to understand, implement and replicate without extensive external support.

Based on these findings, the e-Paper proposes a common framework for the National Olympics of Sustainability (OofS), combining sport, sustainability learning and inclusive participation.

The framework is supported by the OofS Green Playbook, which provides organisers with ready-to-use activities, scoring systems, planning tools, inclusion and accessibility guidance, sustainability management recommendations, budgeting guidance and evaluation templates.

The proposed model combines sport and sustainability stations, bonus challenges and a dedicated Green Badge recognition system that recognises environmental learning and action independently of the overall competition ranking. This approach seeks to ensure that sustainability achievements are recognised alongside sport performance while maintaining a positive and inclusive event experience for all participants.

The framework is designed to be flexible enough to accommodate different national, regional and local contexts while maintaining common principles and shared objectives across participating countries. Particular attention is given to reducing barriers to participation and creating opportunities for young people from diverse backgrounds and experiences, including groups that may face barriers to participation in sport and physical activity.

The findings demonstrate that sport can serve as an effective platform for environmental education, community engagement and behaviour change. By combining physical activity with sustainability learning, the Olympics of Sustainability provides municipalities, schools, sport organisations and community groups with a practical, scalable and replicable model that can continue to evolve beyond the lifetime of the project.

The document concludes with recommendations for implementation, stakeholder engagement, policy integration and the long-term sustainability of the OofS methodology.

1. Introduction

1.1 Project background and rationale

According to the European Commission's Special Eurobarometer 525 on Sport and Physical Activity (2022), 45% of Europeans never engage in physical activity, and only 38% exercise at least once a week. This trend was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to a measurable decrease in sport participation, particularly among young people. At the same time, environmental challenges remain a critical concern for EU citizens. The Special Eurobarometer 571 (2026) shows that Europeans feel strongly about halting biodiversity loss, with 96% of respondents agreeing with the statement that “we have a responsibility to look after nature”. The Special Eurobarometer 501 (2020) found that over 90% of Europeans believe environmental protection is important, but many feel unable to take concrete action.

The Olympics of Sustainability (OofS) project positions itself at the intersection of these two challenges, leveraging the power of sport to create a transformative model for environmental engagement. The project introduces an innovative methodology that combines sport with sustainability education, embedding pro-environmental behaviours into everyday physical activities. The initiative recognises that engagement in sustainability efforts must be practical, rewarding and integrated into daily life. Through a game-based, experiential learning approach, OofS ensures that sustainability knowledge is acquired through action rather than passive education.

The project consortium brings together five partner organisations from four EU Member States: the Municipality of Fundão (Portugal, Coordinator), PJA Consultoria Desportiva e Projetos (Portugal), Finlands Svenska Idrott FSI (Finland), Športno društvo Endorfin (Slovenia) and the Municipality of Pedreguer (Spain).

The project pursues four specific objectives:

- S.O1: Increase sport participation by embedding sustainability into physical activities (target: 500 young people reached; 4 events)
- S.O2: Encourage sustainable behaviours through sport-based challenges (target: 50% of participants reporting behavioural change; 24 activities).

- S.O3: Strengthen inclusion and participation among underrepresented groups (target: 30% participation).
- S.O4: Develop a replicable and scalable model (target: 20 municipalities; 2,000 Green Playbook downloads).

1.2 Purpose and scope

This e-Paper constitutes Deliverable 2.1 of the OofS project and was produced under Work Package 2. It serves as the research-based foundation for the project, providing the evidence base upon which the Green Playbook (D2.2) and the National Olympics of Sustainability competitions (WP3) are developed.

The e-Paper fulfils two primary functions: first, presenting the findings of the state-of-the-art assessment (T2.1); and second, synthesising the results of the stakeholder consultation (T2.2). Together, these activities provide the conceptual and practical foundation for the development, implementation and future replication of the OofS methodology.

1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 T2.1: State-of-the-Art Desk Research

The desk research was conducted between November 2025 and March 2026 (M1–M5). Each pilot partner organisation produced a country report using a standardised template developed by Finlands Svenska Idrott, covering nine thematic areas: youth sport practices and participation; sustainability trends; policies and initiatives; environmental impact areas; gaps, needs and barriers; key stakeholders; proposed competition structures; sample activities; and best practices.

Partners consulted academic literature, Eurobarometer surveys, national statistics, government policy documents, sport federation reports and relevant EU platforms.

As Finland is not implementing a national pilot competition, Finlands Svenska Idrott was not required to produce a full country report. The Finland profile presented in Chapter 2 therefore consists of a short, validated summary prepared with Finlands Svenska Idrott input.

1.3.2 T2.2: Stakeholder Consultation

The stakeholder consultation was conducted between March and May 2026 (M5–M6). The online survey comprised 26 questions across five sections and was administered via Google Forms in five languages. A total of 62 valid responses were received: 18 from Portugal, 16 from Finland, 18 from Slovenia and 10 from Spain.

Semi-structured interviews (16 questions across four thematic blocks) were conducted by each local partner. In total 20 interviews were completed, targeting decision-makers and practitioners from municipalities, sports clubs, federations, youth organisations and educational institutions.

All research activities complied with GDPR requirements, and all interview data is reported anonymously.

2. State of the Art: Youth Sport and Sustainability in Partner Countries

This chapter summarises the findings of the T2.1 desk research across the four partner countries. Each country's profile is deliberately concise and organised around three themes: key characteristics of youth sport and sustainability, main barriers and challenges, and relevant examples and good practices. The full national reports are retained as background material. The comparative analysis at the end of the chapter highlights common trends and practical implications that informed the development of the OofS methodology and the Green Playbook.

2.1 Portugal

Key characteristics of youth sport and sustainability

Portuguese youth sport operates through three channels: school sport (Desporto Escolar), federated club sport and municipal sport-for-all programmes. Despite this multi-layered structure, participation remains among the lowest in the EU. The 2022 Special Eurobarometer on Sport and Physical Activity (525) recorded 73% of Portuguese respondents as never exercising, the highest inactivity rate among all Member States surveyed. The Portuguese Institute for Sport and Youth (IPDJ) is the central public body responsible for sport policy and supports grassroots sport through the National Sport for All Programme (PNDpT). Environmental awareness among young people is high; however, it coexists with a pronounced awareness–action gap, with financial pressures and limited affordable alternatives frequently cited as key constraints.

Main barriers and challenges

Funding is the most frequently cited barrier, with sustainability often treated as an additional cost rather than a core organisational priority. Geographic access remains a structural challenge in interior regions such as Fundão, where longer travel distances, limited public transport and fewer sport facilities increase both emissions and household costs. Gender norms continue to affect female participation rates. Sustainability governance is fragmented across IPDJ, environmental agencies, educational authorities and municipalities, with no

single coordinating strategy. In addition, coach education currently lacks a standardised sustainability component.

Relevant examples and good practices

The Portuguese Olympic Committee implements a Sustainability Plan covering energy, emissions, waste, water and biodiversity, including the Olympic Forest reforestation initiative. Local events such as Fundão's Grande Prémio Cerejeiras em Flor successfully link sport with environmental awareness and local cultural identity. Additional enabling conditions for OofS include Portugal's rapid renewable energy transition (approximately 71% of electricity generation in 2024), the national School Sport programme as a ready-made scaling channel, and a strong tradition of outdoor sports such as trail running, surfing and orienteering that aligns well with the proposed methodology.

2.2 Finland

Key characteristics of youth sport and sustainability

Finland has a strong tradition of organised sport, outdoor recreation and nature-based physical activity. Access to forests, lakes and natural environments is an important part of everyday life, and outdoor activities such as hiking, orienteering, cross-country skiing, cycling and nature-based recreation are widely practised across age groups. Finland's Everyman's Right (jokaisenoikeus) provides broad public access to nature and creates favourable conditions for combining physical activity, environmental awareness and sustainability education.

Sports clubs, municipalities, schools and civil society organisations all play important roles in promoting physical activity among children and young people. Participation in organised sport is relatively common: according to the LIITU 2024 study, 55% of Finnish children, adolescents and young adults aged 9–20 participated in sports club activities, with participation levels higher among younger age groups. At the same time, only around one third met the national physical activity recommendations, and activity levels decreased with age. These findings highlight both the strengths of the Finnish sport system and the continued need to engage young people in regular physical activity (LIITU, 2024).

National policy frameworks, including the Sports Act (Liikuntalaki), the Finnish National Core Curriculum and the Finnish sports community's Responsibility Programme (Urheiluyhteisön vastuullisuusohjelma), increasingly emphasise sustainability, equality, inclusion and social responsibility.

Environmental sustainability is widely recognised as an important societal issue, and sustainability education is integrated throughout the education system. Finnish municipalities invest extensively in recreational infrastructure, including

parks, outdoor trails, ski tracks and other green environments that support physical activity and well-being. Initiatives such as Mulle activities (Metsämörritoiminta) provide examples of how environmental awareness and physical activity can be combined from an early age. Finnish sport organisations have also increasingly integrated sustainability measures into their operations, particularly in areas such as sustainable transport, responsible procurement, waste reduction and recycling.

Main barriers and challenges

Despite strong structures and high levels of environmental awareness, challenges remain. National monitoring data indicate that a substantial proportion of young people do not achieve the recommended levels of daily physical activity, with participation levels generally higher among boys than girls. Environmental awareness does not automatically translate into concrete action, and sport organisations often report limited knowledge, practical tools and resources for implementing sustainability measures.

Participation opportunities are not equally accessible to all young people. Research has shown that some groups continue to face barriers to participation in sport and physical activity. The Finnish Paralympic Committee has highlighted that many young people with disabilities would like to participate in organised sport but struggle to find suitable and accessible opportunities. Studies have also found that sexual and gender minority youth are more likely to experience inappropriate behaviour, discrimination or exclusion within sport settings. In addition, socio-economic factors, geographic distances, transport costs and limited organisational resources may affect participation and implementation, particularly in less densely populated areas.

Relevant examples and good practices

Finland provides several examples of good practice in combining sustainability and sport. The Finnish sports community's Responsibility Programme supports organisations in developing their sustainability work, while municipalities increasingly integrate sustainability considerations into sports facilities, events and procurement processes. Outdoor and adventure-based activities are widely used to strengthen both physical activity and environmental awareness. Collaboration between schools, municipalities, sport organisations and civil society actors provides strong opportunities for engaging young people through sport while simultaneously promoting sustainability, inclusion and active citizenship.

Stakeholders consulted through the OofS project also emphasised the importance of practical and easy-to-use implementation tools. Ready-made activity ideas, templates, checklists, communication materials and evaluation

tools were identified as particularly valuable resources for supporting sustainability work at grassroots level.

2.3 Slovenia

Key characteristics of youth sport and sustainability

Slovenia has a mixed governance model that combines state institutions, NGOs and local authorities, with approximately 10,000 sports clubs functioning as NGOs and forming the backbone of grassroots sport. Municipalities are the most significant public actors, providing around 70% of public sport funding through Local Sport Programmes. The National Programme of Sport 2026–2035 integrates sustainable infrastructure, nature-based sport and environmental responsibility into sport governance. A strong outdoor culture, including hiking, cycling, trail running and skiing, provides young people with a natural connection to environmental protection, although the familiar awareness–action gap remains evident.

Main barriers and challenges

The most frequently cited barriers include limited collective knowledge among funders and local stakeholders, low stakeholder motivation, insufficient financial resources, gaps in implementation guidance and the perception that sustainability is not yet a sufficiently high priority. These challenges are compounded by a gap between strategic planning and practical implementation, limited cross-sector coordination and administrative burdens. Awareness among young people aged 15–19 is generally high in theory but remains uneven in practice. Social media was identified as a double-edged factor, increasing visibility and awareness while also encouraging superficial forms of engagement.

Relevant examples and good practices

The Olympic Committee of Slovenia has adopted a Sustainability Strategy 2024–2030, and federations such as the Football Association of Slovenia have developed their own social and environmental sustainability strategies. At community level, municipalities have widely implemented LED lighting and solar panels in public sport facilities. Examples of good practice include the Fit4Green project (EUSA), Move4Nature (an Erasmus+ Sport project promoting environmental learning through outdoor activities) and events such as Ultra Trail Slovenia, which incorporate waste reduction measures and reusable materials into event design.

2.4 Spain

Key characteristics of youth sport and sustainability

Spain has a decentralised, multi-sectoral system: the Consejo Superior de Deportes (CSD) sets strategy, while autonomous communities and local

councils deliver programmes. Youth participation is relatively high, with 20.2 percent of 15 to 24 year-olds holding a federation licence, the highest of any age group, and large municipal schemes such as Madrid's Juegos Deportivos Municipales reaching over 140,000 participants in 2024. Sustainability integration remains at an early stage. Survey data indicate that around 70% of organisations engage with sustainability only informally. Youth interest is moderate but strengthened by the local relevance of Mediterranean climate challenges, including water stress, wildfires and biodiversity loss.

Main barriers and challenges

The main barriers identified include knowledge and competence gaps, institutional inertia, funding constraints and uneven infrastructure. The decentralised model produces significant regional variation in how sustainability is implemented, which affects how a national methodology can be scaled consistently.

Relevant examples and good practices

The National Strategy to Promote Sport against Sedentarism and Physical Inactivity 2025–2030 allocates approximately €87 million and includes environment and sustainable development as one of its five strategic priorities. The CSD has adhered to the European Commission's Green Sport Manifesto and developed sustainability labels for events and sport entities (Sello de Evento Deportivo Sostenible and Sello de Entidad Deportiva Sostenible), together with carbon footprint monitoring tools. At local level, the Marina Alta circuits provide a regional reference, having eliminated plastics through corn-based cups and individual cartons and reduced the textile footprint with a single circuit-wide T-shirt.

2.5 Cross-Country Comparative Analysis

While this chapter primarily draws on the T2.1 desk research, the comparative analysis also considers relevant findings from the T2.2 stakeholder consultation where these help explain common patterns and practical implications. The four partner countries differ in their sport systems, governance structures and sustainability contexts, yet several shared trends emerged. The table below provides a high-level synthesis of the findings and is intended as an illustrative comparison rather than a quantitative ranking of countries.

Dimension	Portugal	Finland*	Slovenia	Spain
Sport participation	Relatively low participation levels	Relatively high participation levels	Moderate participation with strong grassroots structures	Relatively high youth participation

Dimension	Portugal	Finland*	Slovenia	Spain
Sustainability integration in sport	Emerging and developing	Comparatively advanced	Moderate, with strong municipal involvement	Emerging and largely informal
Youth environmental awareness	High awareness, but a clear awareness–action gap	High environmental awareness and literacy	Moderate to high awareness, supported by outdoor culture	Growing awareness linked to local environmental challenges
Main barriers	Funding, geographic accessibility and gender norms	Knowledge gaps, competing priorities and implementation challenges	Knowledge gaps, motivation and funding	Knowledge gaps, institutional inertia and uneven implementation
Outdoor sport tradition	Strong and growing	Very strong	Very strong	Moderate to strong

** As Finland is not implementing a national pilot competition, no full State of the Art report was produced. The Finland profile is therefore based on selected national contextual information (see Section 2.2).*

Common patterns

The awareness–action gap emerged across all partner countries. Young people generally express concern for environmental issues, but often lack structured and engaging opportunities to translate this awareness into practical action through sport.

Sustainability initiatives in sport remain fragmented and are often concentrated at elite, federation or project level rather than systematically embedded within grassroots youth sport. Across the partner countries, no standardised methodology for integrating sustainability into youth sport competitions was identified, highlighting the potential contribution of the OofS model.

Funding constraints, knowledge gaps and implementation challenges emerged as recurring barriers across the partner countries. At the same time, schools, municipalities and community organisations were consistently identified as important actors in promoting both sport participation and sustainability engagement among young people.

Outdoor environments and nature-based activities were highlighted as important assets in all partner countries, providing opportunities to combine physical activity, environmental learning and community engagement.

Key differences

The partner countries differ in the maturity of their sustainability approaches within sport. Finland and Slovenia demonstrate more established structures and policy frameworks, while Portugal and Spain are still developing more systematic approaches.

Differences were also identified in the environmental contexts and sporting cultures that may shape implementation. Finland and Slovenia have particularly strong traditions of outdoor recreation and nature-based physical activity, while Portugal and Spain highlighted opportunities to connect sustainability activities to local environmental challenges and community engagement.

Governance structures vary considerably, ranging from more coordinated national approaches to Spain's highly decentralised system. These differences may influence how the OofS methodology is implemented and scaled at local and national level.

Implications for the OofS methodology and Green Playbook

The desk research and stakeholder consultation together support the development of a common and transferable OofS framework that can be adapted to local circumstances rather than creating separate national models.

Across the partner countries, several priorities emerged consistently:

- keeping participation free or affordable where possible;
- using schools and community networks as key recruitment channels;
- linking activities to local environmental contexts and sustainability challenges;
- providing practical and easy-to-use implementation tools for organisers;
- promoting social inclusion by reducing financial, geographic and other barriers to participation and by creating welcoming opportunities for young people from diverse backgrounds;
- ensuring that sustainability learning remains closely connected to physical activity, teamwork and enjoyment.

National differences primarily affect the choice of activities, recruitment strategies and implementation pathways rather than the core design of the OofS model itself.

3. Stakeholder Research Findings (T2.2)

3.1 Survey Methodology and Sample

The T2.2 online survey was deployed via Google Forms in five languages between 31 March and 24 April 2026. A total of 62 valid responses were received across the four partner countries.

Country	Responses	Partner	Main respondent types
Portugal	18	PJA	Sport clubs/federations 56%, NGOs 22%, municipalities 17%
Finland	16	FSI	Sport clubs/federations 38%, NGOs 25%, education 13%

Country	Responses	Partner	Main respondent types
Slovenia	18	SDE	Sport clubs/federations 44%, education 39%, municipalities 11%, youth org 6%
Spain	10	MoP	Municipalities 40%, sport clubs 30%, other 30%
Total	62	N/A	Diverse cross-sector sample meeting the 60-response target

Note on interpretation: the T2.2 data is exploratory. With roughly 10 to 18 survey responses and around 5 interviews per country, and with some questions using country-specific answer options, the percentages below indicate direction and relative emphasis rather than statistically representative measures. Where answer scales or item lists differed between countries, this is flagged beneath the relevant table. Items not offered in a given national questionnaire are marked n/a.

3.2 Current Sustainability Practices in Sport

3.2.2 Most Common Practices

Practice	PT	FI	SI	ES
Reusable bottles / less single-use plastic	67%	38%	39%[1]	40%
Waste reduction and recycling	50%	50%	39%	50%
Sustainable transport promotion	17%	88%	61%	60%
Nature-based / outdoor activities	56%	25%	72%	50%
Energy efficiency in facilities	28%	6%	33%	40%
Sustainable procurement	39%	81%	n/a[2]	n/a
Awareness campaigns	17%	25%	11%[3]	10%
Carbon footprint monitoring	17%	19%	n/a	n/a

Practice lists differed slightly by country. [1] The Slovenian item referred to reusable cups. [2] Slovenia offered cooperation with local suppliers (50%) rather than sustainable procurement; the final Spanish questionnaire did not offer sustainable procurement or carbon footprint monitoring. [3] The Slovenian item referred to promotional and awareness events. The energy-efficiency row was added in this revision, as it was present in the national surveys but omitted from the earlier draft.

3.2.3 Main Barriers

Barrier	PT	FI	SI	ES
Lack of funding	61%	38%	39%	30%
Lack of knowledge / expertise	39%	81%	50%[1]	50%
Low participant or stakeholder interest	11%	38%	50%[2]	10%
Competing priorities	39%	38%	22%	20%
Institutional resistance	11%	12%	n/a	10%
No clear guidelines / tools	33%	25%	28%	30%

Portuguese values are reported as qualitative bands following the scale agreed by the consortium: low = 0 to 49 percent, moderate = 50 to 69 percent, high = 70 to 100 percent. [1] Slovenia distinguished a lack of collective knowledge among funders and local stakeholders (50%) from a lack of implementation knowledge (28%). [2] The Slovenian item referred to low stakeholder motivation rather than participant interest specifically. In Finland, limited management capacity was reported separately at 31 percent.

3.2.4 Youth Interest in Sustainability

Across all partner countries, respondents generally perceived young people as interested in sustainability issues, although the level of interest varied.

In Portugal, respondents reported relatively high levels of interest, with most considering young people either very or moderately interested in sustainability. Similar patterns were observed in Spain, although respondents more frequently described youth interest as moderate rather than high.

In Slovenia, respondents generally viewed young people as interested in sustainability issues, while also noting variation between individuals and contexts. Interviewees highlighted the role of outdoor culture and nature-based activities in supporting environmental awareness among young people.

Finnish respondents reported mixed views. While many considered young people interested in sustainability, a substantial share selected "don't know / not relevant", indicating uncertainty about assessing young people's interest on behalf of others rather than a lack of interest among young people themselves.

Overall, the findings suggest that sustainability is a relevant topic for many young people across the partner countries, but that interest alone does not automatically translate into action. Respondents consistently highlighted the need for practical, engaging and participatory approaches that connect sustainability to young people's everyday lives.

3.3 Reaction to the OofS Concept

3.3.1 Appeal of the Concept

Rating	PT	FI	SI[1]	ES
5/5 (extremely appealing)	50%	31%	33%	10%
4/5 (very appealing)	33%	50%	17%	40%
3/5 (moderate)	17%	6%	17%	10%
2/5 or below	0%	12%	34%	40%

[1] Slovenia used an acceptability scale (very acceptable, good, acceptable, partially acceptable, not acceptable), mapped here to the 5-point ratings; the 2/5-or-below row combines partially acceptable (28%) and not acceptable (6%).

The concept received strong support in Portugal (83 percent rated it 4 or 5), Finland (81 percent rated it 4 or 5) and Slovenia (67 percent rated it acceptable or better). Spain showed the most mixed reception, with 50 percent rating it 4 or 5 and 40 percent rating it 2 or below, reflecting its earlier-stage sustainability-sport integration.

3.3.2 Most Engaging Sustainability Challenges

Aggregated across all countries, the sustainability challenges considered most engaging for young people are:

- Waste collection challenges and community clean-up competitions, consistently popular across all four countries.
- Upcycling and creative reuse workshops, the single most common choice in Finland and strong in Portugal and Slovenia, fostering circular-economy thinking.
- Tree-planting challenges, strong in Portugal and Spain, linked to local reforestation needs.
- Sustainable transport challenges, prominent in Finland and Spain, leveraging existing cycling and public-transport options.
- Nature-based orienteering and biodiversity observation, popular in Slovenia and Finland, connecting sport with nature education.
- Climate action planning, noted in Portugal and Finland, linking sport to civic engagement.

3.3.3 Scoring Balance

Preferred balance	PT	FI	SI	ES
Equal (50/50)	78%	81%	56%	40%
Sustainability or quality-weighted (70-80%)	11%	12%	39%	0%
Sport-weighted (70-80%)	11%	6%	6%	40%
No preference	0%	0%	0%	20%

In Slovenia the sustainability or quality-weighted option was framed as quality of delivery and sustainability weighted to about 70 percent, with the sporting result at about 30 percent.

An equal 50/50 balance was the clear preference in Portugal, Finland and Slovenia. Spain is the exception and the only country with a substantial sport-weighted preference: there, respondents were split evenly between an equal balance (40 percent) and sport-weighted scoring (40 percent). The earlier claim that 50/50 was endorsed across all countries should therefore be qualified for Spain. The flexible 40/60 to 60/40 band in the common framework accommodates this variation.

3.3.4 Competitive versus Collaborative Format

Across all countries the preferred format is a hybrid in which competition helps but collaboration carries comparable weight. In Finland half of respondents found competition useful but not essential and a further quarter expressed no preference, with only a small share considering it essential. In Slovenia 61 percent saw competition as important but not the primary purpose and 33 percent favoured a collaborative or participation-based format. In Spain 60

percent found competition useful but believed collaboration should have equal importance. Pure competition was endorsed by a minority (strongest among Portuguese sport-club respondents), while purely collaborative formats received limited support. The OofS competitive-collaborative design is directly supported by this evidence.

3.4 Inclusion and target groups

The 30% inclusion target was generally considered achievable, but stakeholders emphasised that it would not happen automatically. Key challenges included reaching underrepresented groups, overcoming financial and transport barriers, and ensuring that activities are accessible and welcoming to a diverse range of participants. Suggested solutions included school partnerships, targeted outreach, mixed-gender teams, free or affordable participation, transport support and collaboration with organisations working with underrepresented groups. The most effective inclusion strategies identified across countries were:

- Targeted outreach through schools and youth centres, the top strategy in all countries.
- Mixed-gender team requirements, with strong support everywhere.
- Free participation and subsidised transport, identified as critical in Portugal and Spain.
- Stakeholders highlighted the value of working with organisations that engage underrepresented groups and young people facing barriers to participation.
- Peer ambassador programmes and community-leader engagement, noted across all countries.
- Communication in accessible formats and multiple languages.

3.5 Long-term adoption and sustainability

Adoption likelihood	PT	FI	SI[1]	ES
Very likely	44%	0%	17%	20%
Likely	33%	50%	44%	10%
Possible	6%	38%	n/a	30%
Unlikely or very unlikely	17%	12%	39%	40%

[1] Slovenia used a four-point scale with no neutral middle option, and its question asked about the likelihood of a lasting effect and local co-financing rather than the organisation's own adoption. Adoption appeal was strongest in Portugal and weakest in Spain, where half of respondents were doubtful.

Several municipalities across the partner countries indicated willingness to sign letters of support or Memoranda of Understanding for long-term implementation. In the Slovenian consultation, all participating municipalities confirmed such willingness.

When asked what the Green Playbook should contain, stakeholders prioritised practical, ready-to-use tools. The aggregated ranking across countries was:

Element	Priority rank
Planning templates and checklists	1 (top choice in all countries)
Examples of sustainability challenges and rules	2
Scoring and evaluation systems	3
Budget examples and cost estimates	4
Communication and promotional materials	5
Impact measurement and reporting tools	6
Case studies from pilot events	7
Policy recommendations	8

3.6 Interview Findings: Key Themes Across Countries

20 in-depth interviews were conducted across the four partner countries (4 in Portugal, 5 in Finland, 6 in Slovenia and 5 in Spain). All interview data is reported anonymously, in line with commitments made to interviewees. The interviews provided qualitative depth that complements the survey data.

3.6.1 Finland: Interview Synthesis

Five interviews were conducted with representatives from sport organisations, educational settings, NGOs and youth-work professionals. Key findings include:

- Young people generally demonstrate high awareness of sustainability issues in their everyday lives, but additional support and practical opportunities are needed to translate this awareness into action through sport.
- Outdoor activities, adventure education, nature-based learning and biodiversity-related activities were identified as particularly suitable approaches for combining physical activity and sustainability learning.
- Schools, youth organisations, sports clubs, social media and peer networks were highlighted as important channels for reaching young people, particularly those not currently involved in organised sport.
- Financial barriers, transport challenges and limited organisational resources may restrict participation and implementation. Events should

therefore be low-cost or free and designed to minimise participation barriers.

- Inclusion should be embedded throughout the event design. Interviewees highlighted the importance of accessibility, diverse representation, safe environments and meaningful involvement of underrepresented groups in planning and implementation.

- Simplicity emerged as a key success factor. The Green Playbook should provide practical and easy-to-use resources, including activity ideas, templates, checklists, communication materials, evaluation tools and implementation guidance.

3.6.2 Slovenia: Interview Synthesis

SDE conducted six interviews with municipalities and sport organisations. All participating municipalities confirmed willingness to provide a letter of support for long-term implementation. Key findings:

- Strong emphasis on energy efficiency at community level: widespread LED lighting, solar panels on public sport facilities, sustainable-mobility promotion, and eco-event management (trail running, cycling) with waste-reduction measures.
- Youth aged 15 to 19 show moderate awareness of environmental protection. Theoretical understanding is strong, but a gap remains between knowledge and practice. Social media is a double-edged factor, increasing visibility but often promoting superficial engagement.
- The initiative was perceived as innovative and engaging, with strong potential for environmental awareness, social inclusion and active participation through sport. The international dimension was seen as particularly valuable for replication.
- Preferred game types: interactive, team-based games in natural environments; adventure and obstacle-course activities; and games incorporating recycling tasks, resource management and sustainability problem-solving. Locally adapted and traditional games were seen as added value.
- A hybrid format combining competition with experiential learning was consistently preferred. Competition motivates, but the primary focus should remain on learning, cooperation and personal development rather than performance alone.
- Main barriers: financial resources, limited human capacity, the gap between strategic planning and practical implementation, insufficient cross-sector coordination, and administrative procedures.

- Achieving 30% participation from disadvantaged groups is considered realistic with careful planning: adapted rules, simplified instructions, differentiated task complexity, trained support staff, smaller group settings, peer support and cooperation with special-education institutions and social services.

3.6.3 Spain: Interview Synthesis

Five interviews were conducted with municipalities and youth organisations. Key findings:

- Sport and sustainability are perceived as complementary, but practical integration is still limited in the Spanish context.
- Municipal support is considered essential for successful implementation, as municipalities control venues, funding and community networks.
- The competitive element is valued by young people, but events should include educational and social components to avoid excluding less competitive participants.
- Local sustainability themes (water management, Mediterranean biodiversity, waste reduction from tourism) should be embedded in the competition design.
- Schools and local sport clubs are the most effective recruitment channels, with social media as a supporting tool.

3.6.4 Portugal: Interview Synthesis

Four interviews were conducted with stakeholders including sport managers, municipality representatives and education professionals. Key findings:

- Strong interest in the OofS model, particularly the gamification approach and the dual scoring system combining sport with sustainability actions.
- The Serra da Gardunha natural environment in Fundão provides an ideal setting for orienteering-based sustainability challenges.
- Inclusion of refugee and migrant communities and economically disadvantaged youth requires targeted outreach, free participation and transport support.
- The connection between sport and environmental education aligns well with the Portuguese school curriculum's Citizenship and Development subject.

- Sustainability of results beyond the project period depends on municipal commitment and on embedding the methodology into existing sport programmes.

3.6.5 Cross-Country Interview Themes

Six overarching themes emerge from the combined interview data:

- Simplicity is the key success factor. Complex scoring, excessive bureaucracy or overly ambitious designs risk deterring organisations. Clear structures and step-by-step guidance are essential.
- Schools are the gateway to youth. Educational institutions are the most effective channel for reaching 15 to 19 year-olds, particularly inactive youth.
- Competition works, but collaboration matters more. A playful competition format that values teamwork, learning and shared experience alongside performance is preferred. Formats that eliminate weaker teams early should be avoided.
- Local adaptation is a precondition for relevance. Challenges must reflect local priorities: water in Fundão, biodiversity in Slovenia, sustainable tourism in Pedreguer, outdoor culture in Finland.
- Financial accessibility determines inclusion. Free participation, subsidised transport and loaned equipment are non-negotiable for genuine inclusion of underrepresented groups.
- Institutional champions drive adoption. Successful initiatives depend on motivated individuals within organisations. The Playbook should guide how to identify and support such champions.

4. Proposed Structures for National Olympics of Sustainability

4.1 Common Competition Framework

Element	Specification
Format	One-day event combining sport, sustainability and environmental learning activities
Teams	5 members, aged 15–19, with a minimum of 2 girls per team*

Element	Specification
Scale	5–10 teams (25–50 participants) per national event
Scoring	Teams earn points through sport and sustainability activities, alongside a dedicated Green Badge recognition system
Green Badge	Awarded to teams achieving at least 70% of the available sustainability score and meeting the Green Badge criteria
Inclusion	Free or affordable participation; transport support where needed; accessibility and adaptation measures; mixed-gender teams encouraged or required according to local implementation. Participants should be welcomed and included regardless of gender, gender identity, disability, ethnic background, religion, sexual orientation or other personal characteristics.
Evaluation	Pre- and post-event surveys; activity scoring; participant feedback; photo and video documentation
Qualification	Winning team advances to the European Finals (Pedreguer)

4.2 National Event Profiles

Dimension	Portugal (Fundão)	Slovenia (Dobravlje)	Spain (Pedreguer)
Implementing partner	MoF	SDE	MoP
Venue	Serra da Gardunha and municipal facilities	Ajdovščina area and outdoor spaces	Pedreguer municipal facilities and coastal area
Local sustainability themes	Water management, reforestation, rural connectivity	Biodiversity, outdoor sport, community engagement	Sustainable tourism, Mediterranean biodiversity, waste management
Recruitment channels	Schools, Municipal Youth Council, Migration Centre	Schools, Ajdovščina Institute, municipal networks	Schools, local clubs, Valencia sport network
Estimated participation	25 to 50 participants	25 to 50 participants	25 to 50 participants
Target date	M11 (July 2026)	M10 to M11	M10 to M11

5. Sample activities for National OofS competitions

A range of adaptable sport and sustainability activities has been developed based on the findings of T2.1, stakeholder preferences identified through T2.2 and partner expertise from across the consortium. The activities combine physical activity, environmental learning, teamwork and problem-solving while allowing organisers to adapt implementation to local contexts, participant needs and available resources.

The activity catalogue includes both the six Eco Games, originally developed through SDE's Eco Athlete programme and adapted for the Olympics of Sustainability framework, and four additional activities contributed by

consortium partners. Together, these activities provide a flexible toolkit that can be used in schools, municipalities, sports clubs and community settings.

Examples of activities included in the Green Playbook are:

- Capture the Eco Flag
- Eco Challenge Relay
- Eco Bowling
- Eco Tail Tag
- Eco Rescue Mission
- Eco Upcycling Challenge
- Eco Adventure Orienteering
- Green Travel Challenge and Workshop
- Eco Knowledge Quiz
- Water Footprint Challenge

The activities cover a broad range of sustainability themes, including waste management, recycling, biodiversity, sustainable mobility, water consumption, circular economy principles and environmental awareness. Organisers are encouraged to select and adapt activities according to local priorities, participant needs and available resources.

Detailed activity cards, scoring systems, materials lists and implementation guidance are provided in the Green Playbook (D2.2).

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Key Findings

The awareness-action gap is evident across all four countries. Young people express concern about environmental issues but often lack structured and engaging opportunities to translate this awareness into action through sport.

Sustainability in sport remains fragmented, often concentrated at elite, event or federation level, and is only rarely embedded within grassroots youth sport programmes. No standardised methodology for integrating sustainability into youth sport competitions was identified in any of the partner countries.

The OofS concept received positive stakeholder support across the consortium. The integration of sport and sustainability activities, the Green Badge recognition system and the use of game-based learning approaches were generally viewed as attractive and engaging ways to involve young people in sustainability-related action.

Simplicity and practicality emerged as the most important success factors. Stakeholders consistently emphasised the need for ready-to-use tools, clear guidance and low-threshold implementation models rather than complex methodological frameworks.

Inclusion requires deliberate planning and resource allocation. Free or affordable participation, transport support, accessibility measures, adaptive activities and proactive outreach were identified as important conditions for reaching a diverse range of young people.

Local relevance matters. Sustainability challenges should reflect local environmental priorities, community contexts and available resources in order to maximise engagement and ownership.

Schools represent one of the most important pathways for reaching the target group of young people aged 15–19 and were consistently identified as key partners across all four countries.

Gamification and team-based learning approaches were widely supported. Stakeholders highlighted that combining participation, teamwork, environmental learning and friendly competition can increase motivation and engagement among young people.

6.2 Recommendations

- Design implementation tools for simplicity and usability. Step-by-step guidance, templates, activity cards, checklists and budget examples should remain central features of the OofS methodology.
- Strengthen cooperation with schools, municipalities, sports clubs and youth organisations to support recruitment, implementation and long-term sustainability.
- Embed inclusion, accessibility and safeguarding from the outset of event planning rather than treating them as separate or optional components.

- Ensure that activities can be adapted to local environmental priorities, available facilities, participant needs and organisational capacity while maintaining the core principles of the OofS methodology.
- Use gamification, team-based learning and the Green Badge recognition system to encourage participation, environmental learning and positive behaviour change.
- Support local capacity-building by providing practical resources and guidance for organisers with limited prior experience in sustainability or event management.
- Document pilot events systematically through participant feedback, evaluation data, photos, videos and implementation reflections to support future development and replication.
- Promote cross-sector collaboration between sport, education, youth and environmental stakeholders to strengthen long-term impact and sustainability.

6.3 Policy Implications

The findings of this e-Paper have implications for sport and sustainability policy at local, national and European levels.

The OofS model demonstrates that sport can serve as an effective platform for sustainability education, environmental awareness and positive behaviour change among young people. While sustainability is increasingly discussed within sport policy, practical methodologies for implementation at grassroots level remain limited.

Policy-makers may therefore wish to consider:

- Integrating sustainability objectives into grassroots sport funding programmes.
- Including sustainability topics within coach education and sport leadership training.
- Recognising sport as a potential vehicle for sustainability education and youth engagement within broader environmental and climate strategies.
- Supporting cooperation between sport, education, youth and environmental sectors.
- Investing in practical, community-based initiatives that combine physical activity, sustainability and social inclusion.

The OofS methodology provides one example of how these objectives can be translated into practical action at local level while remaining adaptable to different national and community contexts.

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