A. Introduction

From 19 January to 31 January 2010 the Austrian Handball Federation hosted the Men’s Euro 2010 which was a huge success. 285,000 spectators in five arenas watched 47 games, which meant more than an average of 6,000 spectators per game. The various TV companies broadcast 1,706 hours of game coverage viewed by more than 1,031 billion spectators worldwide. The organisation of an event of that dimension demanded the highest standards in all fields of preparation and planning, a professional event management strategy, specialists from all fields, and a state-of-the-art working foundation and infrastructure\(^1\), which posed a unique challenge to the Austrian Handball Federation.

In contrast to the “Home” B-World Championship in 1992 where Austria went to the final against Norway, thus arousing a wave of enthusiasm amongst fans all over the country, but was not prepared to take any initiative to turn public interest into lasting support after the event, the Austrian Handball Federation introduced sustainability aspects into the three year period of preparation for the EURO 2010 hoping thus to achieve lasting effects within the Austrian handball community.

Sustainability

The term sustainability has a rather vague meaning – various definitions can be found in scientific papers - and is particularly related to ecology. “The word sustainability is derived from the Latin sustinere (tenere, to hold; sus, up). Dictionaries provide more than ten meanings for sustain, the main ones being to “maintain”, "support", or "endure"\(^2\). “However, since the 1980s sustainability

\(^1\) http://www.ehf-euro.com/2010-and-beyond.365.0.html#

has been used more in the sense of human sustainability on planet Earth and this has resulted in the most widely quoted definition of sustainability and sustainable development, that of the Brundtland Commission of the United Nations on March 20, 1987: “sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

At the 2005 World Summit it was noted that this definition “requires the reconciliation of environmental, social and economic demands - the "three pillars" of sustainability. This view has been expressed as an illustration using three overlapping ellipses indicating that the three pillars of sustainability are not mutually exclusive and can be mutually reinforcing.

![Diagram of three overlapping ellipses: Environment, Society, Economy]

6 This representation of sustainability shows how both economy and society are constrained by environmental limits.

The UN definition is not universally accepted and has undergone various interpretations. What sustainability is, what its goals should be, and how these goals are to be achieved is all open to interpretation.

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In our paper, however, the emphasis will not be on environmental issues, but on the practical, economic, and social implications of a mega-event such as the EURO 2010. In short on questions such as what can be done to achieve maximum lasting effects in regard to:

- winning over more young players for the game, thus increasing the overall number of handball players in Austria,
- keeping the interest of the media going (TV, print media),
- winning over political decision makers for the sport,
- engaging educational authorities to include handball into school curricula,
- improving the financial situation of the clubs by developing sponsoring programmes,
- creating a new awareness for the necessity of networking etc.

We therefore understand sustainability as an effort by those involved in handball in Austria to bring about a change, an improvement of the present, a new way of thinking what handball on all levels should be in the future. We will discuss these aspects by referring to the sustainability programme of the Austrian Handball Federation.

**B. The sustainability programme of the Austrian Handball Federation**

The programme consisted of various individual measures which had one aim in common: to preserve the enthusiasm and drive of the event itself, and to move handball in Austria from a fringe team sport to a widely known, attractive, and popular activity. As a consequence an increase in the number of new players in the clubs was to be expected, thus broadening the basis of the sport.
1. Evaluation - facts and figures

It was clear from the very beginning that any good sustainability programme had to start with thorough documentation.

a. New activities
   - pre-event Mini Handball tournaments,
   - international promotion tour,
   - organization of draw events,
   - new forms of entertainment in the respective competition halls such as: “fair play” announcements, music programmes, the presence of the EURO mascot, the kiss cam, and the presentation of the EURO anthem “Magic Moments Feel so Good”.

b. Media
   - 44 hours of coverage on ORF Sport Plus (TV),
   - 7 hours on ORF (TV),
   - 1 million spectators on ORF Plus (TV),
   - 1 million spectators on ORF (TV),
   - continuous presence on Ö3 (radio) and other broadcasting networks.

c. Print media
   - more than 400 illustrated handball related articles,
   - more than 1,000 articles on the event itself.

d. External profitability
   - 8,000 overnight stays of teams and officials,
   - 8,000 overnight stays of journalists.

e. Some additional figures
   - 285,000 spectators in five arenas watched 47 games,
   - 700 registered volunteers,
   - 2,500 helpers in the various areas.
2. Evaluation - support by the Austrian Handball Federation for clubs, regional organizations, and schools


3. Activities

Apart from the material described above the Austrian Handball Federation provided vouchers to buy various articles associated with handball at reduced prices, and had posters of the EM team, a video of the highlights of the EM, and a promotion DVD “Teamsport Handball” sent to clubs, schools, volunteers, and fans.

4. Broadening of the basis

a) Mini Handball

From the beginning Mini Handball was considered to be one of the most effective tools to foster the idea of how to play handball on the one hand, and, even more important, on the other to win new young players in order to have a bigger “reservoir” for the future. Following this guideline the Austrian Handball Federation:

• by financing the trainers, encouraged clubs to present themselves with show training sessions at elementary schools,
• created Mini Handball “ambassadors”, travelling salesmen for handball in the various federal states,
• had various Mini Handball tournaments organized all over Austria, and, as already stated above, provided the relevant teaching materials.
b) Youth camps in summer
Another aspect of recruiting new players was the idea of organizing summer camps for young people with the participation of players from the various national teams.

c) Foundation of new clubs
In addition, the Austrian Handball Federation defined the foundation of one new club per year in each of the provincial associations as a goal for the future. To achieve this aim the Austrian Handball Federation offered starter packages (know-how, financial support, etc.) to the newly founded clubs.

d) Additional competitions
- Masters events for seniors: age group +35/+45,
- Tournaments organized by companies (McDonalds, Shell etc.).

e) Beach Handball
Beach handball was officially recognized as an individual sport within the Austrian Federal Sports Organization (BSO). As a consequence official Austrian Beach Handball competitions were and will be held from the season 2009/10 onwards, thus opening new channels for achieving public awareness of the sport.

f) Special events
During the Euro 2010 two special test events took place:
- Wheelchair handball (an international match AUT-SWE) which was organized in cooperation with the EHF, and
- Special Olympics AUT-GER in Innsbruck.
g) Intensification of education

- Coaches’ and trainers’ education is to be intensified by the responsible department within the Austrian Handball Federation,
- Training courses for teachers are to be offered in each provincial state free of charge.

h) Referee scouting

Since the Austrian Handball Federation has always understood refereeing as an integral part of the handball game, the scouting of new referees was another important aspect of the sustainability programme. Two ways of approach seemed to be suited to this task:
- scouting amongst C-level licence candidates and,
- winning ex-handball players for the job.

i) Cooperation of educational institutions (schools, universities, etc.) and clubs

In the area of models for cooperation between schools and clubs the sustainability programme contained the following measures:
- each club of the first and second division had to commit itself to a cooperation between a school (elementary, secondary or other) and the club,
- clubs would be commended according to the cooperation models they set up,
- clubs with high quality instruction for young players were to be nominated for special awards,
- qualified trainers were to be incorporated in physical education lessons with the approval of principals,
- model lessons were to be presented,
- each federal country was to set up its own training centre for young talents,
- schools were to be supported in their preparation for international school competitions,
- teachers’ training at all levels had top priority.
j) Scouting and training of new officials

As the importance of well trained officials within a federation must not be neglected, several guidelines on how to proceed were included in the programme:

- sports management courses were offered by the Austrian Federal Sports Organization (BSO),
- training courses for officials within the Austrian Handball Federation were organized,
- it was planned to motivate ex-handball players to take up a career as officials.

5. New halls

Special emphasis was placed upon the demand for new halls to be built, particularly in Vienna by 2020, thus providing young people and the clubs with sufficient room for training and competitions. It goes without saying that this demand is a question of political and financial feasibility.

6. Communication

The organizers of the EURO considered Communication to the public of all those measures described above an extremely important matter. For that reason the organizers planned:

- a professional communication structure between the Austrian Handball Federation and the federal boards, clubs, and schools,
- professional PR management,
- setting up of data bases,
- a newsletter of their own.
7. EHF - Austrian Handball Federation

Last but not least optimum cooperation between the EHF and the Austrian Handball Federation was one of the pillars for the tremendous success of the event. The smooth cooperation and the know-how in regard to organizing mega-events readily offered by the EHF provided the stable background against which the events unfolded.

C. Conclusion

The effectiveness of sustainability programmes is based on the following. Firstly, on the structure of the organization and the structure of the relevant programme applied. Secondly, on whether the principle of sustainability has been incorporated into the various organizational procedures of the body which organizes, carries out, and evaluates an important sports event, and thirdly, on whether organizations succeed in encouraging employees to think and act sustainably.

“In theoretical terms ... top-down and bottom-up sustainability organizing would be equally effective within an organization. But in practice, organizations where sustainability advocacy comes from top levels were found to have higher effectiveness in their engagement programs”⁸. Consequently the various sustainability inputs were formulated by the Organizing Committee of the Austrian Handball Federation and finally adapted by the relevant regional and local subcommittees.

The question whether the measures of the Austrian Handball Federation described above will have the desired effect in the long run, cannot be answered conclusively at present, since it will take more time and an intensive evaluation process to gauge their effect. One aspect, however, undoubtedly holds true: because of the fact that the “street” does not provide new talents for the clubs as it does for the national sport “soccer”, the schools, their

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⁸ http://www.greenbiz.com/blog/2010/02/19/three-keys-winning-sustainability-programs-revealed?page=0%2C1#ixzz0wscE8eVe
capacities and curricula are the only source of new talents for Austrian handball.

We can only hope that our young players will benefit in their development on all levels from the EURO 2010 and that the quality of Austrian Handball will take a further step closer to international standards.

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