

14th edition

Sport governance : a key driver for the professionalisation of the sport sector

EASE

European Association of Sport Employers

With the participation of our members



CONFEDERAZIONE DELLO SPORT



This EASE Talk is based on the participation of M Daniel Ley from INAPS, Luxemburg. This topic has been initiated by our members, when they have raised the real need and problem in their national sport movement.

EASE thanks also Younes Filali (KU Leuven), a podcaster for his insights and reflexions on this topic.

A 'Governance Gap' in the sport sector ?

The EASE Talk session highlights a transformative shift in the European sport sector, focusing on the recognition and training in terms of governance. As grassroots organizations face an increasing 'governance gap,' the discussion moves beyond the binary choice between volunteers and professionals to champion capacity building. By integrating standardized educational pathways, national insights, and cross-border cooperation, this session outlines a macro-vision to turn sport management into a credible, sustainable, and highly respected professional field.

The Challenge: Technical Excellence vs. Administrative Fragility

- **The Paradox:** Technical staff (coaches) are highly certified, yet management often lacks formal training.
- **Defining the "Governance Gap":** a systemic knowledge deficit occurring when the leadership of an organization lacks the specific administrative, legal, and strategic competencies required to navigate modern complexities. The **administrative core remains fragile** due to a **lack of formal management training**.
- **Actionism vs. Strategy:** A deficit in governance leads to "**Actionism**"—a state of constant reactive management where leaders fix immediate fires with short-term solutions rather than following a macro-vision.
- **Compliance Risks:** A lack of expertise in legal frameworks and financial transparency **creates vulnerability to audits**, loss of funding, and professional liability.
- **The Goal:** Moving from "**fragile, volunteer-led associations**" to "**credible, stable institutions.**"

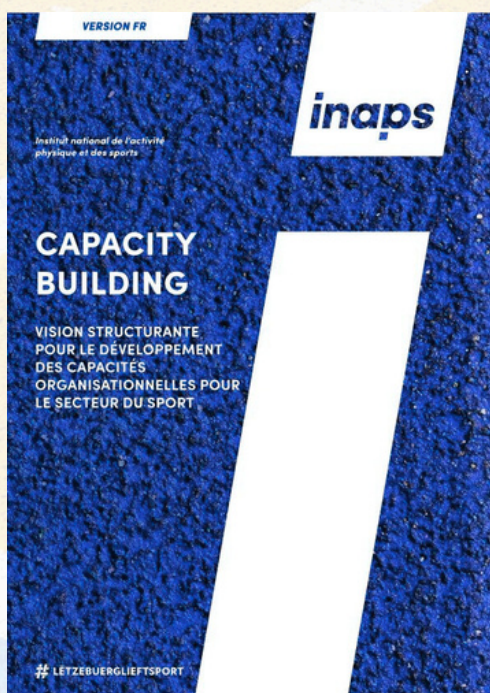


= The Governance Gap: A real Threat to Stability

A New Philosophy: Capacity Building

Moving Beyond the "Professional vs. Volunteer" Binary.

- Shift in Perspective: It is not about who does the work (paid vs. unpaid), **but the competence with which it is done.**
- The 4 Pillars of a Professional Sector:
 - **Education Framework:** State-recognized **diplomas** (e.g., BTS), or a **VET** that enables everyone to be educated to good governance.
 - **Ethical Charter:** Standardized **values** for coaches and managers.
 - **Social Legitimacy:** Meeting **public needs** (Health, Youth Development).
 - **Institutional Response:** Structured policy and state support.
- **The 7 Key Areas:** INAPS Luxembourg identifies **7 organizational competencies required for a sustainable club** (regardless of staff status).



"Professionalization is not about replacing volunteers; it is about capacity building."
– Daniel Ley, INAPS Luxembourg

This is the most important takeaway. Professionalizing doesn't mean firing volunteers, but rather giving the organization the "capacity" to succeed. The sport sector relies mainly on volunteers, the goal would be to give them resources and competences to do better in terms of good governance.

Practical Tools & Educational Pathways

From Theory to Action: The Luxembourg Model (INAPS) :

- **The Capacity Map:** * A self-evaluation tool for sports organizations.
 - Now a prerequisite for public funding in Luxembourg—no map, no money.
- **New Educational Paths:**
 - BTS in Sports Management: 2-year degree producing "operational leaders" capable of managing day-to-day risks.
- **Strategic Funding:** Using Erasmus+ to force international visibility and best-practice adoption.



"The most important part is helping decision-makers develop a long-term and multi-perspective vision."

– Daniel Ley, answering WOS's question on impactful education

Education isn't just about getting a diploma; it's about changing the mindset of the people running the clubs.

The Future of the European Sport Ecosystem

Standardization and Cross-Border Cooperation

- **European Integration:**
 - Establishing a European Framework for recognizing good governance skills.
 - Exchange platforms for decision-makers (cross-border cooperation).
- **The Outcome:** Transforming sports management into a highly respected professional field.
- **Key Driver:** Integrating practical education with a deep understanding of EU policy to better advocate for the sector's needs.



"There is a lack of voice in decision-making for those on the ground; we need platforms that ask: 'What do you actually need?'"
– Synthesized from INAPS and Younes exchange.

This highlights the "Top-Down vs. Bottom-Up" issue in sports governance and the need for exchange platforms.

