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Work Package N°4 Report

Implementation of EFB in Sports Clubs

Recommendations and Regional Model (Austria)





Edition notice**Authors**

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<p>Description of Target Group</p>	<p>This report is made for umbrella organisations of sports clubs, sports-for-all organisations or similar and provides a guideline on how to achieve a sustainable use of the EFB in sports clubs and how to overcome implementations hurdles. The basic setting is the implementation within one country by an organisation which has access to sport clubs. This report gives no information on how to implement the EFB in other organisations than sports clubs. The use of EFB in e.g. companies as part of workplace health promotion or in fitness studios is not part of this report.</p>
<p>General description of strategy taken</p>	<p>Aim of this report is to show different ways how to implement the EFB in regional sports clubs and to describe the framework conditions necessary for a sustainable implementation. The findings are based on experiences made in Austria. Different approaches were tested, in order to gain information about the procedures which work the best (and work not), time frame and financial resources needed. The scenarios were evaluated quantitatively (number of EFB coaches, active codes, events) and qualitatively (feedback of clubs and participants, lessons learned). Based in these findings, general recommendations for the regional implementations can be given.</p> <p>The hereafter described regional implementation scenarios were tried and tested during the project period in Austria, with the basic conditions of the Austrian sports system: Within the national sports system, the SPORTUNION is a national wide sports umbrella organisation that covers 4.370 regional sports clubs with approximately 921.000 members. The national wide network of clubs is based on voluntary work and civil engagement. Sport clubs carry out voluntary tasks in the interest of common welfare. As a broad sports organization SPORTUNION is committed to promote sport and physical activity in the Austrian population. Through sport the SPORTUNION create enthusiasm and motivates more than 50.000 volunteers in various functions: as volunteers, lectures, instructors and trainers they are committed to the community in their spare time. Since 2006 health promotion and prevention becomes an important field of activity. The main work of the umbrella organisation is to strengthen the work of the local clubs, that traditionally provide elite sports as well as leisure sports activities.</p>
<p>Activities performed</p>	<p>During the project period, three possible approaches for implementation of EFB in local sports clubs were tested. This enabled to show different ways of implementation, including hurdles and advantageous factors.</p> <p>The following scenarios were conducted with SPORTUNION member clubs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Implementation of EFB without targeted activities (2) Integration of EFB in existing projects & activities (3) Targeted Implementation in pilot region <p>(1) Implementation of EFB without targeted activities</p> <p>This way can be described as “business as usual” strategy. This means the enrolment of the EFB without any further measures from the implementing organisation.</p> <p>The EFB is one offer among others for sports clubs. There are no special activities for further promotion of the EFB. The information about the tool is given to sports clubs through the association’s regular communication channels.</p>



Activities performed

execution of trainer's seminars and their advertisement as well as advertisement of the EFB itself, meaning informing about the innovative character and the benefits for clubs and participants.

The member clubs were informed about the benefits of the new tool and the possibility to attend the EFB trainer's seminar:

- through E-Mail Newsletters of the regional SPORTUNION associations
- through the member journal
- within personal meetings organized by the regional SPORTUNION associations
- on the SPORTUNION Akademie homepage (seminar dates and details)
- in the SPORTUNION Akademie programme brochure
- on the SPORTUNION homepage and the homepages of the regional associations (all details to EFB)

For the organisation of the EFB-seminars, personnel and financial resources are needed. Costs are dependent on country and structure of the offering organisation and course fees. Especially the latter will have an impact on the number of participants.

Evaluation

The impact of the new offer was evaluated through the EFB Data platform (number of trainers participated, active/non-active E-Codes, number of events/persons tested)

(2) Integration of EFB in existing projects & activities

In order to bring EFB to sports clubs, it was integrated in already existing projects. On the one hand, synergies can be utilized, on the other hand, the successful implementation of EFB is highly dependent on the running project.

Activities performed

In Austria, EFB was integrated into three completely different projects.

- (a) Integration in in-house funding program: all participating sports clubs of this specific funding program (so-called "Fit-und-gesund-Vereinspaket") had the opportunity to attend the EFB trainer's seminar for free. With this approach the barrier of training expenses should be overcome and as much clubs as possible should be aware of the new offer.
- (b) Integration in co-operation project with healthcare-sector: the project "Jackpot Kärnten" supports standardized exercise programs for health prevention and is run by SPORTUNION together with the national health insurance. All clubs participating in the project are foreseen to participate at the EFB trainer's seminar for free and conduct at least one event as part of the effectiveness review of the sports classes. However, due to high dependency on project partners, the project start was postponed and there are no preliminary results so far.
- (c) Integration in state-funded training program for coaches: since 2019 the EFB trainer's seminar is part of the training program of the Bundessportakademie Graz (BSPA) "Fit Instruktor", which focuses on health oriented and preventive training, with a duration of three weeks. All participants of the state training get the EFB education and code for the data platform.

Evaluation

The impact of the integration was evaluated through the EFB Data platform (number of trainers participated through these projects, active/non-active E-Codes, number of events/persons tested)

(3) Targeted implementation in pilot region

In order to find a strategic way to implement EFB in regional sports clubs, a pilot program was conducted in one region of Austria, namely the Federal State of Lower Austria. As described above, for successful implementation in sports clubs, it is important to be in a position where clubs can be contacted directly. Therefore, this implementation project was conducted in close collaboration with the regional association SPORTUNION Niederösterreich.

Activities performed

Considering the EFB being an instrument mainly for the sector of health and fitness sports, all clubs with offers in this area were considered as potential participants for the pilot study. Via regular communication channels the SPORTUNION Niederösterreich (Article in member journal and E-Mail) informed their >1000 member clubs about the possibility to take part in the EFB Implementation Project. The information was spread via the member journal and through personal emails to all clubs. Out of the informed clubs, 15 showed interest to participate in the project.

Based on the findings of the scenarios (1) and (2), where the interest of clubs was quite low, it was decided to give clubs a financial incentive. However, this means not that clubs gain money with their participation but received compensation for their expenses. The trainer's seminar was for free (more than one coach per club was allowed) and clubs received compensation for their costs for EFB-Events (up to 240€).

This was due to the low name recognition of EFB in Austria in the years 2018/19. Once the EFB is a better-known brand, the implementation in clubs is supposed to be faster and easier. However, this must not make any difference for the findings of the regional implementation guideline, as it has no impact on the clubs' perception of EFB – its advantages and disadvantages and factors which are necessary for successful implementation.

For the 15 interested clubs, a trainer's seminar was scheduled (March 31th, 2019). For different reasons (mainly schedule collisions and illness), only 8 clubs sent coaches to the seminar. In total, 9 coaches were educated.

Each sports club has a different reality and different framework conditions. The challenges for implementing a new tool are therefore highly diverse. One finding from preceding interviews with EFB instructors was, that clubs need a high degree of freedom when it comes to organizing EFB-events in the club's everyday activities.

In the pilot project in Lower Austria, clubs had complete freedom how to perform EFB: they could choose date and mode of their EFB-Event without any restrictions. This procedure should bring as much information as possible about how EFB can work in the different realities of local sports clubs. However, three variants were suggested in order to give clubs a broad idea of what is possible and which factors they must think of during organisation: (a) implementation within regular sports classes, (b) implementation as additional offer besides regular sports classes, (c)

	<p>implementation as separate events. These three possibilities were described in more detail and a step-by-step guideline was provided. Clubs could use these detailed instructions for orientation and adapt for their individual needs or design completely new concepts how to conduct EFB.</p> <p>Clubs received personal information about the procedure of EFB implementation and had one contact person for further personal consultation concerning EFB.</p> <p><u>Evaluation</u></p> <p>In order to gain information about different approaches of EFB implementation, an online survey among the participating clubs was conducted. Not only EFB instructors, but also organisers and assistants of the respective EFB event were asked to answer the questionnaire. As the number of cases is small, the figures of the evaluation cannot be interpreted statistically. However, statistical significance was beyond the scope, but WP 4 rather concentrated on conducting regional case studies. Therefore, the results of the online questionnaire must be interpreted qualitatively.</p> <p>The questionnaire covers the following topics: (1) trainer's seminar, (2) preparation of the event, (3) implementation of the event, (4) EFB as tool for sports clubs. By segregation into these 4 topics, the main hurdles for implementation could be identified and together with the club's mitigation strategies could be developed.</p>
Results	<p>(1) Implementation of EFB without targeted activities</p> <p><u>Conclusion:</u></p> <p>After 9 seminars in 3 years with accompanying information and advertisement activities, there are 8 active EFB-instructors who conduct tests in their local sports clubs. In total, 55 events were created.</p> <p>This way is recommended, if the implementation of the EFB is of low priority for the implementing organisation and/or limited resource allocation. More than 5 years are expected until EFB will reach a high share of national clubs and a significant level of awareness.</p> <p><u>Results in detail:</u></p> <p>In 2017 the courses were well booked. 5 seminars were offered in different regions of Austria. Thereof one had to be cancelled due to low enrolment. Still, in 2017 40 EFB-instructors were educated.</p> <p>For this relatively high number of participants the following explanation can be given: In 2017 the EFB was a completely new and unknown product in Austria, so the initial curiosity of clubs and instructors was high - clubs encouraged their instructors to attend the seminar.</p> <p>In 2018 the interest of clubs changed noticeably. Despite using the same communication channels, 2 out of 4 offers in 2018 and 2019 found not enough participants. In these two years, so far only 14 EFB-instructors were educated within regular trainer's seminars.</p> <p>But the number of participants does not show the use of EFB in real life. The share of trainers, who apply the EFB is quite low. Only 19 of the Codes (37%) were used for data input. Thereof only 8 persons (15%) created 2 or more events. It can be assumed that the ones with only one event were used for one-time self-testing of the instructors (which can be also concluded by the names and dates of the events created).</p>

After 9 seminars in 3 years with accompanying information and advertisement activities, there are 8 active EFB-instructors who conduct tests in their local sports clubs. In total, 55 events were created.

(2) Integration of EFB in existing projects & activities

Conclusion

The success of implementation is highly dependent on the success of the existing projects and activities and possible project partners. On the one hand, the experiences in Austria did not show big impact on the use of EFB in clubs (number of events created) in all three cases. On the other hand, the EFB was promoted through these existing projects and the level of awareness for the innovative tool increased, not only within clubs but also for other organisations involved.

This way is not suitable to implement EFB in local sports clubs if this is the only measure taken. However, as accompanying measure to (1) and (3) the integration in existing projects is recommended, primarily to increase the name recognition of EFB by using the projects' communication channels.

Results in detail

(a) Integration in in-house funding program

In the years 2018 -2019 more than 350 clubs made use of this funding program, which means that more than 350 coaches had the opportunity to participate at the EFB trainer's seminar for free. Only one coach attended the education but did not perform tests.

(b) Integration in co-operation project with healthcare-sector:

At the present moment the approach of including the EFB as compulsory part within "HEPA Kärnten" failed, due to resistance of the project partner. In the preparatory phase (more than on year) SPORTUNION claimed several times the importance of EFB being a compulsory part for the participating clubs. The EFB should serve as a general standard within the project and the results would have been used for evaluation of the program, based on scientific standards. The main argument not to integrate EFB was the additional effort for the clubs and the low level of knowledge of the tool in Austria and Europe.

An integration on a voluntary basis was not chosen, as (a) (see above) already showed no increase in number of EFB tests.

(c) Integration in state-funded training program for coaches:

All 43 participant of the training program took part in the EFB trainer's seminar and received an E-Code. The seminar is held by a multiplier of SPORTUNION, but organised and financed by the Bundessportakademie Graz. Codes (T & E-Codes) are solely given by SPORTUNION. The seminar took place in June. So far, no event was created – one reason might be the suboptimal date of the seminar for sports clubs: usually sports clubs in Austria close during the summer months and start again in September, therefore it is expected, that some coaches will conduct tests in autumn.

(3) Targeted Implementation in pilot region

Conclusion

All clubs participating in the implementation project stated that they plan to continue using EFB in the future. The slow introduction of EFB to the clubs combined with continuous support by SPORTUNION and no additional costs for the clubs is a successful way of implementation in sports clubs.

The main hurdles for clubs were the time frame during testing and the commitment / motivation of participants. Both are dependent on the number of participants and coaches. To prevent these problems, not more than 4 persons should be tested by one coach at a time, as stated in the EFB instructor's manual.

Results in detail

9 coaches out of 8 clubs participated in the trainer's seminar.

As they had complete freedom of how to implement EFB in their clubs, different ways were chosen:

- integration in regular units during the semester
- integration in regular units during summer holiday
- closing event of sports week

After the event, an online survey was sent to the club, and all persons involved in the event (persons responsible for organisation, EFB coaches and assistance persons) were asked to answer the questionnaire.

The results show an overall satisfaction with the tool but also point out some hurdles for the clubs. How to face these hurdles is described in the recommendation's checklist and summarized above (Conclusions).

// trainer's seminar

All aspects of the trainer's seminar were ranked as "very good". The evaluation included the transfer of theoretical and practical knowledge and the information material.

// preparation of the event

The above described ways of implementations were chosen, because it seemed to be of low effort for the clubs. Clubs said they don't want to organise an additional date including advertisement and registration.

Clubs were asked, which aspects were challenging during the preparation phase.

Very easy was the organisation of technical equipment and materials for testing, and to find assistance for tests and data input as well as advertising the EFB.

The planning of the time schedule was different from club to club – whereas ones had no problems at all, others stated it to be rather difficult. Same was the organisation of facilities.

This result again shows the heterogeneity of clubs and persons conducting EFB.

Concerning information material, the feedback for all materials was very positive: Instructor's handbook, tutorials and the information on the EFB Homepage were found to be very helpful or helpful. Also, the personal support of SPORTUNION was very helpful.

// implementation of the event

During the event data input and counselling was for all clubs easy or very easy.

	<p>The timeframe and motivation/commitment of the participants was for some clubs easy, for others hard. This could depend on the number of participants: the lesser participants, the easier these factors were for the clubs.</p> <p><i>// EFB as tool for sports clubs</i></p> <p>All clubs stated, that the EFB is a suitable tool for their sports club and all plan to continue using it within the club's activity after the project is finished. Quite different is the perception of the EFB being an instrument for gaining new members, enhancing motivation for additional physical activity and whether EFB brings long-term commitment of member to the club. Half of the persons answering thinks that the EFB is a good or very good tool to reach these goals, the other half thinks EFB is not or not at all suitable. As this is the personal opinion of the respondents, there is no connection with the way of performing the EFB.</p>
<p>Communications strategy</p>	<p>The communications strategy must fit the chosen way of implementation. In Austria, the existing communication channels between SPORTUNION and member clubs were used for communication concerning EFB.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General information at SPORTUNION website and the websites of the regional associations - E-Mail Newsletters of the regional SPORTUNION associations - Articles in member journal - personal meetings organized by the regional SPORTUNION associations - Advertisement at the SPORTUNION Akademie homepage (seminar dates and details) - SPORTUNION Akademie programme brochure. <p>However, based on the experience in Austria, the following recommendation concerning communications strategy can be given:</p> <p>A targeted communication of the advantages of the EFB is an important factor for success. The messages for e.g. board members and coaches should be different. What to communicate to whom?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → <i>Board</i> of the sports club or person(s) responsible for health sports within the club: show benefit for club at large – number of members (also on the long-term), benefit for public health; → <i>Coaches</i>: EFB as a possibility to get new knowledge, be able to perform and offer professional fitness test (personal additional qualification for coaches) → <i>Participants</i>: EFB as a chance to be informed about a personal fitness status – including strengths and weaknesses – at low cost (or even for free). Further, participants get prove & information about personal improvement as a result of training.
<p>Feedback from participants</p>	<p>The feedback from the participants was part of the evaluation and can be found as recommendations in the next section.</p>
<p>Recommendations checklist</p>	<p><u>GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION</u></p>



	<p>The following recommendations can be given based on the experiences made in Austria. These recommendations are for umbrella organisations which want to bring EFB to their local sports clubs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ EDUCATION: Perhaps the most important aspect for the success for EFB is the trainer's seminar, held by an enthusiastic multiplier. After the seminar, instructors should be able to conduct their EFB event independently (preparation, testing, counselling) and know how to advertise and communicate the EFB in their clubs and within the club's members. ✓ MATERIAL Although the EFB requires a minimum of material, the search for material was one hurdle for coaches. It is therefore recommended to provide a material package (including handbook, balance beam, measuring tape, measuring stick, chalk, tape) for the participants of the trainer's seminar. ✓ MULTIPLIER: make sure you find a suitable multiplier for the trainer's seminar. It is essential, that the multiplier has a high level of intrinsic motivation and is strongly convinced of the concept of EFB. Do not conscript somebody to be a multiplier but try to find volunteers for the multiplier's seminar. ✓ HANDLING OF ODP The handling of the Online Data Platform is one of the biggest hurdles for instructors. Especially if there is a long distance between the trainer's seminar and the first EFB-event, coaches will have questions on how to use the ODP. Recommendations to facilitate the situation for coaches: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → give enough time within the trainer's seminar. → Let them put their own test results into the ODP → Make sure they know where to find the YouTube tutorials → Appoint one contact person as "helpdesk" ✓ FLEXIBILITY: sports clubs are highly divers, not only concerning their organisational structure, but also their course portfolio. Clubs must not be restricted in the way of performing EFB, but they need freedom regarding the organisational framework conditions (such as number of test persons per coach, order of tests performed, etc.). Make sure, that clubs and coaches are aware of their freedom in implementing EFB: They should not feel restricted by the recommendations made in the Handbook for instructors. ✓ COMMUNICATION: A targeted communication of the advantages of the EFB is an important factor for success. The messages for e.g. board members and coaches are different. What to communicate to whom? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → <i>Board</i> of the sports club or person(s) responsible for health sports within the club: show benefit for club at large – number of members (also on the long-term), benefit for public health; → <i>Coaches</i>: EFB as a possibility to get new knowledge, be able to perform and offer professional fitness test (personal additional qualification for coaches)
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→ *Participants*: EFB as a chance to be informed about a personal fitness status – including strengths and weaknesses – at low cost (or even for free). Further, participants get prove & information about personal improvement as a result of training.

✓ INFORMATION

On the EFB Homepage, general information about the tool is given. Make sure that clubs and coaches know where to find all this information and appoint one contact person for EFB within the organisation. There are loads of different information material (flyer, poster, videos, handbook, guidelines....) Check which fits the best for your clubs/structure and provide coaches & clubs with summaries for a simple entry.

✓ ADVERTISEMENT:

The fear of failure deters people from participating in the test. Especially non active adults perceive the EFB Event as a competitive situation which makes them feel uncomfortable. The advertisement of the testing is important to take this fear from participants. Point out, that the EFB is focusing on health-related fitness. It is designed for less active people, so everyone can take part!

✓ PATIENCE

The EFB is perceived quite different by coaches. Whereas ones are fully convinced of the benefits, that EFB brings for their sports clubs, others don't have the feeling that EFB will be of any advantage for their club's situation. There will be a lot of inactive coaches, which must not be seen as a failure. New tools and offers need time to find their way to the corresponding users.

RECOMMENDATION FOR IMPLEMENTATION IN LOCAL CLUBS

Precondition for application of this guideline is that the implementing national organisation has the possibility to approach local sports clubs. Consequently, these guidelines are for sport federations, especially for "Sports for All" organisations, or umbrella organisations with strong connection to national and/or regional sport federations.

If you plan to implement EFB in your country within sports clubs, the first pose yourself the following questions, the answers thereof will determine the scenario recommended.

- a. How important is EFB for my organisation and for my country?
- b. Which resources are there for implementing EFB in my county? (financial and staff resources)

Recommendation of implementation models:

Low resource input, long timeframe ->

(1) Implementation of EFB without targeted activates

The national coverage of clubs who offer EFB will go very slow (>5 years expected), but every club has the same potential and possibilities to adapt EFB.

Cost for this implementation model is low: for the organisation of the EFB-seminars and management of EFB within the organisation, personnel and financial resources are needed. Besides there are no additional costs expected.

	<p>The degree of controlling is quite low: it is not possible to control, which and how many clubs will implement the EFB, as this is highly dependent on personal interest of the coaches and club manager.</p> <p><i>middle resource input, medium timeframe -></i></p> <p>(2) Integration of EFB in existing projects & activities</p> <p>This scenario can be very successful for sustainable and national coverage, if suitable projects are existing. It is recommended to integrate EFB as a compulsory aspect into these projects. However, the chance, that other clubs will follow who are not participants in these projects is lower than in the other two scenarios. The success of implementation is highly dependent on the success of the existing projects and activities and possible project partners. Besides this dependency, the use of EFB within clubs can be monitored and to some extent controlled.</p> <p><i>high resource input, medium timeframe -></i></p> <p>(3) Implementation project in pilot region</p> <p>Sustainable and long-term implementation within project-clubs is highly expected. The national coverage takes time and depends on number of participating clubs and their marketing. The degree of controlling is high, as the participating clubs are known. The success can be affected by the height of the financial compensation for clubs.</p>
Inspiring stories	<p>In Austria, within the context of the “Tag des Sports” (Day of Sport), participants of the European week of Sport in Vienna were able to test their fitness level on September 23. Test Profile 1 and 2 was available for participants to execute and receive their corresponding certificate and counselling from EFB certified trainers. It was a great experience to bring the EFB test to the community and to once more, check the fitness level of European citizens!</p> <p>Video available here.</p>

