

DESIGNING AN ONLINE PLATFORM TO FACILITATE THE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN SPORT ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract: *Sport Organizations are now in a situation that need a flow of funding through a modern infrastructure. The world wide web facilities offer the right channel for intersecting funding, ideas and real needs. This article presents a platform design that enables clubs and federations at first, private actors at a later stage, to advertise their projects, connect, and find funding and support across the world.*

Keywords: *social networking service, organizational communication, technology, sport developing, project management, online platform*

1. Introduction

The Internet is nowadays filled with documents and contacts but needs processing power and filters to distribute the needed information to the right persons and organizations. In sport there is a large need of connecting sport organizations to specialized interdisciplinary information. Such information is about funding and business management. There is a real need of designing an online platform which acts as a network router to distribute information on the needed path between funding management agencies and sport organizations of any size. This article presents the need, the actors and the solution for putting together a platform that acts as a portal with access to big databases that respond to the need of today's sport organizations.

2. The project what drives the project?

The project is based on the will to provide information for the observed needs of European sport federations, among which:

- The lack of specialists due to low funds;

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- The lack of communication with other entities;
- The lack of communication between European Sport Confederations;
- The lack of visibility and publicity;
- The lack of funding both from governments and businesses;
- The inability of clubs and federations to attract Erasmus Funds and EU funds;
- The lack of a clear common development project between clubs and federations;
- The fact that projects lack transparency.

This project aims at increasing cooperation, partnerships, visibility, funding and information sharing by and between sports organizations from all over Europe and the world. It will participate to the development of a real network of sports organizations. It could also, on the long-term, facilitate the organization of a yearly meeting between European Confederations leaders and sponsors to further develop sport in regions where the sport is less practiced today.

3. The project itself: Creating an online platform for connecting other sports organizations

The project consists of creating an online “organizational informational communication” tool in the form of a platform that connects other sports clubs, federations but also public and private actors acting as sponsors across the world. The platform will enable and facilitate the creation of relationships as well as the communication between clubs and federations all over the continent to join EU funding projects, attracts sponsors, share expertise and resources and organize joint activities.

The goals of the platform are:

- Bringing and connecting sport actors across the world together;
- Increasing the visibility and publicity of sport in Europe and in countries where it is less popular;
- Enabling communication and facilitating partnerships between sport organizations, within continents but also trans-continently;
- Concentrating the information in one place;
- Facilitating the finding of sponsors and funds for other sports organizations;
- Encouraging cooperation between other sports organizations across borders;
- Foster the development of learning and exchange sport programs between European countries.

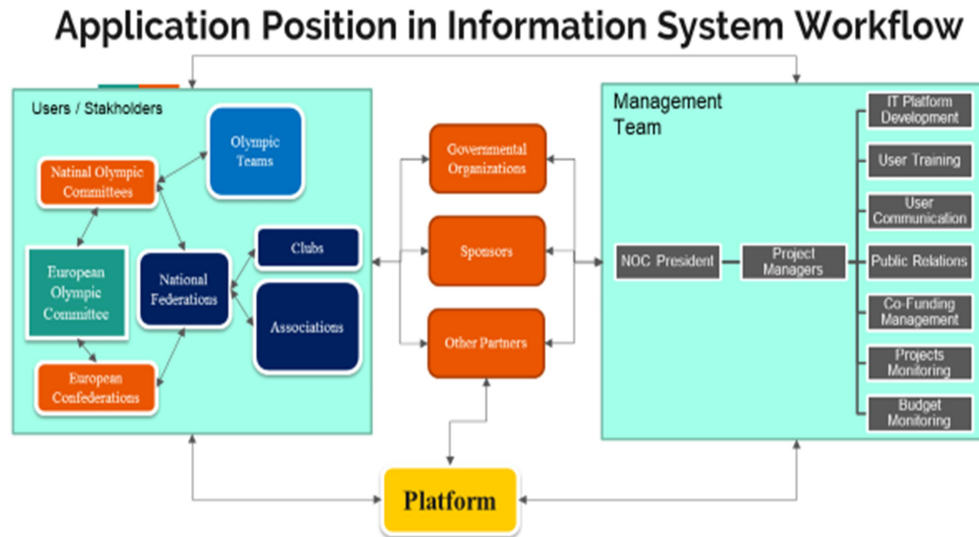


Fig 1 – Application Position in the System Workflow

3.1. Platform members

The platform works as a kind of social network connecting its different members. Members join the platform to exchange, communicate, find partners and initiate collaboration with other clubs of federations as well as join Erasmus+ projects or even develop new projects together.

There are different kinds of members:

- National Olympic Committees (NOCs), International Confederations, National Federations, sports clubs and associations could have access to the platform and constitute its core members. Each of these actors will be able to create their own profile on the platform and fill it with information such as: contact details, activities and projects, research for funds.
- Sport Ministries and Government bodies can also have access to the platform.
- Funding entities such as private companies have access to the platform based on a membership fee. There they can consult the ongoing projects and research for funding of all the members of the platform.

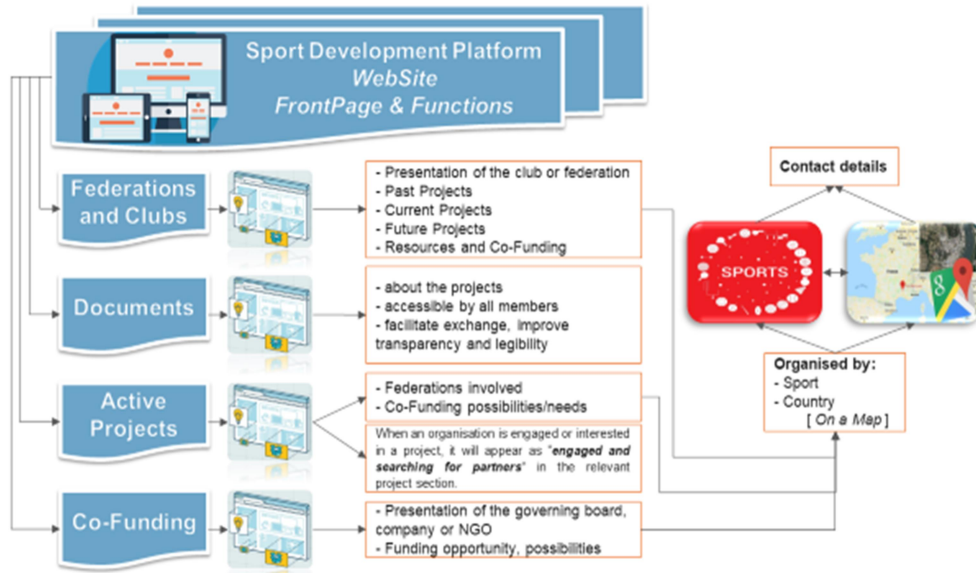


Fig 2 – Platform sections

3.2. Platform structure

The portal has two functional sides depending on the users that will manage it. One side is characterized by the backend which handles the IT administrative part and management of the entire system. The other side handles the front side, which is accessible by the organizations, federations and other final users.

The backend side will manage the administrative part with the following attributes:

- General platform rules such as localization and language
- Visual Theme properties with user specific customizations
- User and roles management
- Modules and plugins management for specific workflow functions
- Views and reports management with
- Communication management
- Platform security rules and modules
- Backup modules that ensures against critical system crashes
- API's that connect the platform to third party applications such as law portals
- Analytics connection module to observe visitor's behavior during its own navigation session
- Social Media Login possibility and other social media connection
- Search Engine Optimization implemented actions to facilitate a widespread visibility and accessibility of the application worldwide

- And other collaborative platform implementations that will have it's own analysis of need and opportunity.

The front side of the platform is divided into four sections: first federations and clubs section (national and international), secondly a documents section, thirdly an active projects section and fourth, a co-funding section. Other modules could be added based on the needs of the users (confederations or clubs, players).

Table 1 – Platform main structure

1. Federations and Clubs	2. Documents	3. Active Projects	4. Co-Funding
Organized by: - Sport - Country - On a Map	The platform will provide a space to upload documents about the projects of the organization for instance -. They will be accessible by all members. This will facilitate exchange and improve transparency and legibility.	Organized by: - Sport - Country - On a Map	Organized by: - Country - Name - On a Map
Presentation of the club or federation		Federations involved	Presentation of the governing board, company or NGO
Past Projects		Co-Funding possibilities/needs	Funding opportunity, possibilities
Current Projects		When an organization is engaged or interested in a project, it will appear as “engaged and searching for partners” in the relevant project section	
Future Projects			
Resources and Co-Funding			
Contact details			Contact details

This would participate in making the activities and initiatives of other sports federations and organizations more visible and attract the attention of civil society

partners and sponsors. A discussion forum tool or a group tool could also be present enabling members to exchange directly with a group of interested entities on specific topics. Finally, a FAQ section could come add to the platform to facilitate its ease of use.

3.3. Examples of similar types of platforms.

There exists online platforms or social networks that connect actors together and where members share what they are looking for but also what they can offer and then enter in contact to exchange services or start a cooperation. These platforms can be found for common services such as baby-sitting, private lessons (Yoopies.com; Superprof.com, etc.) but also for various projects in a specific locality where they enable inhabitants from the same area to get together to launch a project (Pal'réseau). Apps such as ConnexMe that was used at the EU Sport Forum also to facilitate the interaction between organizations and actors by making documents available but also proposing an “interact” function to reach out to fellow participants.

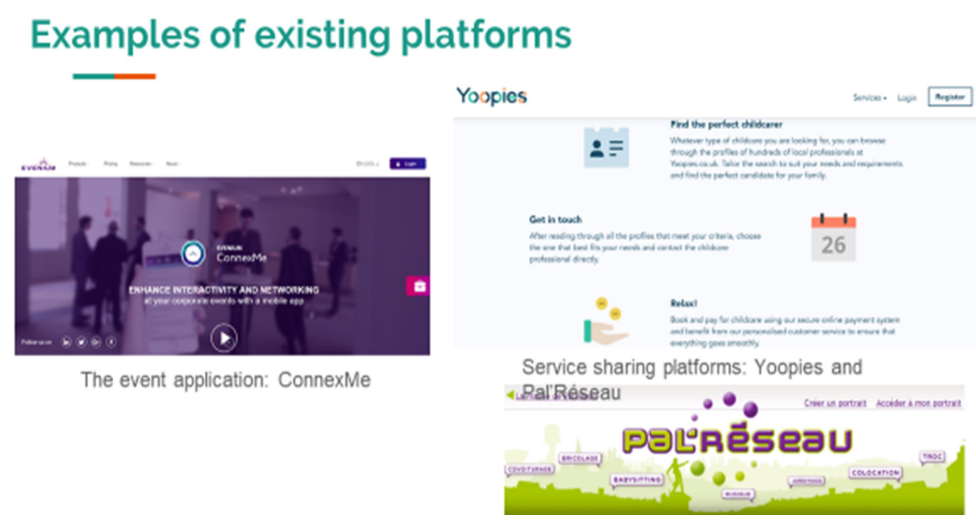


Fig 3 – Existing platforms

4. Who would join the project?

The creation of a Europe-wide communication platform for sport organizations can only work if a variety of actors is interested to be members of the platform and to bring it to life. These include other sports Governing Bodies at national, continental and world level, but also clubs across the world, Ministries, NOCs, and other organizations such as NGOs, private actors, etc. A handful of sport actors have manifested interest in the first steps of the projects already.

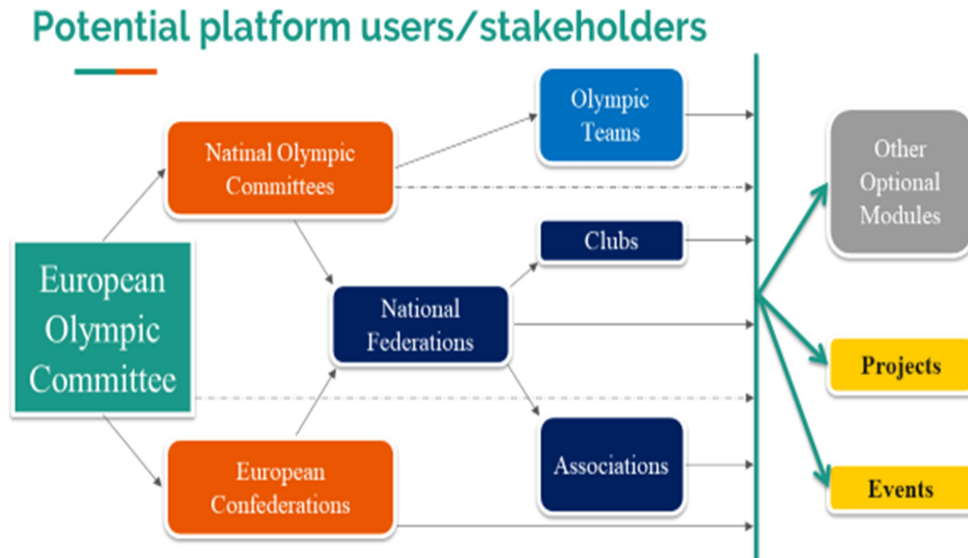


Fig 4 – Platform users

The project could start as pilot for an Olympic Committee. It could later be developed as a tool for worldwide sport. It will notably provide athletes with opportunities to find contracts outside their country as well as to attract individual sponsorships.

Junior clubs could use the platform to connect with regional clubs and to organize competitions together with a region or a given geographic area. For example, clubs from Romania could organize a regional cup with clubs from Bulgaria, Moldova.

At a later stage, a platform module could be dedicated to athletes that are searching for a new career and are searching for a new team to join. They could upload their information and description on the platform. Scouters could then access the platform as a database they could use to identify young talents. Players could transfer more easily to European clubs and to European or American universities for instance. These organizations represent prospective platform users.

The platform modules could be adapted and transformed according to the member Federations' needs.

The platform could be used by multiple sports Confederations, Olympic Committees and Ministries or Agencies.

Project management companies could collaborate with the project holders – the EOC or specific NOCs for instance, in the form of packages, in order to help them develop. Ex. Low budgets federations would say they do not have the budget to hire a project manager, but they can use the platform to receive all documents and

know-how in order to apply for external funding (this compiled and provided by the project management company).

As on the platform will host many sports entities, it will be a place where sport retailers could advertise their products.

Sponsors could become members of the platform (after paying a fee) and engage (fund) some of the projects that can be found on the platform. This creates a single point of information for private companies as well and gives them more incentive to engage with sports projects.

*EOC – European Olympic Committee

*NOC – National Olympic Committee

*NGO – Non Governmental Organization

4. Conclusion

Collaborative software applications are used in the case presented in the article as for connecting different parties that otherwise are having difficulties in relating in an easy way. The presented platform brings sport federations and sports club together with management companies that can offer state of the art access to optimized investments using funds from the European Union Committee and other financial institution that can easily support sport projects. The platform is designed to be a portal of opportunities for sports clubs of any size and any type of financial and managerial institutions or specialists.

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