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- for the organisation of sustainable orienteering events

The survey “Orienteering and the Environment” carried out in 2022 among IOF Member Federations highlighted the need for practical guidelines for the organisation of sustainable orienteering events.

The Environment and Sustainability Commission of the IOF (IOF-ESC) undertook this initiative and provided a draft for consultation to the network of contact persons that had been indicated by the National Federations. All the comments received were considered with great attention and most of were incorporated in the current version of the Checklists and Guidelines (C&G). We hope that the reason why not all were accepted will be clarified by this introduction.

The focus of the C&G is the sustainability of orienteering events in all three facets of the concept: environmental, social and economic. A possibly minor emphasis was placed on the economic aspects of events, as circumstances are so varied that generalisations are hardly possible. However, the social aspects, and particularly the relationships with stakeholders, received a notable attention as the context in which orienteering events are organised involve a broad spectrum of interactions with other interest groups that are often “invisible” to the participants but essential for the organisers.

The C&G are not a handbook or a set of rules to be followed verbatim, but rather a list of points that should be considered by organisers and adapted to the local context. Some may be relevant in which case the Guidelines may represent a useful reference; some may not and may then be skipped. For example, relationships with native communities may be relevant in the US, Canada, Australia,

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New Zealand but not in most of Europe (except the far North); hunting is very important as an activity in Northern Europe, less so in Australia.

The C&G are meant to be an agile and practical tool; we have therefore omitted references to sources of information as would be done in a scientific paper; some considerations are mainly the outcome of long-term experience and not necessarily derived from authoritative sources. Scientific papers on environmental aspects of orienteering are indeed very scarce; most of what was published (e.g. on the now discontinued Scientific Journal of Orienteering) is mainly the outcome of empirical observations; they are very useful and reliable but lack the methodological rigour that would be required for a scientific publication in a modern peer-reviewed journal.

Another point to be considered is that the size of orienteering events varies a lot: from local events with less than a hundred participants to events with a huge number of runners (such as O-Ringen or the big relays, like Tiomila and Jukola). It is up to the organisers to decide which of the C&G is relevant in each case.

The document is organised in a hierarchical mode, with Areas, Sectors, Initiatives and Description. The Checklist corresponds to the “Initiatives” and the Guidelines to their “Description”.

The organisation of an event implies different roles and therefore different responsibilities, but whereas some aspects are clearly pertinent to specific roles (e.g. the placement of controls is the responsibility of the course setter) in many cases people fill multiple roles or, on the other hand, especially with big events, a sector of activity is split into different areas with different persons in charge.

We therefore suggest using the Checklist as a support to the subdi-

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vision of tasks in the organisation and the Guidelines as a reference for the persons responsible for each task.

The Checklists and Guidelines will be periodically revised based on new data and on proposals that will come from the users. Your comments and suggestions are therefore most welcome (mail to: chair-esc@orienteering.sport).

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SELECT POTENTIAL AREAS AND BE AWARE OF IT'S STATUS FOR THE BEST DIALOGUE WITH STAKEHOLDERS

The choice of areas for orienteering events normally reflects criteria related to their sporting interest (technical and physical difficulty of the terrain for the practice of orienteering), landscape, proximity to event centre town for a major event, proximity to club's home base for a local one. Some areas are not considered because it is already known that access to them will be difficult or impossible (e.g. known protected reserves); see the area "Nature Protection" for more information. In any case, it is crucially important to consider also criteria related to the environmental value of the areas and the vulnerability of the present habitats.

SELECT ARENAS IN COOPERATION WITH LOCALS

Arenas in a given territory should be chosen considering the possibility to minimise transport of materials, facilitate the use of bicycles or collective mobility means (e.g. coaches) for athletes and supporters, utilise existing facilities (e.g. electricity, toilets, water and other services).

MAKE A LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS

When planning an event, make a comprehensive list of possible stakeholders. A possibility is to review the different phases, from the choice of the site to the drawing of a map, to the identification of possible dates, to the authorisations you need, the help you expect, the people/companies/groups in different roles for the performance of the event, etc. The sooner you make the list, the better; keep it open to new entries. For each stakeholder, prepare a list of what you need to discuss.

❑ START DIALOGUES EARLY

You may need the green light of multiple stakeholders and that may require more than one meeting with each group. Do not underestimate the time that some stakeholders (e.g. public authorities) take to provide replies, sometimes due to internal decision-making routines. An early start will minimise the chance of last-minute denials.

❑ VERIFY SUSTAINABILITY

If premises are rented/borrowed, ask if these are environmentally friendly. If goods and services are purchased (e.g. the purchase of maps, plastic pockets, and disposable materials), ask if the supplier is environmentally certified. Providers of services or goods that can demonstrate their sustainability claims, e.g. with recognised certification schemes, should be preferred.

❑ VERIFY SPONSORS' SUSTAINABILITY

Before requesting or accepting a sponsorship by a company or an organisation, verify (ask to provide proof) of its operations be sustainable. If the company/organisation is certified for sustainable management, ask to provide evidence thereof and cite in communications materials.

❑ START DIALOGUE WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLE EARLY

In some countries ethnic groups have, for historical reasons, a special status and privileges in the management of the land: e.g. in Northern Scandinavia, the Americas, Australia and New Zealand and other parts of the world. In such cases early contacts are necessary, also in case they are not mandatory, in order to respect traditional cultures and traditions, to understand what is feasible and under what conditions (see: <https://native-land.ca/>)

❑ **UNDERTAKE THE RIGHT ATTITUDE AND EXPLAIN RATHER THAN DEFEND THE SPORT AND EVENT**

In the planning and organisation of orienteering events, you may frequently depend on a favourable attitude by people who are not familiar with the sport. The right attitude is simply to explain what orienteering is, its positive effects on the wellbeing of people for all ages, the benefits of an immersive experience in nature as a stimulus to its preservation, the lack of permanent infrastructures, the good record of cleanliness, etc. An aggressive approach, giving the impression that all permissions and support are taken for granted, would most likely result in a negative attitude by the very people you depend on. You could invite the relevant stakeholders to an event in advance of the one you are preparing and make a simple course (e.g. a beginners' course) in their company.

❑ **CONSIDER RELATIONSHIPS WITH FARMERS AND ASSESS ACCESSIBILITY OF FARM FIELDS EARLY**

Agricultural fields with growing crops or prepared for sowing/planting should be always off limits for athletes and marked as forbidden areas on the map. Exceptions (e.g. a wheat field after harvest or a meadow right after mowing) can be discussed with the farmers but never taken for granted. Avoid stress to grazing animals; a possibility is to agree with the farmer that the animals will be confined in a given fenced area (off limits to athletes) during the competition. The accessibility of farm fields should be assessed as early as possible, in order to avoid the risk of last-minute changes to courses.

❑ **APPOINT RESPONSIBLE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS**

The organisers should appoint a specific person, with adequate experience/qualifications to coordinate/supervise all aspects that have a reflection on the environment. For big events, a team should support the person in charge.

- ❑ **MAKE SURE THE "OWNER" OF THE MAP HAVE CONTROL**
It is very important that the "owner" of the map, usually a local club, maintains control over the activities that are going on the land, including organised training. No unplanned orienteering activities should take landowners by surprise. Clubs wishing to use another club's map for training should ask for a specific authorisation. 'Unorganised training' (individuals/small groups) may not be an issue, for instance, for a public park but private land will usually require permission for any access.
- ❑ **REASSURE LANDOWNERS ABOUT POSSIBLE IMPACTS**
Do not take it for granted that all landowners will be enthusiastic about orienteering, for any reasons; however, you will need their support or at least a "go ahead" from them. Show them that no harm will come from the orienteering event or, if that is the case, that perturbations are temporary or, in case they are not, that reparative actions are foreseen.
- ❑ **PROVIDE INFORMATION IN BULLETINS**
Specific needs or limitations imposed by stakeholders (e.g. on access, footwear) should be clearly mentioned in bulletins or flyers (web based).
- ❑ **GIVE ACCESS TO VIP AREA, SERVICES AND REFRESHMENTS**
It is a good idea to invite stakeholders, or at least the key ones, to the event. In big events, where a VIP area is created, stakeholders should be welcomed and given access to refreshments. Landowners are always to be considered VIP; they usually appreciate receiving a detailed map of their land.
- ❑ **SEND THANK-YOU LETTERS TO MAIN STAKEHOLDERS**
After the event, a thank-you letter to the main stakeholders would pave the way to a new event in the years to come.

INVITE THE LANDOWNER TO ATTEND

Landowners are the key people that one needs to have on one's side; do not forget to invite them and possibly accompany them through the terrain so that they can appreciate the limited impact provoked by orienteering and all the arrangements made to minimise it. Give public recognition of their collaboration in official speeches, e.g. at the prize-giving ceremony.

INSPECT CRITICAL POINTS - BEFORE AND AFTER THE EVENT

A good practice is to inspect critical points with the stakeholders involved before and after the event. Arena, parking places, toilets, access roads, highly frequented controls, fences, etc. Before the event it is necessary to verify the existing state of the area in order to evaluate a possible change after the event.

PLAN A RESCUE ROUTE FOR AMBULANCES

Ambulances must have a rapid exit route in case of accident. It is also important to verify which routes within the competition area are accessible to ambulances, in case an accident occurs in a remote area of the mapped terrain.

EVALUATE LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE EVENT

After an event a thorough "lessons learned" session should be carried out involving all the key persons in the organisation, the Event Advisor (when appointed) and, if appropriate, key stakeholders. The objective is to analyse what went well and what did not, and understand the reasons. The objective is not to put blame on anyone, but to understand the reasons and learn from the experience in order to improve things next time. A written record should be kept by the organisers and used as a reference in future events. This exercise should not be limited to environmental aspects but should include all aspects of the event organisation.

CHECKLIST

A quick list for crossing off guidelines and actions.

- Select potential areas and be aware of its status for the best dialogue with stakeholders
- Select arenas in cooperation with locals
- Make a list of stakeholders
- Start dialogue early
- Verify sustainability
- Verify sponsor's sustainability
- Start dialogue with indigenous people early
- Undertake the right attitude and explain rather than defend the sport and the event
- Consider relationships with farmers and assess accessibility of farm fields early
- Appoint responsible for environmental aspects
- Make sure the "owner" of the map have control
- Reassure landowners about possible impacts
- Provide information in bulletins



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- Give access to VIP areas, services and refreshments
- Send thank-you letters to main stakeholders
- Invite the landowner to attend
- Inspect critical points - before and after the event
- Plan a rescue route for ambulances
- Evaluate lessons learned from the event