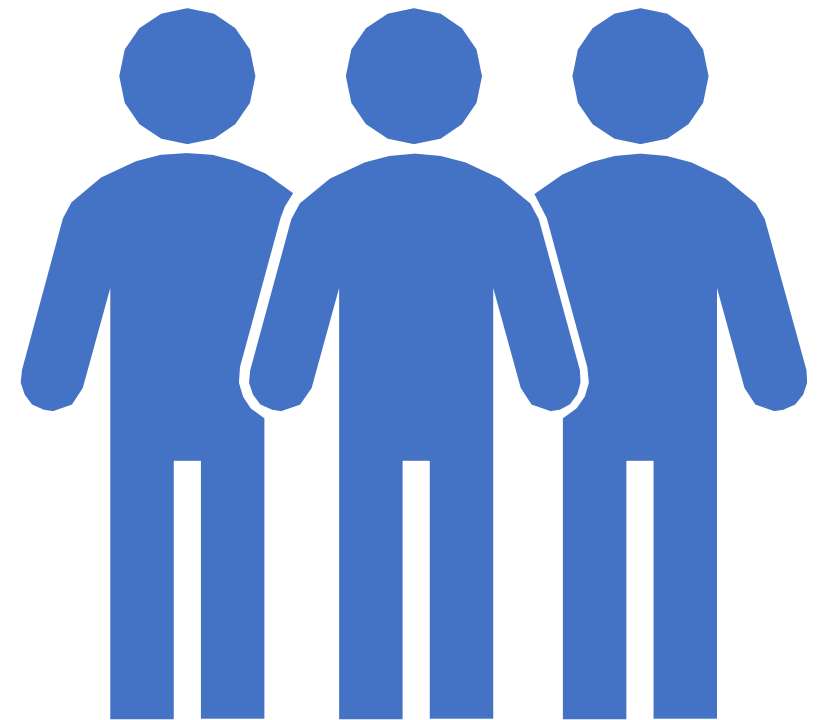


The concept of Social Return on Investments

Project «Fairplay4eu»

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iassem



Results expected from non-profit activities

Efforts made in non-profit activities are rarely seen as «investments».

More often, they are regarded and defined as «donations», «volunteering», «grants».

However, some tangible results are still expected from non-profit activities; They just fall outside the typical rational economic thinking.

For example, contributors expect that the beneficiary organization will accomplish the objectives that inspired the donation, and that those objectives have worth greater than the value of the donation..

Social activities are non-profit ones

Social activities may be seen as volunteer actions performed for the benefit of a local community, or a group of disadvantaged people such as disabled, homeless, psychotics..

For instance, a homeless shelter might have objectives such as the number of people housed, the number of meals served, the number of clients who have been helped to find permanent housing, and so forth.

In all these cases, a social objective can be defined such that the degree of accomplishment of such objective determine a certain result. Such result can not longer be seen as a “financial” result rather as a “social result”.

A matrix can be created showing the progress toward each of these objectives.

This leads to the concept of “social return on investments”.

Social Return on Investment

For what we have just said, the Social Return on Investments (S-ROI) consists of three main conceptual components:

Social: concerns some sort of community of people who are the ultimate beneficiary;

Return: pertains to the impact or the result achieved by means of certain actions;

Investments: means any activity, donation (including financial ones), grant, gift or volunteer action performed by a party.

How do we evaluate such return?

Can we develop a summary measure of the value created by nonprofit investments, and the total benefit derived?

To do this, we need to understand the nature of the benefits, and how their value can be quantified. The benefits of an investment can be classified as follows:

- Organization economic benefits, which result in improved economic performance for the organization. For instance, a donation used to purchase computers might result in improved efficiency and reduced administrative costs.
- Socio-economic benefits, which result in measurable economic benefits to society. For instance, if an organization provides services that result in a decrease in the number of people receiving welfare payments, the reduction in welfare cost is an economic benefit to the community.
- Social benefits, which provide improvements that cannot be defined by standard measures. For instance, a program that results in participants having improved self-esteem or a happier life creates real benefits even though these cannot be measured in dollar terms.

How does “fairplay” match with that?

Fair-play is probably the most intangible social values that we may encounter among the objectives of social investments.

It clearly belongs to the third category just seen, the one of “social benefit” for which non-economic measures need to be defined as a way to appreciate the degree of accomplishment of the objectives.

However, is fair-play really an ultimate social objective?

Or, rather, it should be seen as an intermediate one, a sort of “instrumental value” that, in turn, may instil a bunch of positive values across the entire society?

Disseminating positive social values

Fair-play is indeed instrumental to create an improved society...

In fact, it is synonymous of *justice, fair-mindedness, impartiality, lack of prejudice, open-mindedness*. Actually, we can equally affirm that fair-play inspires other derivative terms such as *friendship, respect* and *tolerance*.

Clearly, sports activities are opportunities to spread fair-play practices across the social community but nothing socially valuable would result from these activities without a certain degree of consciousness, without the awareness of the ultimate sense of fair-play, that is, training ourselves to practice certain high values such as justice, open-mindedness and respect in each action of our daily life...

The “return” of fairplay activities

Once Fairplay is put in the right context of the society, it clearly produces a critical impact on our society. In fact, among the tangible features of a fair-play-oriented society we can encounter:

- Reduction of social conflicts among students;
- Higher cooperation and improvement of the students' learning curve;
- Better educational environment and reduced degree of school abandonment;
- Acceptance and deeper sense of belonging to the social community;
- Development of a stronger respect of the public good;
- Willingness to perform volunteer actions in favour of disabled/needy people;
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Spreading awareness

In concrete terms, we believe that the concept of S-ROI is applicable to fair-play by means of a questionnaire that each Fair-player shall submit to as many people/players as possible in order to spread the awareness of the several positive outcomes of practising fair-play across our life.

Such questionnaire shall be divided into 4 sub-sections as follows:

- i) Open questions about what people generally mean by fair-play;
- ii) Making sense of examples of sport-related actions and asking to what degree they concern fair play;
- iii) Moving from sport to life-situations and making sense of analogies of socially sensitive values that can be seen as fair-play-like cases;
- iv) Asking to what extent the questionnaire has opened their mind as to how fair-play concerns life-related values.

Measuring results

Each section shall include 5-to-10 questions.

Questions shall be mostly multiple-choice ones, which are easier to process and turn into comparable results across individuals. Open questions shall be used to collect ideas.

The result of the survey shall disclose some critical parameters concerning the social value of fair-play-related actions:

- What was the common belief related to fair-play;
- Do people reward sports activities as drivers of fair-play practices;
- How deep was the awareness of the social impact of fair-play?
- Had people thought about sport and fair-play as life-disciplines?

Measuring results

The Principles of Social Value:

- 1 Involve stakeholders** – Inform what gets measured and how this is measured and valued in an account of social value by involving stakeholders.
- 2 Understand what changes** – Articulate how change is created and evaluate this through evidence gathered, recognising positive and negative changes as well as those that are intended and unintended.
- 3 Value the things that matter** – Making decisions about allocating resources between different options needs to recognise the values of stakeholders. Value refers to the relative importance of different outcomes. It is informed by stakeholders' preferences.
- 4 Only include what is material** – Determine what information and evidence must be included in the accounts to give a true and fair picture, such that stakeholders can draw reasonable conclusions about impact.
- 5 Do not over-claim** – Only claim the value that activities are responsible for creating.
- 6 Be transparent** – Demonstrate the basis on which the analysis may be considered accurate and honest, and show that it will be reported to and discussed with stakeholders.
- 7 Verify the result** – Ensure appropriate independent assurance.