

# **Adaptation of AISTS SportEco to an International Sports Federation: A Case Study on Environmental Sustainability of UIAA Youth Camps**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Approaching one of today's society's hot topics, environmental sustainability, this case study deals with how a management tool can be used to evaluate the ecological impact of mountaineering activities. Each year, the International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation (UIAA) coordinates a number of events that take place in ecologically sensitive mountainous areas. In order to measure and to improve their level of environmental quality, the operations of 15 UIAA Youth Camp organisers were assessed with regard to their ecological sustainability. The study has been carried out as a pilot project within the UIAA, adapting the environmental assessment tool AISTS SportEco to the organisation's specificities and circumstances and testing its utility for sport federations. Having identified deficiencies in management procedures of the participating event organisers, the results of the case study led to the recommendation of implementing an overall environmental management system to UIAA.

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This case study entitled "Adaptation of AISTS SportEco to an International Sports Federation: A Case Study on Environmental Sustainability of UIAA Youth Camps" was written on initiative of the International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation, UIAA, which is attributed to the wish of their member federations to be more active in environmental matters.

The overall objective of this study is to test the utility of the environmental assessment tool AISTS SportEco for sport federations and to adapt it to the specificities and circumstances of UIAA. In order to measure and to improve their environmental sustainability, the assessment has been carried out as a pilot project at 15 UIAA Youth Camps that took place in 2007. The research study aims to explore, analyze and assess the fundamental issues of environmental sustainability in the context of these events.

The report introduces the topic by providing background information on the evolution of environmental sustainability in sports, by describing the special importance of nature and the environment for the sport of mountaineering, and by pointing out UIAA's position and their activities concerning ecological matters.

Focussing on AISTS SportEco, environmental management systems are then presented as tools to improve the environmental quality of an organisation's operations.

In the following, the research methodology employed for the study is demonstrated. A variety of literature, especially sport and environment related, but also articles on environmental management systems published in business magazines, have been reviewed for this research. Primary and secondary information were gathered during the study. A checklist was developed and implemented to AISTS SportEco in order to collect data on the practices of the UIAA Youth Camp organisers. Likewise, a survey on the organisers' opinion on AISTS SportEco's utility for their purposes was carried out. Group discussions, reflection on

experience gained through a recent project conducted with AISTS SportEco, and an interview provided additional information for the study.

The expected results of the study are phrased in three hypotheses:

1. The checklist results of each UIAA Youth Camp are likely to differ significantly from each other.
2. The UIAA Youth Camp organisers are likely to face a number of obstacles to the use of AISTS SportEco.
3. AISTS SportEco needs to be integrated into an overall environmental management system in order to become a useful tool to assess, communicate, and monitor environmental quality.

The findings of the study support Hypotheses 1 and 2, while the third assumption represents the initial point for the recommendations. Generally, the findings indicate better results of the UIAA Youth Camp organisers' performances in the categories Noise, Land Use and Soil, Flora and Fauna Impacts, and Clean Up of Site. Relatively poor results were obtained in the sections Air, Management, and Monitoring.

Taking the necessary improvement of the management into consideration, the recommendations focus on the need to introduce an overall environmental management system. The individual steps of the system's implementation are described in detail and the integration of AISTS SportEco in this process is proposed.

The report discusses critically the strengths and weaknesses of AISTS SportEco, shows the limitations of the present case study and presents opportunities for future research.

In conclusion, the overall research findings approve a good ecological quality of their events to the UIAA Youth Camp organisers according to the average result of the self-assessment (60.04%). However, some guidance and standardisation of procedures is needed in order to enable continuous improvement and effective environmental management.