

# Building digital tools in sport that actually last: Lessons from DiaPS

Policy Brief | 3-2026



## The Challenge

Digital solutions are becoming an important part of sport - from supporting athletes' health to building stronger communities. However, many tools developed through projects do not last beyond their initial launch.

Based on the DiaPS experience, this brief highlights key lessons from implementation, monitoring and evaluation, showing what works in practice and what should be considered when designing sustainable digital solutions.

### 1. Before you build: Do you even need an app?



Projects often assume the solution must be an app. This can lead to overcomplicated tools that do not match real needs or capacities.



Before defining the app, the process included mapping users, existing services, and gaps - confirming that a digital community solution was actually needed.



Choose the right solution, not the most attractive one:

- analyse user needs and existing tools
- identify real gaps
- consider different formats (platform, content hub, community, not only app)



### 2. Before you build anything: Do you even know your users?



Projects move too quickly into development without fully understanding athletes, coaches, and their environment. This results in tools that are not used in practice.



Significant time was invested in understanding user journeys, behaviours, and everyday challenges before defining features.

Start with users:



- map the ecosystem: sport, medical, community
- define personas and real-life situations
- build solutions based on real needs, not assumptions

### 3. Who runs it - and who keeps it alive?



Ownership, responsibilities, and sustainability are often unclear. After launch, no one maintains the platform, updates content, or covers ongoing costs.



Questions about infrastructure, roles, and long-term maintenance became critical only in the later stages of the project.

Plan governance and sustainability together:



- define ownership and responsibilities early
- ensure long-term maintenance and funding
- avoid dependency on a single provider or developer

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For access to the DiaPS application, educational materials and reports | sportsanddiabetes.eu | app.sportsanddiabetes.eu

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## 4. You can't publish without the rules



Legal, GDPR, and app store requirements are often underestimated. Without them, digital solutions cannot be launched or scaled.



Publishing required Terms & Conditions, Privacy Policy, and clear data-use definitions - requiring additional legal support.



Integrate compliance from the start:

- GDPR and data protection
- terms of use and community guidelines
- clear policies on user data and safety

## 5. Working with young athletes? Everything changes.



Platforms involving minors require additional safeguards. Without them, risks arise around privacy, communication, and data sharing.



The inclusion of minors required consent systems and restrictions on interactions.



Design for safety:

- parental consent mechanisms
- age-based permissions
- controlled and safe interactions



## 6. Your app won't grow if no one runs it - or uses it properly



Without active management and real-user testing, platforms lose engagement and relevance. Internal testing alone does not reflect real behaviour.

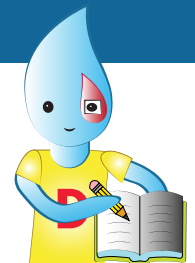


Moderation, content roles, and real-user testing proved essential to understand how users actually interact with the platform.

Plan for real use:



- assign moderation and content roles
- ensure continuous engagement
- test with real users and adapt based on feedback



## Closing remarks

Digital solutions in sport should not be seen as final products, but as evolving systems. Continuous feedback, monitoring, and real user experience are essential for improving the solution and creating practical knowledge that can be reused in future initiatives.

Further insights, tools, and resources - including the DiaPS application and Toolkit with detailed explanations, are available at:

[www.sportsanddiabetes.eu](http://www.sportsanddiabetes.eu)



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