

EAS Conference 2025

Riga, Latvia

**Proposal abstract presentation:
ELEVATE DC & FOCUS EU+**



To create a thriving global ecosystem where sport drives innovation, opportunity, and impact, empowering athletes, communities, and organisations to shape a better world. NYSA Sweden envisions a future where integrated excellence in athlete development, research, education, and social entrepreneurship inspires transformative change, establishing NYSA as a global leader in sports innovation and social impact.





ELEVATE DC & FOCUS EU+ 2026



ELEVATE DC:

Current stats of Higher Education activity
across European Football:

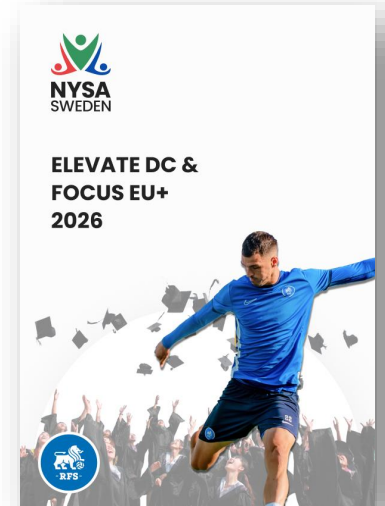


Region / Country	% Active players with Higher Education	% Retired players with Higher Education	Notes
Europe (overall)	10–15%	~25–30%	UEFA / EU Athletes data; varies widely by region
SE Sweden (Nordics)	25–30% enrolled 15–20% complete	35%+	Moderate dual-career integration through national sports universities
NL Netherlands	~20%	~30%	HBO (applied university) partnerships with academies
DE Germany	<10%	20–25%	Emphasis on vocational and coaching education pathways
ES Spain	~5–8%	10–15%	Early professionalisation limits academic continuation
Retired Players (Europe, overall)	—	13% hold degrees	FIFPro global study (2017) – pre-career transition spike
Premier League & EFL context	<10% (while active)	20–25% (post-career)	Education mainly pursued after release or retirement

ELEVATE DC:

Current sources for Higher Education activity across European Academy Football:

- **European Commission / EU Athletes / UniSport Europe** – Dual career and education studies for elite athletes across Europe.
- **EASE (European Athlete as Student Network)** – Advocacy and data on athlete education participation.
- **UEFA** – Elite player development, education, and academy transition data.
- **FIFPro** – Global player employment and education reports for active and retired footballers.
- **Swedish Sports Confederation (Riksidrottsförbundet)** – Data on elite athletes in higher education.
- **KNVB (Royal Dutch Football Association)** – Reports on academy education pathways in the Netherlands.
- **DFB (German Football Association)** – Dual career and vocational education initiatives in German football.
- **AFE (Asociación de Futbolistas Españoles)** – Education and post-career programs for Spanish players.
- **EFL & Premier League (England)** – Statistics on academy release rates and career outcomes.



ELEVATE DC: RFS x NYSA Sweden

The **Elevate DC** project represents a bold step forward in shaping the future of dual career pathways for Football Athletes in Latvia.

Developed through partnership between NYSA Sweden and RFS Football Club the initiative is designed to bridge the gap between elite sport, education, and long-term career development.

By combining proven European best practices with innovative new frameworks, Elevate DC aims to position Latvia as a leader in Football Athlete centered development.

At its heart, the project is about creating sustainable systems that allow young athletes to thrive both on and off the field equipping them with the skills, support, and opportunities to build meaningful, lifelong career pathways.



ELEVATE DC & FOCUS EU+ 2026



ELEVATE DC: RFS x NYSA Sweden

Transforming Dual Careers

Elevate DC redefines dual career in Football pathways in Latvia, positioning the country as a European leader in athlete education and career development.

High Performance academy hub

RFS 2 becomes Latvia's first LTAD Dual Career Academy, integrating sport, education, career and transition support in one hub.

Innovative interventions

Combines dual career structures, employability skills, cocreation frame working, decision making, digital mentorship, and Erasmus+ pathways.

Sustainable European Model

International mentor network, creating a scalable, athlete-centred system.



ELEVATE DC & FOCUS EU+ 2026





FOCUS EU+:

RFS x transnational entry into DC

The **FOCUS Dual Career Project** is a bold step toward reimagining how Europe supports young athletes in navigating the complex journey between elite sport, education, and future careers.

Rooted in athlete led co creation and backed by transnational collaboration, FOCUS goes beyond short term interventions to build sustainable, evidence based pathways that prepare athletes for life both on and off the field.

By integrating education, sports science, digital innovation, and policy reform, the project aims to set a new European standard for dual career development, one that is collaborative, future focused, and centered on real athlete experiences.

Dave McDermott as Lead coordinator for NYSA Sweden



ELEVATE DC & FOCUS EU+ 2026



FOCUS EU+:

RFS x transnational entry into DC

Athlete led transformation

Puts athletes at the centre of decision making, replacing top down models with cocreation, mental health support, and career mobility frameworks

Integrated Dual Career pathways

Connects elite football academies with universities, sports science, and career planning to create structured, evidence-based pathways that extend beyond sport

European collaboration & policy impact

Unites Sweden, Latvia, Finland and partners to build a scalable, cross-border model that strengthens EU dual career policy, mobility, and knowledge exchange

Future Ready Athlete Development

Equips young players with education, employability, digital skills, and strategic tools to navigate uncertain career transitions confidently



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FOCUS EU+:

Aims

Strengthen dual career systems by creating inclusive, evidence-based football specific education pathways through cross sector collaboration.

Develop and pilot flexible dual career programmes while upskilling stakeholders and building a transnational support network.

Improve athlete retention, wellbeing, and employability through scalable dual career models that shape policy and practice.

Produce adaptable frameworks, training resources, and policy outputs to drive sustainable dual career adoption across Europe.



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FOCUS EU+:

Partners



Funded by
the European Union

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Riga, Latvia

A call for external interest:

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Thank you!!

