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Book of Abstracts

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*Dual Career of Elite Athletes:
Integrating Sport and Education
for Future Success*



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Updating Dual Career Self-Management in Individualized Mentor-Mentee Collaboration in Sports and Studies

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Abstract

This article examines dual career (DC) mentoring in the context of Latvia's educational reform. In 2023–2024, rapid university consolidation is underway. Uncertainty in education has led to increased stress among lecturers and students.

Purpose of the article: To explain individualization and personalization in an athlete's dual career in education and sports, as well as the interaction and usefulness of self-management in the collaboration between the DC mentor and athlete under conditions of educational change.

Materials and Methods: Literature and regulatory document analysis on individualization and personalization in DC mentoring in education and sports. Two methods were used in the qualitative study. The case study involved two respondents: a professional athlete and his mentor. Additionally, 20 athletes were interviewed using the interview method.

Results: The case study describes the dual career experience of a professional hockey player from age 4 to age 30. The study emphasizes the importance of DC mentor support and the athlete's self-management skills in an equal collaboration during the educational process in a remote study format.

Conclusions: One of the most common challenges student-athletes face is the lack of understanding and flexibility from teachers and universities. Without structured support, student-athletes are often left to figure things out on their own. To keep up, they rely on adaptability, strong determination, and good time management. Most end up prioritizing their sport and pushing schoolwork aside. But when the academic pressure catches up, it can become overwhelming and stressful.

In DC mentoring, it is important to provide resources, a flexible study plan, and remote learning opportunities. Collaboration among university leadership, mentors, and athletes is necessary so that each athlete in individualized studies has the opportunity to purposefully implement self-management. Large universities have resources and greater opportunities to apply them in DC mentoring. Smaller universities have a greater chance to use resources through a flexible, individualized approach for each mentee.

Keywords: *Individualization, personalization, dual career mentoring, self-management, collaboration.*



Winning in Life – Winning in Sport

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Abstract

The "Winning in Life, Winning in Sport" (WIN-WIN) project aims to create a comprehensive support system for dual career athletes in higher education. This project investigates how universities can better integrate sports training and competition into academic curricula and promote dual career opportunities to attract new students. This project will develop instruments which has 3 main types of activities: (1) Research. State of the art; (2) Development of project outputs; (3) Pilot study. Evaluation; Project consortium consist from NGO Andara Plus (Latvia) and seven more partners.

Four primary objectives emerged: (1) Creating an evaluation framework to determine skills gained through sports training and competitions; (2) Developing an open online course (and course B or C with ECTS) integrating sports and academic skills; (3) Producing guidelines for implementing the course within universities; (4) Creating a handbook for universities to use dual career support as a promotional tool; (5) Produced 1 policy recommendation on special pensions scheme for professional athletes.

The implications include new study course and practical guidelines for implement this study course for dual career athletes. The findings will help higher education institutions better address the needs of student-athletes and leverage dual career support for institutional advancement in Latvia and five more countries in EU.

Keywords: *Dual Career, Student-Athlete, Higher Education, Curriculum Development, Soft Skills, Sports Policy*



Focus on the Transition from University to the Job Market: Initiative by AU Elitesport

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Abstract

In Denmark, there is an increased focus on developing good dual career possibilities for athletes who want to enter the job market and continue their athletic career. In AU Elitesport (dual career program at Aarhus University), we experience that many student-athletes are concerned about entering the job market and want to extend their studies in order to time their graduation with the end of their athletic career. This is due to a shared conception that it is not possible to combine an athletic career with a job. Therefore, we planned an event for student-athletes at Aarhus University to prepare them for the transition from university to the job market and to challenge the idea that it is not possible to continue a dual career in the job market. We invited speakers from well-known Danish companies to talk about their perception of athletes in a recruitment process and how they, from a corporate point of view, see the possibilities for athletes to continue their dual career. We also invited three alumni from Aarhus University to share their experiences with the transition from university to the job market. Finally, inspired by the AFTERMATCH project, we initiated a workshop for the participants to help them reflect on how they can translate competencies and skills from their sport into the job market.



University Mentoring Network to Facilitate the Dual Career of Athlete-Students

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Abstract

Despite the legislative and theoretical advances on the dual career of student-athletes, no concrete and adapted actions have been implemented that would allow progress to be made in this area. This Network (RUMDE), created under the auspices of the CSD's 2024 Call for Proposals, is making progress in the knowledge and action of the accompaniment of high-level student-athletes entering university. RUMDE has identified the consequences of the lack of intervention protocols for this group (Álvarez et al, 2014; Sánchez-Pato et al., 2022; Rodicio-García and Ríos-de-Deus, 2025; Rodicio-García, et al., 2020). This led to the initiative of RUMDE, which proceeded to design a Dual Mentoring model for student-athletes (MEDEAN) to accompany and facilitate their dual career. As a continuation of the work carried out, the aim of the Network is to create a culture of dual mentoring that facilitates the integration of high-level student-athletes into the university. RUMDE has grown from 8 universities (7 Spanish and 1 Italian), with a total of 20 researchers belonging to 11 initial research groups, to 16 universities (12 Spanish, 1 Italian, 1 Maltese and 2 Portuguese), with a total of 36 researchers, belonging to 18 research groups, in the current call. In 2025, the expansion of the Network will continue, disseminating, disseminating and involving more universities and academic and sports institutions -national and international-, co-responsible for dual career policies, and to ensure good practice in the development of the same. A three-phase procedure is proposed: disseminate the MEDEAN model, disseminate the RUMDE Network and its progress through social networks, and organise an International Congress. The aim is to achieve the consolidation of an innovative Dual Mentoring model capable of transferring existing policies into specific and homogeneous intervention plans and protocols for high-level student-athletes

Key words: *dual mentoring, dual careers, peer mentoring, student-athletes*



Perception of Barriers in Dual Careers and the Importance Given to Psychological Characteristics in Athletes in Training: A Gender Perspective

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Abstract

Currently, there is a strong focus on alternatives such as the dual academic-sport career, where athletes can progress simultaneously in academics and sport. However, there are barriers that hinder the success of the dual study-sport career. The objectives of the present research were to determine the differences in the perception of balance and barriers in the dual career in high performance athletes in training as a function of gender, and to analyse the differences that may exist between athletes with respect to their identity as athletes, psychological characteristics related to performance and the conceived importance of academic performance as a function of gender. A total of 119 U16, U18 and U20 athletes participated, of which 61 were male (age = 18.31 ± 2.31 years) and 58 were female (age = 17.27 ± 1.44 years). The athletes completed the Athletes self-completed the athletic identity measurement scale (AIMS), the Questionnaire on Characteristics Related to Sports Performance (CPRD) and The questionnaire about the perceptions of dual career student-athletes (ESTPORT). Females showed significantly more perceived interference between studies and sport ($p=0.005-0.001$); in relation to their identity as an athlete, significantly higher scores on the item 'I feel bad about myself when I do badly in sport' ($p=0.025$); and they attached significantly more importance to school performance, obtaining significant differences in the variable 'Obtaining an academic degree is important to enrich my knowledge' ($p=0.035$). However, in relation to the psychological characteristics of sport performance, men showed significantly higher values in the variables of stress control ($p=0.001$) and performance influence ($p=0.035$). In conclusion, young female athletes perceive a higher percentage of barriers to achieving dual career success than their male counterparts.

Keywords: *adolescent; athlete; dual career; gender; sport*



Advancing Athlete Employability through Career Mentorship and Education

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Abstract

Europe sees approximately 120,000 elite athletes striving to balance education and high-performance sport every Olympic cycle, but dual-career services in many Member States remain fragmented and inconsistently implemented, limiting equitable access (European Commission, 2012). These gaps highlight the urgent need for structured support to foster employability and lifelong learning among athletes. Research shows that career transitions in sport should be understood from a developmental perspective that includes educational, psychosocial, and vocational dimensions (Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004). Moreover, international sport psychology has emphasized that coping resources and systemic support are essential to facilitate successful transitions (Stambulova, Alfermann, Statler, & Côté, 2009). Educational pathways are also closely linked to athletic performance and long-term employability, underscoring the importance of accessible and flexible education for elite athletes (Aquilina, 2013).

Against this backdrop, the Erasmus+ funded DCMENTOR project was designed to address systemic shortcomings in dual career provision. Using a multi-stage academic design—literature reviews, 35 semi-structured interviews, focus group meetings, and a survey of 280 participants—the project identified key needs in career planning, time management, and self-assessment. Based on these findings, a Life and Future Skills curriculum and a self-assessment toolkit were developed. The project culminated in the launch of a digital mentoring and training platform (<https://portal.dcmmentor.eu>), offering innovative resources for athletes to navigate dual career transitions.

By embedding transversal skills such as leadership, resilience, and communication into structured training, DCMENTOR provides a scalable and sustainable model for supporting athletes' employability. Its results contribute not only to individual career readiness but also to the wider European policy agenda on sport and education.

Keywords: *Dual Career · Elite Athletes · Employability · Life and Future Skills · Mentoring · Erasmus+ · Career Transition*



Choosing Non-Teaching Paths in PETE: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Dual-Career University Footballers

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Abstract

Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) programs often enroll students who continue to compete in sport and weigh teaching against coaching. Using Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) to explain why some head toward non-teaching futures, this study examines how perceived self-efficacy and outcome expectations shape career decisions regarding teaching versus coaching. Using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), three male PETE student athletes who play football (ages 20–21) completed one in-depth, semi-structured interview each.

Four SCCT-aligned themes emerged. (1) Coaching Self-Efficacy: Mastery, mentoring, and social reinforcement on the pitch (e.g., drill design, micro-corrections, video/RPE/GPS) built coaching self-efficacy. (2) Low-Autonomy Practicum–Constrained Teaching Self-Efficacy: A low-autonomy, diffuse-impact teaching practicum plausibly depressed teaching self-efficacy. (3) Outcome expectations: coaching was linked to agency, visible impact, and growth potential, whereas teaching was associated with stability and routine. (4) Coaching-Oriented Engagement: Contextual and affective constraints (time–energy debt, injury-related emotions) reweighted capability and payoff appraisals; academic effort then concentrated where efficacy and value were perceived to be highest, yielding selective engagement aligned with a coaching orientation.

Implications follow directly from SCCT mechanisms: practicum designs that engineer frequent mastery opportunities and timely feedback, mentor architectures that provide targeted social persuasion for teaching, and program–club coordination to reduce avoidable structural frictions. Small all-male sample, and cross-sectional timing limit generalization but clarify process-level pathways through which PETE experiences are translated into career intentions in Türkiye.

Keywords: *Phenomenology, Student-Athlete, Social Cognitive Career Theory, Self-efficacy, outcome expectations, PETE*



Designing and Evaluating a Stakeholder-Informed Mobile App to Promote Physical Activity in Children: The Walk Around the Earth Erasmus+ Project

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Abstract

Background: Prolonged sedentary behaviour and associated obesity are recognized risk factors for poor health across the lifespan. Globally, data show that many children and adolescents aged 5 to 17 significantly increased their sedentary behaviours during the COVID-19 pandemic, failing to meet recommended physical activity levels and reporting increased smartphone use. While mobile devices and video games have been traditionally linked to physical inactivity, novel formats like exergaming, that combine gameplay with gross motor activity, offer potential to promote physical activity and cognitive engagement. However, many digital health tools for children are developed without incorporating feedback from key stakeholders and end users (e.g., children, teachers and guardians).

Methods: This project describes a prospective study that aims (1) to identify the most influential factors or characteristics affecting the engagement and usability of a mobile application promoting physical activity among primary school students; (2) to develop a mobile application for children based on the identified factors and characteristics. The project employs a group concept mapping approach to identify such factors, involving primary stakeholders (e.g., children, teachers, guardians, and physical activity experts) to ensure that the app's features align with end-user needs and motivations. Following app development, its effectiveness in increasing physical activity levels and reducing sedentary behaviour will be evaluated through a mixed-method design, incorporating anthropometric data, validated physical activity questionnaires (Physical Activity Questionnaire for Older Children (PAQ-C) and International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ)), and engagement metrics.

Conclusions: The E-Walk project integrates participatory design with educational content and activity-based challenges, representing a novel, multidimensional strategy for promoting health, learning and motivation in children. By encouraging an active lifestyle combined with educational elements, the project supports children's holistic development and lays early foundations for skills and attitudes that resonate with the broader concept of dual career. Ultimately, this project contributes to the development of user-informed digital interventions that foster sustainable behaviour change in line with broader goals of child health, education and digital innovation.



Improving the Support to Student Athletes with International Mobility

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Abstract

The SAMEurope (Student Athletes Erasmus+ Mobility in Europe) project is a significant endeavour aimed at implementing EU Guidelines on Dual Careers (DC) of Athletes and enhancing the European dimension of dual careers. An international academic mobility contributes to the holistic development of a high-level student athlete; however, the additional challenges it brings often lead to withdrawals.

To facilitate this mobility, SAMEurope developed a growing platform focused exclusively on sports and university DC programmes. Students easily find relevant information on the benefits of a DC programme and the training opportunities within their sport, either within the host university or nearby. This helps to prevent from creating acculturation stress for student – both in their studies and in their training on high level. As more universities join the platform, student athletes have more choices worldwide.

SAMEurope produced a “Guide of good practices”, the methodology of which led to the identification and definition of 31 benefits offered to student athletes in five European universities. They were ranked by combining the perspectives of university staff (experts from sports services and international relations offices) and student athletes. The results highlight the commitment of universities to facilitate the dual career and identify the benefits that may be of greater interest to student athletes to contribute to their health.

SAMEurope conducted a sociological study focused on the influence of international study mobility on the personal and professional development of student athletes. By leveraging data from the FISU WUG between 2009 and 2019, and employing a multi-method approach, the project seeks to provide valuable insights into the challenges faced by student athletes according to the labour market.

Overall, the SAMEurope tools and findings represent a significant step towards promoting the holistic development and well-being of high-level student athletes, contributing to the advancement of DC support systems and policies.



Challenges and Opportunities for Implementing and Developing A Student-Athlete Support Program in the Federal District (Brazil)

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Abstract

Given the tension between the demands of the educational and sports fields (Ryba et al., 2015), our general objective is to analyze the legal and political context surrounding sports training and the athlete's career in the Federal District (Brasília/Brazil), which led to the proposal and approval of the law that supports the Comprehensive Protection of the Student-Athlete (Distrito Federal, 2019, 2021, 2022). As complementary actions to this project, we conducted a technical visit to the *Unidades de Apoio ao Alto Rendimento nas Escolas* Program (Costa et al., 2025) and analyzed a sports talent identification and development policy implemented by the Federal District Department of Education (Santos et al., 2025).

The results of this research highlight the absence of public hearings, technical reports, or any reference to best practices in student-athlete support in the dual career context that could have provided a technical basis for the legislation under analysis. We identified procedural imprecision in addressing athletes' demands by the Department of Education, which is also unaware of the size and profile of its target population. The absence of clear and objective legal provisions regarding the status and support of student-athletes in the educational system of the Federal District is a topic that deserves a qualified discussion involving athletes, their families, the sports training network, the local Department of Education, and researchers. The legal basis for the recognition of student-athletes in the Federal District calls for public debate, review, and updating, aligned with international best practices (Costa & Veloso, 2024). The production of quantitative and qualitative data on the dual career context of student-athletes is an essential requirement for proposing a support program suited to the local reality.

This work was funded by the Fundação de Apoio à Pesquisa do Distrito Federal (FAPDF), under project number 00193-00002180/2023-11.



International University Sports Federation (FISU) and Dual Career: A Global Approach for Stakeholders

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Abstract

This presentation outlines FISU's vision and roadmap to strengthen Dual Career provision worldwide, enabling student-athletes to successfully balance elite sport and higher education. It introduces FISU's definition and tools — including the *Dual Career Toolkit* for students, universities, and National University Sports Federations — highlights evidence from international studies and summarises key findings: opportunities differ widely across regions; most student-athletes have low awareness of their rights and available support; and there is an urgent need for shared minimum standards and certification.

Within FISU's *Healthy Campus* programme, Dual Career is included as one of the key criteria, requiring universities to demonstrate how they support student-athletes. Best practices are collected and disseminated globally. The next step is to make a qualitative leap — helping universities, with the national support of University Sports Federations, to strengthen and structure their Dual Career systems.

Under the *Student Wellbeing* area of FISU's, the next phase will focus on engaging stakeholders to design a standard for institutional certification, validated by networks of Dual Career experts, and to scale implementation through a digital platform that consolidates resources, monitoring, and knowledge exchange.

Together, these actions aim to empower balanced student lives and build a coherent global network for Dual Career.



PORTAL Project: Building an Inclusive European Platform for Olympians' Post-Career Transitions

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Abstract

PORTAL is a 24-month project addressing the intricate challenges faced by Olympians during their transition to post-retirement life. The project's core objective is the development and implementation of an inclusive online platform, complemented by a network of Real-Life Transition Officers, to provide comprehensive support to Olympians. In particular, the general objective is to create an inclusive and diverse system emphasizing social inclusion and outreach of individuals facing fewer opportunities (e.g., Olympians without medals, with health issues, or limited financial and educational resources). Furthermore, PORTAL aims: i) in the short term, to raise awareness and conduct research on Olympians' challenges, developing mental health and career retirement resources; ii) in the medium term, to develop and pilot an online platform with dedicated officers; and iii) in the long term, to establish a sustainable support system fostering social inclusion, active citizenship, and lifelong well-being. PORTAL introduces innovations in athletes' career support, mental health, societal engagement, and life skills development. The project promotes collaboration among stakeholders from sport, education, and health, fostering a cross-sectoral approach to maximize its impact. In line with EU guidelines, PORTAL integrates IT tools and face-to-face support, ensuring flexibility, accessibility, and real-time monitoring of elite athletes' careers. To inform the platform content design, three preparatory studies were conducted: 1) a systematic and umbrella reviews on elite athletes' mental health and career transitions sustainable support; 2) a survey with European National Olympic Committees, mapping existing support practices; and 3) a survey with over 100 European elite athletes on perceived challenges and needs. This evidence-based approach will ensure the creation of a research-driven, stakeholder-informed, and tailored to end-users platform.



Supporting High Level Athletes at INSA, France

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Abstract

From basic support for dual projects to meticulous support for the very highest level – 45 years of expertise in dual career. INSA Lyon is the largest engineering school in France with an integrated preparatory class and more than 5,000 students, all of whom are future engineers. Every year, it graduates more than 1,000 students, including around 20 high-level athletes. The high-level sports section brings together 200 athletes in three concentric circles. Among them are nearly 50 students who have very ambitious dual career at an international level in their age category. Their sporting level is recognised by the French state, the Ministry of Sport, the National Sports Agency and the school. The challenge is to find a process and key factors for each of the student athletes so that they can successfully complete their dual career. This support therefore requires very specific skills, a networked organisation with the sporting world, in-depth knowledge of the university ecosystem and exceptional financial resources to see the dual projects through to completion.

I will outline all of these factors and illustrate them with current examples: Louise CEVERA, Ilca 6 sailing world women's champion in 2024 in China Sarah Madeleine, 8th in the 1500m at the World Athletics Championships in Tokyo in 2025 Margot RAVINEL, French mountain skiing team, set to be selected for the 2026 Turin Olympics. Cléo HAGEL, under professional contract with the French Rugby Sevens Federation for LA 2028. Emilien Maire, in talks with the Olympic Modern Pentathlon team and INSEP to prepare for the 2028 LA Olympics games. Ugo VIGNOLLES, under professional contract with a rugby team in France. Dimitri GRANJUX, Oly, French para-swimming team member who competed in the Paris Olympics and is in the running for LA 28. Bartholomé SANSON, French under-20 rugby team and 4th in the world rugby cup 2025 Koceila MAMMERI, Oly, who competed in the Paris Olympics in badminton for Algérie.

I hope you will be interested in INSA's commitment and innovation in enabling athletes to achieve their dual goals.



Dual Career from the Perspective of SDG17 and PPPs

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Abstract

Sport4Impact is an international initiative that integrates sport, education, and social innovation within the framework of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 17 (SDG 17) — Partnerships for the Goals. Led by Paolo Bertaccini and Andrea Carletti, the organisation promotes a strategic and systemic vision of sport, grounded in public–private partnerships (PPPs) and multistakeholder collaboration. Operating in more than 100 countries, Sport4Impact engages institutions, businesses, universities, and civil society actors to generate sustainable, measurable social impact through locally rooted projects.

Central to its mission is the promotion of dual career pathways for student-athletes, linking athletic participation to the acquisition of soft skills such as teamwork, leadership, resilience, and emotional intelligence. These transversal competences, developed through sport, are essential for employability and active citizenship. Sport4Impact designs and implements training modules that connect sporting experience with labour-market frameworks, ensuring that the skills acquired through sport are recognised and valued in educational and professional settings.

Through its collaborative, science-based approach and diversified funding models, Sport4Impact exemplifies SDG 17 in action — transforming partnership into a culture of shared responsibility. By bridging the worlds of sport, education, and policy, it fosters inclusive, sustainable development and strengthens the role of sport as a catalyst for learning, cooperation, and community building.

Keywords: *Sport4Impact; Sustainable Development Goal 17; public–private partnerships; dual career; student-athletes; soft skills; employability; social innovation; education; sustainable development.*



Legacy of the 2025 Rhine-Ruhr FISU World University Games, Focusing on the Dual Career of Student-Para-Athletes

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The Rhine-Ruhr 2025 FISU World University Games Summer send a clear signal for inclusion in the sense of self-determined and equal participation.

For the first time in the history of this international multi-sport event, para sport will be integrated into the competition program of the Summer Games with the addition of 3x3 wheelchair basketball.

South Korea, as host of the 2027 FISU World University Games in Chungcheong, will continue the Paralympic trend with the introduction of para taekwondo. These decisions are very welcome and mark significant milestones in the development of international university sports. They invite us to constructively support this inclusive approach and to provide further impetus for a sustainable inclusive orientation of future games.

During the Rhine-Ruhr 2025 Sports and Inclusion Summit on July 19, 2025, the relevance of inclusion in and for international university sports was reflected upon in a participatory process together with representatives from the fields of sports, science, and politics. As part of this process, a comprehensive awareness of key international development trends towards a more inclusive understanding of sport was discussed.

This Initiative Paper is intended as an impetus for the continuous development towards more inclusive FISU World University Games. It is based on a constructive dialogue process and formulates perspectives that can pro-mote a stronger structural embedding of inclusive measures. There is agreement among those involved in this Initiative Paper that promoting inclusion at future FISU World University Games requires a progressive and joint learning process, supported by openness, reflection, and equal, partnership-based cooperation between all those involved, particularly with the inclusion of people with disabilities.

As a top international sporting event, the FISU World University Games offer a central platform for promoting diversity, equal opportunities, and social participation. Against this backdrop, this initiative paper expressly advocates the structural and programmatic integration of para sports into the FISU World University Games. The initial focus on para sports follows a strategic approach to the gradual implementation of inclusive structures at the FISU World University Games.

Keywords: *Student Para athlete, University Games, FISU, Legacy, Dual Career, Initiative Paper, Inclusion, German University Sport Federation (adh)*



Advancing Dual Career Officer Training and Support Across Europe

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Abstract

The transition from high-performance sport to academic or professional life represents a critical challenge for athletes, making the role of Dual Career Officers (DCO) increasingly relevant in Europe. The AFTERMATCH 2.0 project builds upon the European framework for dual careers, responding to the growing need for structured, innovative support systems for athletes. This communication presents an academic overview of the project, focusing on (a) the state of the art of dual career research and practice, (b) the design and continuous improvement of the Dual Career Officer Guide, and (c) the implementation of specialized training across the consortium's countries.

The guide was developed as a comprehensive tool to analyze organizational and athlete needs, design personalized dual career pathways, and provide clear procedures for reporting and follow-up. It integrates best practices from European initiatives and emphasizes a holistic, athlete-centered approach that combines educational, vocational, and psychosocial dimensions. Training modules were piloted in multiple partner countries, incorporating blended methodologies, case-based learning, and cross-national exchange to enhance professional competencies of DCOs.

Preliminary outcomes indicate that the AFTERMATCH 2.0 model has strengthened the capacity of sports organizations to support athletes' transitions, fostered the exchange of good practices among institutions, and contributed to the European dialogue on sustainable dual career frameworks. This initiative underlines the academic and social value of structured dual career mentorship, highlighting its potential for replication and future scaling in European sport ecosystems.



Boxing, Books, and Belonging: The Case of Turkish Female Student-Athlete Duo

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Abstract

This study explores the lived experiences of two Turkish female student-athletes in boxing, a sport often culturally linked to working-class masculinities. Both participants are graduates of science high schools in Türkiye and currently enrolled in Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) programs, despite possessing the academic capital to pursue careers in medicine, engineering, or other elite professions. Their trajectories illustrate the complex intersections of gender, class, education, and sport.

Guided by the Social Ecological Model (SEM), the study examines how individual, relational, institutional, and socio-cultural layers interact in shaping their identities and career orientations. Methodologically, this is a qualitative case study employing life-history interviews and participant observations, with analysis conducted through thematic coding.

Findings reveal three interrelated themes. First, “Cultural Decision: Athletes must choose Sport Sciences” highlights how PETE enrollment represents both a pragmatic career option and a compromise between academic potential and sporting passion in Türkiye. Second, “The Centrality of the Coach: Master–Apprentice Relations” underscores the enduring authority of the trainer in boxing culture, where mentorship functions as both a disciplinary force and a source of belonging. Finally, “The Swept-Under-the-Carpet Reality: Being a student-athlete in Türkiye” exposes hidden struggles, including time pressures, marginalization of academic identity, and the lack of systemic support for balancing dual careers.

Overall, the study contributes to understanding how the SEM captures the multi-layered dynamics experienced by young women as they navigate academically elite backgrounds, subcultural sporting practices, and gendered expectations in individual sports.

Keywords: *student-athletes, boxing, Social Ecological Model, case study, gender*



Fostering Success in Young Biathletes: Addressing Cultural and Educational Challenges

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Abstract

The DC4Biathletes project aims to support young biathletes in achieving both their sporting and educational goals through a holistic dual career path. The expected short-term impact of the project includes the development of educational resources and programs for young biathlon athletes and coaches, which will improve their understanding of dual careers. The project also seeks to reduce the number of young athletes who prematurely abandon biathlon or education due to challenges in balancing both.

Since the project's goal is to help international athletes (biathletes) reach their full potential in sports while maintaining academic excellence, it also focuses on exploring cultural differences among athletes. Athletes' cultural backgrounds significantly influence their values, behaviors, expectations, and experiences, which affect how they balance sport commitments with school and sport goals. Recognizing and understanding these cultural needs is crucial for creating support programs tailored to the diverse needs of athletes from different regions and cultural contexts.

The findings from qualitative focus groups with 120 young biathletes, conducted using the Cafe method, will be presented. Using focus group interviews gave the participants the opportunity to speak freely about experiences around certain topics from a personal perspective and to discuss their thoughts with others (Gratton and Jones 2004). The interview guide was structured around the following themes: (1) balancing DC and (2) cultural aspect of DC. These results provided insights into identifying gaps and areas for improving support for young biathlon athletes in dual career pathways.



Sustainability Perceptions Among Young Tennis Players: Insights from the European GreenTennis Project

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Abstract:

The Hague University of Applied Sciences Training athletes about the new challenges facing society is essential for their successful integration into the professional sphere during and after their sporting careers. A crosssectional, multicenter study was conducted within the European project GreenTennis (ERASMUS-SPORT-2024 – ID: 101184588) to assess sustainability perceptions among young tennis players using a validated questionnaire. The sample included 454 players aged 10–20 years ($\bar{X}=14.14\pm2.14$), 53.5% male and 46.3% female, from 41 countries. Most belonged to private clubs (56.2%), and the majority competed at the international level (54.7%). The GreenTennis-SUSYOUTH questionnaire (33 items, six dimensions) was administered digitally between August and September 2025. The first five dimensions used a 5-point Likert scale, while the emotional dimension assessed up to three emotions related to sustainability experiences. Data confidentiality and ethical standards were ensured (approval CE062501, 27/06/2025). Descriptive statistics were calculated, and non-parametric tests (Mann-Whitney U, Kruskal-Wallis) were applied with significance set at $p < 0.05$. The item with the highest agreement was “Taking care of animals and nature is part of sustainability” ($\bar{X}=4.61\pm0.64$), while the lowest was “I avoid buying products from brands that I know don’t care about the environment” ($\bar{X}=3.54\pm0.94$). Statistically significant gender differences were found in 20 of 33 items, with females consistently obtaining higher scores. In addition, players who had previously discussed sustainability within their clubs reported significantly higher levels of agreement in five items. Overall, young tennis players demonstrate strong awareness of sustainability, particularly regarding environmental care, though sustainable consumer behaviors appear less consolidated. Gender and prior exposure to sustainability discussions play a key role in shaping perceptions and attitudes.



ERASMUS-SPORT Project - FIND ME: University Dual Career Opportunities

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Abstract

In recent years, the topic of dual careers has gained significant attention within the European Union (EU), resulting in multiple initiatives aimed at developing programs that support athletes in balancing sport with education and professional development. According to the EU definition, a dual career enables athletes to combine their sporting commitments with education and/or work in a flexible manner, safeguarding their health, well-being, and long-term professional perspectives, with particular emphasis on the continuation of formal education (European Commission, 2012). Dual career programs are essential, as both academic and sporting pathways are highly demanding, often requiring extensive travel or periods abroad. Without adequate support, student-athletes may face the difficult choice between pursuing education or sport, ultimately limiting their future opportunities.

The ERASMUS-SPORT Project FIND ME: University Dual Career Opportunities aims to establish an evidence-based European platform specifically designed to enhance dual career support at the university level, fully aligned with the EU Guidelines on Dual Careers of Athletes (European Commission, 2012). Building on strong expertise and networks at national, European, and international levels, the FIND ME consortium integrates experiences from the European Minimum Study on quality standards for dual career services, the Research for CULT Committee on qualifications and dual careers in sport, the More Than Gold guidelines, as well as the Italian university dual career platform. This project seeks to create a sustainable and innovative framework to ensure that higher education institutions across Europe can effectively support student-athletes in pursuing both academic and athletic excellence.

Key words: *career, students athletes, sport, education*



Eating Right, Sleeping Tight? The Evaluation of the Student-Athlete Paradox

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Abstract

Background: Student-athletes face the dual challenge of balancing academic and athletic commitments, which can simultaneously promote healthy lifestyle habits while increasing psychosocial and physiological stressors, especially in female student-athletes. Despite the growing participation of women in high-level competitions (e.g. Olympic Games), female athletes remain underrepresented in sports science and health research. Understanding how these competing demands affect key behavioural (e.g. dietary habits, sleep and chronotype) and psychological (e.g. body image) factors is essential for supporting their overall well-being. Therefore, the study examined body dissatisfaction, adherence to the Mediterranean diet, sleep quality, and chronotype in female student-athletes and sedentary peers. Methods: 12 female volleyball student-athletes (age 21.6 ± 2.4 years, body mass 64.3 ± 8.1 kg, height 168 ± 7 cm, BMI 22.5 ± 2.3 kg/m²) assessed during their competitive in-season period, and 16 female university students (age 24.0 ± 3.2 years, body mass 64.0 ± 8.2 kg, height 164 ± 5 cm, BMI 23.8 ± 2.8 kg/m²) completed the Mediterranean Diet Adherence questionnaire (PREDIMED) to evaluate dietary habits, the Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI) to assess sleep quality, the Morningness–Eveningness Questionnaire (MEQ) to determine chronotype, and the Body Image Dimensional Assessment (BIDA) to assess body dissatisfaction. Results: Student-athletes showed significantly higher adherence to the Mediterranean diet (8.5 ± 1.5 , $p < 0.01$), although experiencing poorer sleep quality (PSQI: 6.8 ± 3.0 , $p = 0.03$) compared to sedentary students (PREDIMED: 6.7 ± 1.6 ; PSQI: 4.6 ± 2.3). Conversely, comparative body dissatisfaction was significantly higher ($p = 0.04$) in sedentary students (19.4 ± 24.5) than student-athletes (5.6 ± 10.5). No significant differences emerged for chronotype or overall body dissatisfaction. Conclusion: These findings highlight a paradoxical health pattern among female student-athletes, characterised by healthy eating behaviours contrasted with compromised sleep quality, underscoring the complexity of balancing dual academic-athletic commitments. The results emphasise the importance of comprehensive wellness strategies that integrate dietary habits, sleep hygiene, and psychophysiological factors to support dual-career, particularly in female student-athletes.

Keywords: *Student-Athletes, Physical Activity, Sedentary Behaviours, Mediterranean Diet, Sleep Quality.*



Elevate DC – Building the Future of Elite Athlete Careers in Latvia

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Abstract:

The Elevate DC project represents a transformative step in redefining Dual Career (DC) pathways for elite football athletes in Latvia. Developed through strategic collaboration between NYSA Sweden, RFS Football Club, and the Latvian Dual Career Federation (LUSF/LASS), the initiative positions Latvia at the forefront of European innovation in athlete education and career development.

Anchored in best practices from Erasmus+ initiatives, COMPATH, WIN-WIN, and DCMENTOR, Elevate DC introduces a comprehensive operational framework that integrates elite sport with academic, vocational, and personal development. At its core is the repositioning of RFS 2 into Latvia's first High-Performance, LTAD Dual Career Academy Hub, serving as a resource centre for athlete education, sports science, coaching, employability skills, and career mentorship.

The project advances several strategic ambitions: embedding dual career support into club structures; delivering 21st-century skills curricula for employability; deploying structured decision-making training via the Cynefin framework; launching a digital athlete career mentorship platform; and internationalizing academic and sporting pathways through Erasmus+ and partner universities. These interventions aim to elevate RFS into a European leader in dual career development, while providing Latvian athletes with sustainable opportunities to thrive both on and off the field.

Through its structured work packages, policy alignment, framework development, athlete empowerment, public awareness, and sustainability, Elevate DC not only addresses immediate developmental gaps but also establishes long-term capacity for systemic change. By 2026, the program seeks to achieve recognition within European Dual Career ecosystem, secure sustainable EU funding, and build an international mentor and alumni network to reinforce its legacy.

Ultimately, Elevate DC aspires to reshape the Latvian dual career landscape by creating a replicable, scalable, and sustainable model of athlete-centred development. Its ambition is to ensure that elite athletes are not forced to choose between education and sport, but rather equipped to pursue integrated, lifelong career pathways that strengthen both individual futures and the wider sporting ecosystem.



Finnish High School Student Athletes' Perceptions of the Implementation of the Dual Career

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Abstract

A dual career refers to a situation where elite sport persons are combined with studies/training or work (Ryba et al. 2016a; Stambulova et al. 2020). Young athletes studying in sports high schools are therefore pursuing a dual career. Sports high schools play important role in Finnish competitive sports system, which aim is that all athletes should complete a secondary education

The aim of this study was to study athlete students' perceptions of the implementation athletic career with high school studies. Students' perceptions of the implementation were compared according to gender, grade level and the sport.

The data was collected from Finnish sport high school students in spring 2021. The final sample included 912 sports high school students from 13 sport high schools around Finland.

Student athletes' perceptions of the integration athletic career with high school studies were investigated using a questionnaire which contained 4 likert-scale items related to the students' perceptions of 1) Received guidance to high school studies 2) Received guidance related to further studies 3) Received guidance and support for being a sport high school student and 4) cooperation between the actors of coaching and study guidance to support the implementation of dual career

The results revealed that most of athlete students perceived that they received quite a lot or lot guidance and support to integrate high school studies and athlete career. When examining gender differences, boys perceived higher levels of guidance related further studies, and the cooperation the actors of study guidance and coaching to supporting the implementation of dual career compared to girls ($p < 0.001$). The differences were most clearly observed in summer team sports. In grade levels compare, differences were found only item guidance related further studies between grade 1 and the grades 2 or 3-4 ($p < 0.001$).

Young athletes perceive that they receive guidance and support for implementing a dual career during their high school studies. One reason for this could be long-term efforts have been made in Finland to develop sports high school system.

Key words: *sports high school, competitive sport, dual career*



Forms of Support for the Student Athletes in the Academy of Physical Education in Katowice

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Abstract

The Academy of Physical Education in Katowice is a public university which specialises in sport and physical education. It is one of six such universities in Poland and the only one in the Silesia region. The university is attended by a significant number of professional athletes, including members of Olympic national teams. In the report prepared for the Ministry of Sport and Tourism entitled „Dual career of athletes in Poland. Diagnosis of the situation”, the Academy of Physical Education in Katowice is mentioned as one of the best universities in Poland in terms of support for dual career of student athletes.

The main goal of my presentation is to show various forms of support for the student athletes who maintain a dual career in the field of education and sport at the Academy of Physical Education in Katowice.

The presentation will present the following forms of supporting student athletes in combining higher education with professional sports training:

1. Recruitment for studies.
2. Personalised Plan and Study Program.
3. Scholarships, funded by the government's budget and by the university's own resources.
4. Using the modern research laboratories.
5. The Academy of Physical Education University Sports Association Club activities.
6. “National Academic Team” – The Polish Program Supporting Student-Athletes’ Dual-Career.

Observation of the existing forms of support for student athletes allows us to conclude that they increase the effectiveness of these students' studies.



Elite Level Athletes' Awareness and Use of Dual-Career Programs in Latvia

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Abstract

The global focus on athlete-cantered approaches and dual-career support is increasing, especially in youth education. In Latvia, however, dual-career responsibilities mainly fall on universities and athletes, with limited active involvement from the Latvian Olympic Committee.

This thesis aims to thoroughly examine elite athletes' awareness and engagement with dual-career programs in Latvia. It identifies barriers and motivators to participation and uses these insights to develop specific recommendations and a strategic plan to improve the current dual-career support system.

A robust mixed-methods approach was used. The quantitative phase involved a survey of about 200 top Latvian athletes and coaches. This was complemented by in-depth qualitative interviews with five athletes and five program officials, which provided detailed insights. A comprehensive review of literature on dual-career concepts also established a solid context.

The study revealed a significant lack of awareness among elite athletes regarding dual-career programs. The primary obstacle was the lack of clear, organized, easy-to-access information. Athletes strongly preferred receiving information through lively communication channels such as social media (Instagram, Facebook), email, structured seminars, interactive forums, and informal WhatsApp groups.

Based on these findings, a detailed action plan was developed. Key areas include improving information, clarifying dual-career benefits, and promoting programs. Involve cross-sectoral collaboration, establish a regulatory framework, and improve access and engagement.

This thesis offers significant practical contributions by providing concrete, actionable recommendations and a detailed LOC and stakeholder plan. Implementing these proposals aims to strengthen Latvia's dual-career support system and enhance elite athletes' educational integration and holistic development.