

EU Guidelines on Dual Careers

Recommended Policy Actions in Support of Dual Careers of Talented and Elite Athletes

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1. Introduction

1.1. The concept of dual careers

Athletes often face challenges to combine their sporting career with education or work. The aim to succeed at the highest level of a sport demands intensive training, which can be difficult to reconcile with limitations and restrictions in the educational system and the labour market. In recent years, both non-governmental and governmental stakeholders in sport and education have been asking specific attention for these challenges. Special arrangements are needed to avoid that young sportspeople are forced to choose between education and sport. These arrangements should be beneficial for athletes' sporting careers, allow for education, promote the attainment of a new career after the sporting career, and protect and safeguard the position of athletes as human beings.

The combination of a career in sport and, at the same time, education or (other) work, is referred to as a "dual career". Its promotion matches with several of the aims of the Europe 2020 Strategy (i.a. prevention of early school leaving, more graduates in higher education, higher employability) and makes sport policies more efficient by keeping more talented and devoted athletes in the sport system.

The term 'dual career' in sport encapsulates the requirement for talented athletes to successfully initiate, develop and finalise an elite sporting career as part of a lifelong career, in combination with the pursuit of education and/or work as well as other domains which are of importance at different stages of life, such as taking up a role in society, ensuring a satisfactory income, developing an identity and a partner relationship.

Dual careers generally span a period of 15 to 20 years, depending on the type of sport and other factors such as gender and personal ability. Three stages can be distinguished:

1. The educational stage (approximately between 6 and 28 years of age, duration 5 – 10 years), during which recognised young talented players participate in specific programmes in sport and education.
2. The vocational stage (from approximately 16 years of age onwards with a duration of 5 – 10 years), with athletes in professional clubs, teams or companies and 'professional' athletes representing Member States in European and World Championships and Olympic and Paralympic Games.
3. The post-athletic stage (starting between the ages of 20-36 years, unexpectedly or planned), representing a fundamentally different life and career for most athletes.

Dual careers of athletes are sometimes compared with the "dual careers" of musicians, dancers and other artists. However, compared to these professions athletes face unique challenges because of the strong competitive character of elite sport and its wide international dimension. International activities are increasing in all sports and starting at a younger age, as illustrated for example by the Youth Olympic Games (15 – 18 years) and international youth championships in several sports. The numbers of people concerned are large.¹

¹ No detailed figures at EU level exist. However, for example,

1.2. Timeline of athletes' careers

Athletes encounter different transitions throughout their sporting career. Research findings show the strong concurrent, interactive and reciprocal nature of transitions occurring in the sporting career (athletic transitions) and transitions occurring in other domains of athletes' lives (e.g. academic, psycho-social, professional). As pupils change educational levels, they generally also disperse to different schools, thus breaking up the friendship networks which were a primary source of initiation of sport participation. While young talented athletes try to reach the mastery/perfection stage in their sporting careers where they need to perform at their highest level, as consistently and for as long as possible, they also have to cope with transitional changes at psychological level (from adolescence into young adulthood), at psycho-social level (development of temporary/stable relationships with a partner), and at academic or vocational level (transition to higher education or a professional occupation).

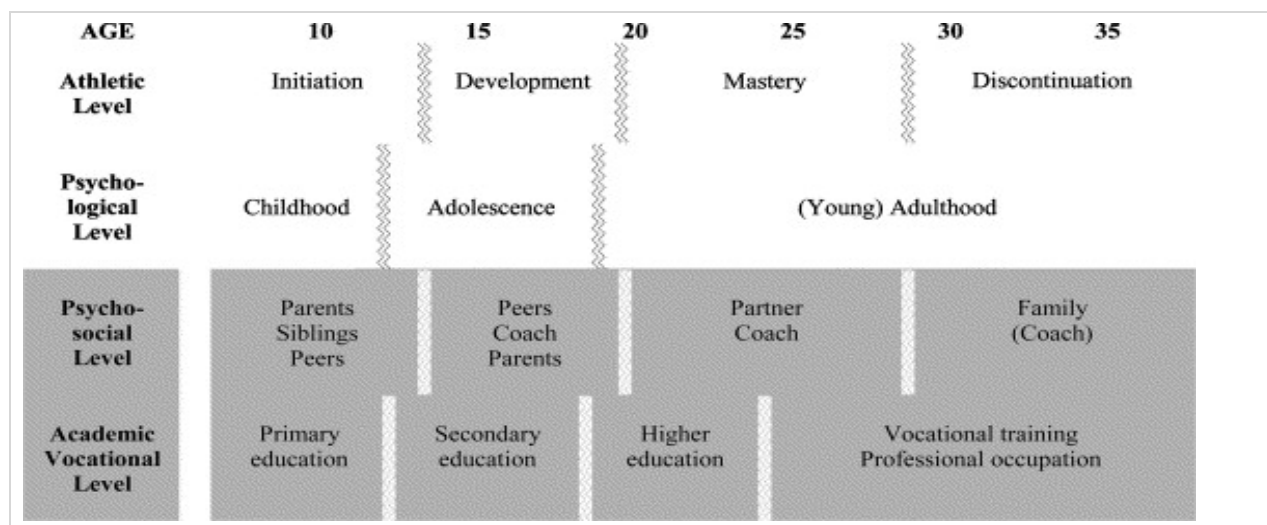


Fig. 1. A developmental model of transitions faced by athletes at athletic, individual, psychosocial, and academic/vocational level, Wylleman & Lavellee, 2003

Alongside these more or less predictable transitions, athletes also face non-normative transitions (e.g. an injury or change of personal coach) or transitions which were expected or hoped for but did not happen (e.g. not reaching the Olympic Games). They can have a big impact on the quality of athletes' participation in competitive sport and life.

Not all athletes' sport careers span all stages. In particular, many young athletes already drop out during the development stage or the beginning of the perfection stage.

- 30,441 student-athletes were enrolled in 99 sport schools in Poland in 2010, including 40 primary schools, 48 middle sport schools and 11 high sport schools. 6,754 student-athletes attended 67 sport champion schools. It is estimated that one-third of young Polish sportspersons active in elite sport are educated in the framework of the sport school system.

- 3,550 student-athletes were enrolled in 29 elite sport talent schools at secondary school level in the Netherlands in 2010. In 2007, 859 elite athletes in Olympic sports were awarded a special status (A, B and high potential) and got financial support (of whom 8% in disability sport). 33% combined sport with a study and 44% with work; the others were full-time athletes.

1.3. Benefits of a dual career and existing guidelines

1.3.1. Benefits of a dual career

According to international research, one-third of all participants between the ages of 10 and 17 withdraw from sports each year as they consider that sport takes up too much of their time and prevents them from pursuing other things in life (e.g. to study). More efforts therefore need to be made to coordinate and support athletes' dual careers to keep talented young people in sports and educational systems and make them aware of the benefits of a dual career.

Benefits for athletes involved in dual career programmes (as compared to athletes experiencing a lack of coordination between sport and education) are clearly articulated in sport research and include:

- Health-related benefits (e.g. balanced lifestyle, reduced stress levels, increased wellbeing);
- Developmental benefits (e.g. better conditions to develop life skills applicable in sport, education and other spheres of life, multiple personal identities protecting athletes from one-sided development, positive effects on athletes' self-regulation abilities);
- Social benefits (e.g. positive socialisation effects such as expanded social networks and social support systems and better peer relationships);
- Benefits related to athletic retirement and adaptation in post-sports life (e.g. better career/retirement planning, shorter adaptation period, prevention of identity crisis);
- Financial benefits (e.g. higher employability and access to well-paid jobs).

1.3.2. Existing guidelines on dual careers

A large number of specifications and regulations related to dual careers of talented and elite sportspeople exist in EU Member States, but most of them are fragmented or focus only on some aspects. A few Member States have set out legal regulations, including specifications relating to the necessary requirements to run training centres. Training duration (mostly in early maturity sports) is limited through educational or labour laws or collective bargaining agreements in the case of professional sports, or on the basis of official guidelines issued by the State and/or the sports movement.

Example of good practice

In France each regional training centre must sign a general agreement with an educational structure where athletes may follow their academic education. The aim of the agreement is to facilitate the time schedule of athletes, allow for personal planning of exams during competition time, and provide tutoring.

No guidelines or regulations exist at EU level, neither of a general nature nor in the framework of EU education or youth mobility programmes.

In football, UEFA's Club Licensing System gives guidance on dual careers. A licence applicant must ensure that every youth player involved in its youth development programme has the

possibility to follow mandatory school education according to national law and is not prevented from continuing his non-football education (complementary school education or profession).²

Thanks to the EU's Preparatory Actions in the field of sport, some sport organisations have drafted suggestions and guidelines.³ So far, the most comprehensive European guidelines on dual careers, "Promoting Dual Careers in the EU" (March 2011), were the result of the "Athletes-To-Business" project. With a focus on athletes in higher education and their relation to the world of business, concrete guidelines were addressed to all the major partners in organising dual career programmes including national authorities, the EU, athletes, representatives of business, educational institutes and sport organisations.

1.4. Main actors involved

Various actors (parents, clubs, schools, national sports associations and professional leagues) are involved in the training of young elite athletes. At the stage of talent identification, the actors are mostly limited to clubs, schools, coaches, teachers and parents. When special arrangements become necessary to combine school and sport, more actors start playing a role. Depending on the situation in Member States, sport academies run by federations or commercial providers, specific schools and training centres may be part of arrangements at secondary school level, as may athletic services (counsellors, health and nutrition experts). A single coach tends to give way to a team of experts managed by a head coach as the sporting career of a talented sportsperson reaches elite level. Some athletes who start a professional career in sport are supported by a personal manager or agent.

Whereas the abovementioned actors have a direct link to the athlete, many other stakeholders play an indirect, though important, role by setting the policy and legal frameworks or financial arrangements, or being responsible for the maintenance of facilities, field labs, education of coaches, organisation of scholarships, quality control etc.

1.5. Challenges to implement dual careers

Attention for dual careers is relatively recent in a number of Member States and sports. A choice for 100% sport after the period of compulsory education was traditionally the preferred pathway to get to the top. It was often welcomed by groups of athletes, in particular athletes not motivated for education, and promoted by coaches looking for short-term results. Changing this attitude is essential for a successful implementation of the dual career concept.

² Strictly speaking UEFA's licensing system applies only to professional football clubs entering European competitions.

³ Four dual career projects were supported in the framework of the 2009 Preparatory Action in the field of sport, the aim of which was to test projects in view of a possible future EU funding stream for sport. The 2009 projects were implemented between late 2009 and early 2011. Total EU support for the 4 projects amounted to approx. € 750,000. On average, each project included partners from 8 EU Member States. The following projects were supported:

- "Dual Career for young athletes in Europe", project leader: Bosön Sports College (Sweden);
- "Athletes2Business", project leader: EU Office of the European Olympic Committees;
- "FIFPro Online Academy", project leader: FIFPro;
- "INTECS Network Building: Establishing a Network of International Training and Education Centres for Winter Sports", project leader: Rovaniemi University of Applied Sciences (Finland).

Today the success of a dual career arrangement in some Member States still depends on the goodwill of a person in a key position of an organisation or institute, while in fact a systematic approach based on general and sustainable financial and legal arrangements is needed. Within these general arrangements tailor-made solutions should be found for (small groups of) athletes because of the variety of sports and the different preparations needed for each sport, the stages of development athletes are passing, and the variety in educational providers and work environments.

Athletes can be in a disadvantaged position compared to other workers in the labour market. Enterprises may perceive it as difficult to adapt to the changing employment needs that athletes have at different stages of their careers. Specific challenges have been reported for athletes participating in international training stages and international events which take them abroad for a long time. The organisation of individualised pathways in education or distance learning is demanding while extra 'holidays' are a problem in the labour market.

Financial constraints in Member States, high unemployment and budget reductions in the fields of education and sport are factors which require creative solutions in the implementation of dual career systems.

1.6. Added value of EU guidelines

Governments and various organisations have raised concerns about the quality of education and supporting services for young people involved in elite sport in Europe. The main concerns are:

- The safeguarding of the development of young athletes, especially of children of primary school age, young people in vocational training and disabled athletes;
- The balance between sports training and education;
- The balance between sports training and employment (at a later stage of life);
- The end-of-sporting-career phase of athletes including those who leave the system earlier than planned.

Stakeholders have repeatedly called on the European Commission to consider taking action at EU level to facilitate the introduction and implementation of dual career systems. The conclusions of two EU funded studies⁴, the results of dual career projects supported in the framework of the 2009 Preparatory Action in the field of sport, and informal expert meetings with Member States led the European Commission to propose to develop guidelines on dual careers in its Communication on sport of January 2011. In its Resolution on an EU Work Plan for Sport 2011-2014, the Council decided to treat the development of such guidelines as a priority.

The principal aim of these Guidelines is to raise awareness at national level about the concept of dual careers and its implementation. The Guidelines should contribute to the exchange and spreading of good practices and learning experiences. Furthermore, the Guidelines suggest a framework of possible arrangements at international level and invite the European Union to initiate supplementary actions.

⁴ ADD REFERENCES TO STUDIES

These Guidelines are addressed primarily to policy makers in the Member States, as inspiration for the formulation and adoption of action-oriented national dual career guidelines. The purpose of the document is not a comprehensive academic review of the subject. This document is intended for a wide range of users who deal with dual careers. The use of footnotes, references and specialist terminology has therefore been kept to a minimum.

All guidelines have been developed in reference to all athletes – men, women, boys and girls, without and with disabilities. This corresponds to the demand for equal participation and is in accordance with the EU Strategy for Equality between Women and Men (2010-2015) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities adopted in 2006 by the UN General Assembly, which was ratified by the EU in 2008 and came into force in 2011.

1.7. Need for a European approach

Projects in the framework of the 2009 Preparatory Action in the field of sport indicated the need of exchange of information and good practices between governmental and non-governmental organisations within and between the EU Member States. However, the European dimension goes beyond the exchange of information. More and more student-athletes train or study abroad for a longer period and coaches from different countries are involved. Various developments leading to further internationalisation have been identified:

- Athletes in sport disciplines characterised by a high training frequency and international events already at secondary school level need specific facilities for longer periods abroad.
- Athletes from small EU countries combine their higher education and sport in neighbouring countries because of a lack of facilities in their home country (either in sport or higher education).
- Youth academies of professional clubs and specialised schools attract young players (and their parents) from various countries.

An increasing trend is that athletes train and study for some years in different settings, starting generally in their own country, and later regularly train and/or compete abroad. To combine this with a study period abroad is often a challenge. Talented athletes with an EU passport can often not take part in certain talent programs in Member States other than their own.

The European sport movement supports a European initiative because it will make it easier for European athletes to perform well and compete on a high level in competition with athletes from the USA, China and other powerful sporting nations.

For the European Commission and national governments, this is only one side of the medal. Equally important is the need for highly qualified employees on the European labour market (Europe 2020 Strategy). Elite athletes should have a balanced and healthy sporting career and good follow-up after their active sporting career so that no talent is lost and investment wasted. Reintegration in education and the labour market are of great importance. Moreover, a well-balanced dual career is good preparation for becoming potential role models in society.

2. Policy areas

2.1. Need for a cross-sectoral, inter-ministerial approach at national level

The notion of a dual career for elite athletes by definition involves engagement in the sports domain and the domains of work (whether training or employment), education, and the health sector. In addition to these domains, Ministries of Finance may well be engaged in issues relating to student-athlete funding, taxation and payment for health benefits. The individual will thus enjoy a range of rights and responsibilities in relation to these domains depending on Member State policies and practices (including legal frameworks), and responsibility for the policy domains themselves will be invariably spread across a number of central (and in many cases regional and local) government departments responsible for work, sport, education and health with the precise configuration of responsibilities varying from one Member State to another. Health provision and protection for elite athletes may be administered by health departments, while financial matters such as tax incentives for commercial providers of education provision are likely to be the responsibility of finance departments.

In addition to engagement of a variety of policy bodies across related policy domains, organisations and interests across the commercial, public and NGO sector are implicated in the dual career framework. Thus in terms of regulation or control, or the fostering of good practice, the area of athletes' dual careers invariably involves an element of 'joined up policy' across policy domains, and the steering and/or regulating of activity to ensure that athletes' long-term needs outside of sport are met.

There is no single model to be recommended how to include all related policy domains in the dual career framework. Different studies⁵ identify four types of approaches to state intervention in this area, namely: a state-centric provision backed by legislation; the state as a facilitator fostering formal agreements between educational and sporting bodies; National Federations / Sports Institutes acting as facilitator/mediator engaging directly in negotiation with educational bodies on behalf of the individual athlete; and a 'laissez faire' approach where there are no formal structures in place. Research points out how France, Finland and the UK respectively have sought to adapt to their local systems and produce success in both academic and sporting terms, by cooperation across levels of government, across policy domains and across commercial, public and NGO providers.

Guidelines for Action

Guideline 1 – Talented and elite athletes as well as retired athletes, including athletes with a disability, should be recognised as a specific population group. This status should be:

- a. Developed and recognised through cooperation between stakeholders in elite sport, education, employers and business, as well as governmental agencies (ministries responsible for sport, education, employment, defence, home affairs, economy and finance).

⁵ Aquilina, Henry and PMP (2004) a review of policy on the education of elite sports persons in the (then) 25 Member States

- b. Integrated in the institutional regulations and policy plans of sport bodies, educational institutes and as part of the social dialogue between employers and employees.

Guideline 2 – Public authorities responsible for policy domains involved in the provision of sport, education, training, social and financial support and employment should consider the establishment of interdepartmental bodies or mechanisms to ensure the coordination, cross-sectoral cooperation, implementation and monitoring of dual career policies for talented and elite athletes.

Guideline 3 – Authorities responsible for the implementation of dual careers should develop national guidelines for dual careers. They should consider the use of agreements between stakeholders to promote dual careers. Where appropriate, such agreements could involve specific reward mechanisms.

2.2. Sport

Sport policies should aim at talented and elite athletes participating in a combined career of sport and education. National Governments in most EU Member States play an important role in national sport policies through their legal and/or financial frameworks. As political and often the main funding bodies they can react to developments in sport and society and give direction to the implementation of the concept of dual career by organising inter-ministerial arrangements and distributing funding to sport organisations, federations and other stakeholders which recognise and support the importance of dual careers.

Alongside contributions from other sectors such as education, employment, health and well-being and finance, stakeholders in the field of sport such as sport organisations, sport centres and, in particular, coaches play a key role in the successful implementation of dual careers for athletes, including athletes with a disability.

2.2.1. Sport organisations

Sport organisations (confederations, federations, associations, clubs) which still have a tendency to focus on the organisation of competitions should define or review their policies and include the development of athletes' dual careers. National sport bodies could promote and support the inclusion of the concept of dual careers in the various activities of their member sport organisations, taking into account the position of athletes, a long-term strategic approach to dual career programmes and the availability of supporting services and facilities.

The position of athletes should be the starting point of high performance strategies and actions of sport organisations. It is essential that the process of selection of talented or elite athletes and the further decisions on the dual careers of athletes are transparent and exclude any form of discrimination or exclusion based on gender, race, religion or sexual preference. Strict ethical regulations are necessary. Private life and developments outside sport should be respected and a balance in athletes' lives considered important. Concrete charters and ethical rules could be helpful if they regulate for example the process of appeal against decisions inside organisations.

Clear and open communication and information about the rules and the decision process are recommended.

A strategy to involve athletes in governing bodies and integrate athletes' points of view in decision-making processes should be developed. In the retirement process of athletes, sport organisations could support the athletes by providing a role in the organisations' activities. Good practices include athletes' commissions, consultation processes of athletes in decision-making, specific election processes to include athletes in their governing body, facilities or programmes to support and spread athletes' opinions, priority access for athletes to employment or voluntary activities in the sport organisation's programmes.

In strategies, structures and programmes for athletes' dual careers the different steps of career development in the particular sports discipline should be identified and clearly described, so that a clear pathway from the beginning of practice to the highest level and retirement is foreseen. This career plan should be shared by all the relevant actors.

In training and competition schedules, educational and extra-sport activities need to be planned and integrated in for example a transition period without training and competition. Proper dual career arrangements need to be arranged when athletes are abroad for a longer time because of training or competition. Better use could be made of existing international contacts, including with international federations, to contribute to the development of international educational networks linked to high-performance training and sport locations.

Example of good practice

Recently, the IOC included in its evaluation of international federations an assessment of athletes' career programmes, which should integrate the dual career approach. This represents an important step since, as it is identified as a must-do, international federations will have to contribute to the whole process.

Sport organisations should be aware of the fact that athletes are confronted with conflicting requirements and needs at different levels of development (athletic, academic, vocational, psychological, psycho-social, social, financial) throughout each of the stages of a dual career. Some flexibility towards other stakeholders will enhance further cooperation.

Recognition of supporting services is essential: the conflicting requirements, the lack of time and the high pressure due to expected exceptional performances in sport define a clear need for these services for the athlete. Whether sport organisations should have a full service in charge of identifying the athletes' challenges in their strategies or programmes and monitor and support their needs, depends on the role specific organisations such as sport agencies for talented athletes, training centres and sport academies play in the networks of stakeholders involved in dual careers.

2.2.2. Sport academies and high-performance training centres

Sport academies exist in many modalities in EU Member States. Alongside schools, local multisport academies without boarding facilities deliver extra sport activities for starting talents and talent identification in certain sports. Municipalities, schools and sport clubs are involved in

these academies and local arrangements with all stakeholders involved are a key for their success. Clear objectives, definition of target groups and a link to regional and national talent programmes are recommended.

Local and regional sport academies set up by (professional) clubs and federations for more advanced young talents are common in the majority of Member States. It is only in a limited number of sports where other private bodies than sports clubs and federations are directly operating the training of young talented athletes (mainly in tennis, golf and skiing). Even in those cases, a mix between private academies, national associations and clubs exists and may be different from one country to another. Besides the professional training of young athletes, special emphasis should be given to their personal development and complex education with the help of coaches, teachers and health experts. Sport academies should function according to time schedules which allow for the reconciliation of the highest level of sports training with school education.

Example of good practice

The Hungarian Government supports the development of football academies as education centres of future top athletes, aiming to start and maintain the athlete's career as a life model, to spot the talents and develop a continuous monitoring system.

In many Member States, National Olympic Committees or sport federations run (inter-)national high-performance training centres hosting different sports. The existence of such national training centres, where elite athletes train all year long, is essential in the organisation of the training of elite athletes. In general, all the best athletes of a country (starting from 15 years old) are gathered in one place or in a few places. National associations play a key role in the organisation of training, while the management of the training centre can refer to different types of bodies (Ministry of Education, Olympic Committee, private company). Athletes should benefit from high-quality standards for sports training, medical survey, education, and other supporting services, and proper and transparent arrangements should be made internally or with services in the neighbourhood of the centre. Sport science laboratories run in cooperation with universities are an interesting option. The training centres have accommodation where athletes can stay during their sports life. Training programmes for the growing number of athletes from abroad, international training stages and sport apprenticeships should be offered in the centres, although the inclusion of the concept of dual careers for foreign athletes remains a challenge because of their different needs and backgrounds as well as potential linguistic barriers.

Example of good practice

The High-Performance Centre of Sant Cugat in Spain has an Athletes Care Service (SAE) giving individual attention to the education-sport-personal development balance, job/working experience search, and retirement plan including two academic transitions: the end of secondary education and university education. First working experiences are facilitated in local companies thanks to a programme for companies (SECAR) that raises awareness of the importance of facilitating access to work, making it compatible with sport practice. The public high school (IES CAR) which is located inside the training centre offers lessons at different times on the same day to allow the different training groups to attend classes.

Sport academies and national sport centres run by sport federations are often part of the sport policy of the national sports authorities. Through financial frameworks and/or regulations, including books of specificities and quality control mechanism, transparency may be reached regarding the work process and output of these centres. For sport academies run by professional enterprises or clubs, these mechanisms are often not in place, but licensing systems of federations could give guidance. It is important that the position of athletes and staff in such sport communities should be regulated well, for example through an internal code of behaviour and the presence of confidential agents.

Furthermore, the educational part of dual careers, in particular after the compulsory education period, needs more support. There is still a traditional focus on the physical sport performance of the athlete, instead of a complete set of competences including (applied) expertise in the field of nutrition, healthy lifestyle, prevention of injuries etc. Moreover, sport stakeholders often do not feel responsible for competences needed for an after-sport career. As a consequence, the relation with higher education and vocational training institutes is often seen as a necessity rather than an opportunity. Legislation, guidelines and licensing systems, if existent, should include the promotion of continuing education after compulsory education, which would be in line with national and European strategies on lifelong learning, and include this in agreements with the stakeholders in sports. Further education and training should be part of collective bargaining agreements for professional athletes in sport academies, in a similar way as in other professions.

2.2.3. Coaches

Trainers and coaches are key actors in the different stages of sports training of young talented athletes. As the future of young athletes, both as sportsmen and as persons, is partly in their hands, it is essential that trainers are qualified at the right level. They need to have the competences to understand different types of risks that may be incurred by athletes, and not only the risks directly linked to sports training. Their role in the development of the sporting career should include the lifestyle of talented and elite athletes and the lifelong development of the athlete as a person. Accordingly, coaches should equip athletes not only with technical, tactical, physical and mental capabilities, but should also seek to develop personal, social and lifestyle capabilities through educational and career pathways. Coaches who view the athlete as a whole person promote the development of confidence, competence, connection, caring and character in such a way that these capabilities are not only displayed within sport, but are transferred to life and career development as well.

This approach requires a mind-shift in sport governing bodies and organisations in many Member States. A code of conduct, including the principles of dual careers, could be part of a collective bargaining agreement or individual contracts for well-qualified coaches.

Member States should update their regulations relating to the requirements necessary to become a trainer (degrees, sports training) based on a modernised professional profile of specialised coaches for talented and elite athletes. These updates should be compatible with National Qualifications Frameworks with reference to EQF, as well as with the European Framework of Coaching Competence and Qualifications of the European Coaching Council.

Coaches are in need of further education once they are at work, not only because of new methods of training and but also in the perspective of a changing sport environment. Some Member States and sport organisations have already created further education systems in order to revalidate the licences of trainers, but systems are often still in development or not organised in an attractive and effective way. The concept of lifelong learning should be implemented in sport coaching and dual career topics should be included.

There is also a need for a pro-active and structured approach to support the transition from athlete to coach in which the relevant experience of athletes is recognised. Many elite athletes have the potential and desire to become coaches. They often accumulate over 10,000 hours of practice in their chosen sport, often at the expense of other areas of their development. However, it should not be assumed that excellent former athletes will make excellent coaches.

Whereas the position of coaches in national training centres, professional sports clubs and big sport organisations is often that of a full-time professional, this is not the case in other sports and in particular for coaches of disabled sportspeople. Coaches often have to combine their coaching with other work and face challenges with employers during specific training sessions and international events abroad. Coaches are often employed part-time or even only get reimbursement of their expenses. In many sports and countries, there are good coaches, but there is no money to employ them.

2.2.4. Special arrangements for athletes with a disability

Special attention is needed for talented and elite athletes with a disability. The social inclusion of athletes with disabilities requires that decision-making processes incorporate the perspectives and needs of this group. A tendency persists to discriminate against athletes with a disability in comparison to able-bodied athletes. This tendency applies to funding policies of both governments and sport organisations.⁶ It would amount to considerable progress for disability sport if measures in connection with the topic of dual careers applied equally for athletes with a disability.

On average, an athlete with a disability is older than an able-bodied athlete. There are many reasons for this: many athletes enter disability sport only after a traumatic event, others after the onset of a degenerative illness. Therefore, the relevant age group for high-performance disability sport is from about 15 to 45 years. Prospective guidelines and recommendations are primarily concerned with this age group.

Guidelines for Action

Guideline 4 – Sports authorities should support the implementation of dual careers in the activities of national sports organisations through formal agreements which require a clear strategy, planning of activities and involvement of athletes, and make the allocation of funding conditional upon the inclusion of the dual career concept in their activities.

⁶ Radtke & Doll-Tepper, 2006

Guideline 5 – Sports authorities should recognise sport academies and high-performance training centres as part of a coherent system of provisions for dual career athletes, including student-athletes from abroad, and secure the implementation of the dual career concept in these institutes.

Guideline 6 – Sport academies and high-performance training centres should only be recognised and supported if some minimum requirements have been fulfilled:

- Balanced combination between sports training and general education;
- Qualified staff (including specific qualification for disabled athletes);
- Regular medical surveillance of athletes and full medical check-up;
- Career management assistance;
- Services of nutritionists;
- Assistance from psychologists to young athletes;
- Quality criteria for safe and accessible sport facilities and services;
- Internal code of behaviour.

Guideline 7 – Sport and educational authorities should promote a lifelong strategy for coaches and implement the dual career concept within coach education programmes of national organisations and international federations, as well as within coaching and coach education programmes of universities and vocational education and training institutes.

Guideline 8 – Sport bodies and educational institutes should develop recognised adapted pathways for elite athletes to qualify as a coach in the framework of their dual career.

Guideline 9 – Sports authorities and sport organisations are invited to make specific dual career arrangements with employers, social services and employees to develop principles for a collective bargaining agreement for coaches.

Guideline 10 – Sports authorities should promote the creation by sports organisations of specific dual career pathways for disabled young athletes in sports where pathways for able-bodied athletes cannot be used.

2.3. Education

As all talented children, individuals who have displayed a talent for sport are still required by law to complete their education according to the requirements of the national curriculum. Flexible pathways to reach the learning outcomes related to the curriculum do not always exist in all types of education in Member States. Hence, special arrangements may be necessary regarding the exact number of hours and subjects student-athletes have to follow.

There is a growing number of specialist institutions, programmes and methods in place to help young sportspersons balance their education and sport. These measures promote the implementation of dual careers, but also support indirectly the strategies of Member States on the prevention of early school leaving. Furthermore, given the popularity of sport, they provide schools with opportunities to profile themselves as schools of excellence to parents and students.

2.3.1. Primary education

Children start to be active in sport at an early age. Clubs and schools offering specific training sessions, often in adapted forms, for children who are 4-5 years old are no longer an exception. This development is beneficial for the careers of young athletes. The beginning of intensive and/or regular training depends mainly on the specificities of each sport discipline. National associations and clubs are free to apply their own training policies and can decide by themselves to start intensive training earlier or later.

The main concern regarding athletes in the primary school age group is their personal physical and mental development. For most sports, a general sport profile of the school, including extra PE and daily sport activities, has a positive influence on the child. More specific attention for certain sports is only recommended in the last grades of primary school. In Member States with active local sport clubs, these activities can be organised in close cooperation between schools and clubs. The combination of sport and education can often be organised in a natural way since no long training stages and competitions abroad are on the agenda while homework and exams are often non-existent.

For early maturity sports such as gymnastics, figure skating, swimming and tennis, more intensive training starts in general between the ages of 6 and 11 and may demand special arrangements at primary school level. Highly specialised primary schools for these disciplines, recognised by the Ministry of Education, can be recommended. Specialised schools demand a good system of care and residence (preferably foster parents) and guidance for families, depending on the cultural acceptance of the education of young children away from home.

Example of good practice

Young athletes in tennis, swimming and gymnastics in Flanders (Belgium) can obtain the status of “promising young athlete” which allows them to be absent from primary school during 6 hours a week for training and to be absent for 10 half-days per year in order to participate in sports competitions.

2.3.2. Secondary education

In secondary education there are currently several ways throughout the European Union for young athletes to combine education and sports training. Many Member States have created a specific status which grants beneficiary athletes scholarships, flexible timetables and exam dates, and allows them to be absent for competitions. A majority of Member States regulate sports classes in regular schools, allowing students to have more sports classes per week. These sports classes are not specifically targeting elite athletes and are consequently not always suitable to their level of training. However, elite athletes benefit at least from more intensive training and are medically taken care of, while profiting from tolerance for missing school up to a certain period of time, flexible timetables or additional exam dates.

Many Member States favour the combination of sports training and academic success in special sport schools or sport colleges (often in upper secondary education) where young athletes may benefit from an educational programme adapted to their sports training. Sport is the main skill

and programmes are taught around trainings. These structures allow for flexibility, which is convenient since each sport has different requirements. However, it is made clear that students must generally follow the same educational programmes as in regular schools. For athletes the various types of specific arrangements are of great value (e.g. extended education by one year, a specific school guide or coordinator, supplementary tutoring at school and through telecommunication networks, study buddy schemes, specific delivery of written assignments and adapted organisation of exams and tests). Schools are encouraged to use Internet-based tools and communication channels between students and teachers in view of athletes' stays abroad for longer periods.

Example of good practice

In Denmark one hour of supplementary tutoring at school is granted for each day of absence by Team Denmark and the NOC, when athletes attend activities for the national federations.

Results of evaluations of existing sport schools and sport classes indicate that student-athletes are not always better off in academic and sport results compared to talented athletes at normal schools. The success of sport schools and classes depends on many factors including the quality of flexibility arrangements, cooperation with the sport federations regarding the profile and qualification of coaches and the content of training programmes. Quality also depends on the selection of schools and monitoring mechanisms in place. An accreditation system for schools which are keen on functioning as sport schools could be considered. Exchange of experiences within and between Member States, taking into account the specific position of the school and sport in every national sport and education system, could improve the effectiveness of sport schools and special colleges.

2.3.3. Vocational education and training (VET) institutes

Opportunities for the implementation of dual careers in the vocational education and training sector should be further explored. For many talented athletes, vocational education forms the educational part of their dual career⁷. Specific arrangements therefore need to be developed which should ideally be part of a legal or policy framework for all VET institutes in a Member State. Positive experiences in Member States where youth academies of professional sport clubs already cooperate with VET institutes, leading to sport-related qualifications such as sport instructor, show that dual career arrangements should not be limited to flexibility only, but may also include a curriculum leading to a profession in sport.

Example of good practice

The Johan Cruyff College offers tailor-made study programmes for elite athletes from all kinds of sports in five "Regional Vocational Education Centres" administered by the Netherlands Ministry of Education. Student athletes and retired athletes may qualify as (assistant) trainer, event organiser or for a profession in sport marketing (EQF levels 3 and 4).

VET institutes sometimes offer important elements toward the development of professional athletes, e.g. in the form of applied theory on training, contracts and labour conditions, a foreign language, communication and media training, medical care, prevention of injuries etc. Through

⁷ E.g. in the UK around 50% of TASS-supported athletes participate in VET.

the vocational education system, substantial apprenticeships in the sport sector are already widely developed in some Member States.⁸ Training on the job and traineeships abroad may be part of these apprenticeships.

Example of good practice

In England the Sector Skills Council 'Skills Active' operates the Advanced Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence programme which focuses on structured training and development across a number of sports for talented young athletes (aged 16-19), who have the potential and opportunity to excel in their sport, either competing internationally or securing a professional contract. The programme currently serves approximately 2,500 athletes in 20 sports, including disability sports. It is designed to enhance the athletes' ability to plan, apply and evaluate their development in the appropriate technical, tactical, physical and psychological aspects of their sport and also addresses wider issues such as lifestyle, career development, communication and health and safety.

In reality not many VET institutes in Member States offer vocational programmes to become an elite athlete as a profession yet. But formalised cooperation between stakeholders from professional clubs/teams and VET institutes is increasing and should be promoted.⁹ The starting point for such cooperation should be the description of the necessary competences (knowledge, skills and responsibilities) for an elite professional athlete. National athlete organisations (e.g. members of EU Athletes, FIFPro and athletes commissions) could be invited to contribute to the formulation of such profiles as part of the social dialogue related to VET in the Member States.

2.3.4. Higher education

The combination of education and training often becomes complicated when athletes would like to combine higher education with their sports career. More transitions are often taking place at this age as students move to another town away from home and family, make new friends, change clubs and have to make new training and sport arrangements. A substantial investment is needed in all domains. In most Member States, opportunities for pursuing an academic education and a sports career are not planned as well as at compulsory school level.

Several Member States have Sports and Physical Education Faculties¹⁰. Like sport schools, these faculties are adapted to training since their subjects are all sport-related. They generally lead to teaching and training jobs in sport and physical education. Some countries only have sports faculties as an adapted means for athletes to access upper education. In some cases, a sports faculty may not be the best path to follow as a dual career. If more sports have to be combined in the curriculum, the specific discipline of the athlete may suffer due to an overload of physical training and injuries, having a negative influence on the athlete's sport performance.

Most Member States entitle elite athletes to benefit from specific advantages taking into account the specificity of their condition. But universities are autonomous and therefore entitled to

⁸ E.g. in Austria, Netherlands, France, United Kingdom, Spain

⁹ In some countries, a dual VET system (guided learning on the job and specific days at the institute), run and paid by the industry and educational sector, exists as well. The professional sport sector seems to be absent from these dual systems.

¹⁰ Taj Ineum (2008): Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Greece, Poland, Romania and Slovakia

regulate the status and advantages allocated to elite athletes and to set up their own arrangements on flexibility in timetables, distance learning, tutors etc. Some universities across the Member States have specific policies or programmes in place to facilitate entry requirements for elite sportspeople. Either the Ministry of Sport or the Ministry of Education, depending on the Member State, has put these policies in place. Athletes must meet specific criteria to qualify for facilitated entry requirements, which vary between Member States but typically centre on a top-three placing in the Olympic Games, World Championships or European Championships. A number of Member States have an incentive scheme where ‘bonus’ points, based on sporting performance, may contribute towards entry requirements.

Example of good practice

French regulations require universities to favour enrolment of elite athletes. They may benefit from the status of employed students, from an extension of the duration of their studies, from the granting of bonuses for exams, or from authorised absences. Furthermore, each year 20 elite athletes have access to schools that organise courses for masseurs-physiotherapists without an entry exam. Elite athletes may also benefit from specific arrangements to qualify for the National Certificate of Sports Instructor.

Practice often shows that existing measures are not sufficient (no policy of the university, too much dependence on individual arrangements) and that many elite athletes cannot study efficiently if they want to reach the elite level on the sports side. It could be of interest to come to a general agreement between sport stakeholders and (interested) higher education institutes and define a statute of a student-athlete in higher education, accepted and respected by all partners. This would increase transparency so that athletes could know which specific arrangements to expect when and where.

Alternatively an accreditation system could be developed to identify and select institutes or faculties of higher education with proper dual career arrangements in place. The use of academic sport services on campus for regular training could be one of the elements of such arrangements.

Example of good practice

Statute of student-athlete in higher education in the Netherlands.

2.3.5. Distance learning environments

The development of a range of flexible forms of education delivery is critical to meeting the needs of student-athletes in all types of education. Distance learning (or distributed learning) in particular may provide student-athletes with flexibility in terms of the timing and location of their sporting and academic activities. Student-athletes may equally profit from the development of Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) in many educational institutes and the advent of cheap and functional means of providing tutorial support via the Internet. However, distance learning programmes require a heavy investment of resources for the development and testing of materials prior to the launching of a module. Costs can be reduced if educational authorities and institutes develop platforms, curricula and programmes together.

Guidelines for Action

Guideline 11 – Public authorities should set up a system of primary schools with a sport profile, where possible in cooperation with local sports clubs, and with a focus on specific sports in the higher grades.

Guideline 12 – Educational and sports authorities should consider setting up specialised primary schools in early mature sports such as gymnastics.

Guideline 13 – Public authorities should increase the flexibility of educational pathways in secondary education for dual career athletes, including the development of e-learning programmes and supplementary tutoring.

Guideline 14 – Public authorities and stakeholders should develop a framework for dual careers in sport and vocational education and training (VET) in which specific arrangements (flexibility, adapted curriculum) are defined.

Guideline 15 – Educational and sports authorities should promote cooperation between professional sports academies and VET institutes to organise dual careers in an effective and attractive way, including for students who have completed compulsory education.

Guideline 16 – Educational and sports authorities should encourage stakeholders in sport and institutes of higher education to reach an agreement on dual career pathways in higher education, including the content of the curriculum and the use of facilities and services of higher education institutes.

Guideline 17 – Public authorities should support the development of an accreditation system for educational institutes involved in dual careers of student-athletes, taking account of the specific characteristics of the different types of education.

Guideline 18 – Educational authorities and institutes should participate in consortia to develop learning curricula, programmes and materials using either a shared Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) as a platform, or a shared protocol to be adopted for local VLE platforms.

2.4. Health and well-being

Academic evidence has highlighted the importance of a strong support structure to help elite athletes achieve their sporting ambitions¹¹. Medical and paramedical care, injury prevention and nutrition support are basic needs which have to be provided to protect athletes' health. But equally important is career assistance to manage time, to overcome career transitions and to deal with the entourage of supporters, including parents, and stakeholders, all of whom want to influence young sportspersons in ways they feel are best for their development. In addition, support may be needed in relation to non-normative transitions in the life of student-athletes which may cause traumas, drop-out or deviant behaviour.

¹¹ Chartrand & Lent, 1987; Lavalley & Wylleman, 2000

2.4.1. Medical care and injury prevention

The health of athletes underpins their dual careers. Illnesses and injuries can restrict their ability to cope with sports training and education. They can also have a serious emotional impact (depression, anxiety, boredom, exclusion from team environments) as well as financial consequences (loss of competition money, playing bonuses, appearance fees). Medical follow-up is therefore crucial and should include both regular follow-up in order to identify signs of health problems and full medical check-ups in order to study specific issues which a sports medical practitioner may not identify “on the field”. Some Member States have detailed legal regulations on medical surveys while others do not have any mandatory rule and surveys are left at the discretion of sports associations. Regarding nutritional services, only a few Member States have rules; these are generally issued by sports associations. Special attention should be paid to anorexia among young female gymnasts.

The safeguarding of the development of young athletes, particularly those of primary school age and disabled athletes, should have high priority. Measures should therefore be taken to offer them the right regular medical care and nutritional surveillance and to prevent athletes from doping themselves. In view of likely changes in environment and entourage in the course of athletes' careers, public authorities may consider issuing health records which would be delivered to each elite athlete upon the beginning of his high-level sports training and which would remain the athlete's property.

An inevitable aspect of competing and training at the highest level is the risk and occurrence of injuries, which may range from minor, short-term strains and setbacks to the need for long-term rehabilitation or even accelerated debilitation later in life.

The importance of being able to swiftly receive medical care of high quality so as to minimise long-term effects is vital to any injured athlete. The cost of and geographical distance from provision should not be factors that detract from the ability of a high-performing athlete to access medical care. Treatment, however, should not be the sole concern with regard to sports injuries. Reducing the risk of injury in the first place should be considered just as important. Screenings can identify an increased risk of injury. Corrective work can then be implemented to address these factors and thus have a positive effect on performance. In addition, education in the areas of technique, recovery from participation/travel, safe use and quality of equipment and surfaces, and nutrition will help athletes to cope with the physical effects of their sports and should therefore be included in the educational part of their dual careers.

2.4.2. Supporting services

Athletes need to prepare for, initiate, develop and finalise the educational and vocational stages of their dual career themselves. However, the provision of services and support specific to dual careers is beneficial to their development. Support structures and services need to be continued and strengthened and will contribute to the prevention of early school leaving and dropping out of both the educational and the sport systems.

Supporting services can notably include:

- Individual assessments, direct one-on-one contacts and self-assessments
- Educational guidance and information
- Career discovery, planning, development and coaching
- Personal development training courses
- Employment preparation
- Access to career referral networks
- Online services related to educational and vocational development
- Lifestyle management, skills to prepare and cope with transition and change
- Transfer of skills from sport to educational and vocational contexts
- Accredited education programmes
- A network of partners from different sectors (e.g. public, self-employed, small and medium enterprises) which provide career advice, internships, temporary work etc.
- Financial management and budget control
- Referral services through a network of specialists (e.g. financial, psychological, social, legal, social security).

Supporting services should be advertised among the community of athletes, coaches, sport federations and other stakeholders and be based upon sound scientific research and/or have the backing of scientific experts.

Example of good practice

Career Counsellors in the 19 Olympic Training Centres in Germany support an optimal athletic as well as professional career of high-performance athletes. They provide services and support from the moment of an athlete's entry into high-performance sport through to post-sporting career support. As contact persons for the athletes they support the best possible development of young athletes with regard to sport and profession as well as from a social and personal perspective. To achieve this, targeted consultations are held.

Supporting structures need to be fully integrated in the sport, educational, vocational and lifestyle systems of the athletes rather than remaining isolated outside the sport context. They need to be based on direct contact with athletes, coaches, performance directors and other stakeholders. Dialogue between counsellors, physiotherapists, doctors, coaches and education-based representatives should be organised so as to reach commitment about individualised action plans.

There is no preferred model to organise supporting services because of the different history, responsibilities of stakeholders in sport and recognised competences in EU Member States. However, the position of the athletes should be the starting point and conflicting interests between organisations and athletes should be avoided. Career counsellors working in the service structure (whether independent or employed by a sport organisation, an educational institute or a private agency) should be qualified in career assistance and counselling and have extensive experience with the world of sport in general and elite sport in particular. They should have expertise related to the challenges faced by athletes during and after their sporting careers. Counsellors may well be former elite athletes who qualified for the job through an adapted educational pathway recognising learning experiences of the former athletes themselves.

Examples of good practice

Exchange of experience acquired in the Olympic networks, TASS (United Kingdom), KADA (Austria) and in projects such as “Study & Talent Education Programme” (Belgium), “Athletes Study and Career Services” (Finland) or “Tutorsport” (Spain) could benefit the further development of supporting services in Europe.

2.4.3. Career assistance

Career assistance, which is a crucial part of supporting services, is a rapidly developing discourse in applied sport psychology, aimed at helping athletes to overcome transitions in their careers inside and outside of sports through specific interventions. Combining sport with other activities in life, balancing lifestyle to reduce stress and enhance wellbeing, seeing a sporting career as only a part of a life career are among the central tenets of career assistance. Career assistance should have a focus on teaching athletes life skills applicable both in and outside sport and provide enhancement, support and counselling.

Alongside more predictable transitions, athletes also face non-normative transitions such as serious long-term injuries, a change of personal coach, interruption because of pregnancy or a positive doping test, as well as transitions which were hoped for but did not materialise, such as going to the Olympic Games. Sometimes athletes are obliged to stop their careers or are victims of sexual harassment.

Such transitions can have a huge impact on the quality of an athlete’s life and participation in competitive sport. Athletes therefore have to learn to cope with career transitions. Preventive interventions can help athletes become better aware of forthcoming transitions and develop in a timely manner resources for coping with them. Crisis-coping interventions should help athletes to analyse the crisis situation and find the best available way to follow an effective strategy.

2.4.4. Quality control

Quality control of the implementation of dual career strategies is necessary to assure the quality of measures and interventions in the longer term. Some external and internal control mechanisms exist in some Member States but they are often fragmented. In some Member States the legal and policy frameworks for national training centres are subject to external control, including evaluations and inspections. More often governments make use of the framework of financial arrangements in the field of sport, for instances by making grants conditional upon a quality system.

While there is a long tradition of quality control in the education sector, in sport this sort of mechanisms is often neglected. Quality standards should exceed the obligatory criteria for compulsory education and academic education should be included.

Regular independent evaluations should cover the quality of facilities (sport and boarding). Facilities should be safe, accessible for elite athletes with a disability, and allow young athletes to train in good conditions. Structures should be in place to deal with conflicts or misbehaviour in a discrete manner. Evaluations should include consultations with the athletes, their national federations and any funding agencies to ensure that the type and level of delivery e.g. of supporting services is appropriate and facilitates dual careers.

In addition, the transparency of the quality of facilities and services from stakeholders involved in dual careers could be improved. A quality label could be an appropriate instrument to safeguard the balance between sport and education at schools and training centres. A European framework of minimum requirements could be developed either by the sport movement or by independent organisations (e.g. CEN, the European Standardisation Committee) so that sports organisations could make reference to these requirements formulated at European level.

Guidelines for Action

Guideline 19 – Public authorities should support national sports organisations and other stakeholders in dual careers to ensure that through supporting structures:

- 1) Expertise on dual career topics is available and accessible to all stakeholders involved;
- 2) Dual career support (including crisis-coping interventions) is available to all recognised talented, elite and retired athletes;
- 3) The quality and content of supporting services meet the demands of athletes including athletes with a disability;
- 4) Counsellors delivering supporting services are competent and qualified.

Guideline 20 – Member States should ensure professional qualifications and certification of professions in supporting services, including career consultants and counsellors who work with student-athletes in educational and sport systems.

Guideline 21 – National sport organisations, health insurance schemes and the medical profession should improve communication based on athletes' health records to ensure a better flow of information on injuries as well as quick and accurate referrals to medical specialists.

Guideline 22 – Sports, health and educational authorities should jointly develop education programmes for athletes in the areas of injury prevention, healthy living, nutrition and recovery techniques.

Guideline 23 – Sports authorities and national sports organisations should promote regular internal control and external inspection of dual career services including sport and academic results, qualifications and further education of staff, safety and accessibility of facilities and services, and functioning of internal codes of behaviour.

Guideline 24 – Sports authorities and national sport bodies should consider developing a national quality label for dual career services and facilities with reference to a European framework.

2.5. Employment

2.5.1. Combination of work and sport

Some Member States allocate a number of posts within the public sector specifically to athletes. In some countries top athletes can work for the government and public institutions, or positions are available in the military, the border police, the forestry sector and/or the customs service.

Different models exist, varying from athletes getting training for a function in these services, having a part-time job or being available for marketing and publicity. In general, athletes are very positive about these opportunities. However, retirement from sport often also leads to a departure from the public service due to a lack of longer-term career perspectives.

The introduction of systems of financial support to athletes in Member States has enabled an increasing number of sportspersons to become full-time athletes. For them it is important that they should continue education in parallel with their sporting career.

A substantial number of elite athletes still need to earn a steady income through part-time or full-time employment to supplement sport-related funding. For these athletes, flexibility from employers is essential to combining their sport and employment and achieving the right balance.

Example of good practice

In Germany a national pool of companies offer traineeships and employment that are compatible with full-time competitive sport. The Sports Aid Foundation provides financial compensation for the loss of earnings to companies which employ athletes.

Many countries have structures in place to provide advice and support to athletes in their career planning, including programmes with agreed arrangements between companies and athlete staff to balance sport schedule demands with business needs. Such structures or networks should:

- Provide (retired) elite athletes with opportunities to meet-and-greet with employers and to gain information about jobs, expectations and requirements in enterprises;
- Monitor available jobs and make information available to (retired) elite athletes;
- Establish a liaison officer for relations with human resources departments of interested employers;
- Establish opportunities for flexible internships, (part-time) employment, short-time employment, graduate trainee programmes and mentoring by senior business managers;
- Establish a local and regional network of partnerships with interested enterprises, complemented with a network of recruitment partners;
- Identify possibilities for elite athletes to develop their vocational competences while in another region/country (e.g. for training camps, after a club transfer, for a competition period of long duration).

Incentives need to be offered to companies to recruit athletes. Businesses are attracted by shared values and engagement in sport sponsorship. To approach non-sport sponsors and business associations, sport organisations can seek the help of chambers of commerce, business associations and companies which already work with athletes. Sponsorship contracts should ideally include a clause on dual careers, with enterprises committing to offer career opportunities to sportspersons fulfilling the profile requirements. In advance, sport organisations should develop a benefit package (incentives, increased publicity etc.) to leverage their engagement with businesses.

Examples of good practice

Team Denmark has established cooperation with a 'golden network' of a wide range of companies, offering world-class athletes flexible jobs.

In close cooperation with Olympic Committees in several Member States, Adecco offers part-time positions with in-built flexibility to take account of athletes' schedules.

2.5.2. Transition to a new job

The end of a sporting career depends on factors such as success and defeat, age limitations, but also injuries and other external factors. In general, elite athletes take their future retirement from competitive sports into account during their sporting careers and counselling is important and helpful in this context.

The transition from sport to the regular labour market is often complicated by factors such as a lack of working experience outside sport, outdated diplomas, limited interest from private companies to employ retired athletes, or lack of willingness to be employed in the public sector. Although it is accepted that retirement is seen as less problematic when it is planned as a process rather than an event, sport organisations are often still afraid that planned preparations for a successful entry into a career after the sporting career may decrease athletic achievements.

In most Member States there is growing awareness that measures should be taken to avoid that previous role models end up in a personal crisis, losing their value for society and the labour market. Some Member States provide guarantees of employment or preferential recruitment based on sporting performance. No EU country has a policy for the recruitment of retired elite athletes in the public sector as these positions are reserved for current rather than retired sportspeople. Very few EU Member States offer direct incentives (e.g. tax incentives) to private companies to employ former athletes.

A majority of Member States have policies or programmes in place to support athletes during their careers and help them secure employment thereafter. Examples of such policies or programmes include advice and support, career counselling, employment opportunities through cooperation between Olympic Committees, job placement companies and major sponsors, as well as financial loans and incentives to return to education (e.g. scholarships or facilitated entry requirements to university). The specificities of female elite athletes, elite athletes with a disability and coaches, and athletes in early development sports, who retire at a relatively young age, should be taken into account.

Athletes are often not aware of the existence of supporting programmes.¹² There is a considerable need for creating awareness of existing athlete programmes and spreading the availability of services among athletes.

Example of good practice

The Finnish "Sports Academy Network" has a multiplier effect in efficiently informing athletes about the services available to them. A website (www.eliteathlete.fi) provides additional advice on job placement services.

2.5.3. Social dialogue

¹² As demonstrated in the framework of the Athletes2Business project

Social partners can play an integral role in policy setting and implementation of a dual careers agenda. As with continuing vocational training, the social partners can be involved by means of collective bargaining or participation in joint committees or boards of institutions that may be designed to govern dual careers.

Social dialogue is not as developed in elite sport as in other sectors as commercialism and professionalism are relatively recent phenomena in many sports. At the European level, a European Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee exists in the football sector and the European Commission proposed a test phase for a sectoral social dialogue committee in the wider European sport sector.¹³ At an informal European social dialogue meeting in June 2011, the European social partners, EASE (European Association of Sport Employers) and UNI Europa Sport, agreed to include the topic of dual careers in their future work programme. There are many examples of provisions for dual careers in social dialogue at the national level.

The OECD¹⁴ points out that market failures arise in the market of training that prevent an efficient sharing of the costs and benefits of training between employers and employees. Alongside low-educated and older workers, it may be appropriate to add high-level athletes to the list of affected workers. This is due to the short-term nature of sporting careers. Sport employer organisations should ideally provide time for athletes to educate and train for a career after they end their sporting career, but this aim is difficult to achieve in practice since it provides no benefit for the current employer.

As commercial interests grow in sport employer organisations and governing bodies, so does the short-term performance pressure (for both the athlete and the sports organisation). This pressure also decreases the likelihood that time or energy will be set aside for such long-term priorities as dual careers. This dynamic can be exacerbated by coaches, also under increased performance pressure, who may see any activity that is not focused towards success on the field as a distraction. Individual athletes should not be stigmatised if energy or time is spent on interests or education outside of the athletic workplace.

For professional athletes, the setting up of a collective bargaining agreement, which would apply to all sports, could be discussed between European sports organisations representing clubs and elite athletes with the co-operation of the sports movement. This should lead to a reduction of the differences existing between contracts executed by different elite young athletes, who could be provided with a more efficient protection regarding social aspects.

Guidelines for Action

Guideline 25 – Public authorities in sport and employment should set up a network of complementary public and private partners enabling elite athletes, including athletes with a disability, to combine in an optimal way their athletic and vocational careers in public services (military, police, customs etc.) and private businesses.

¹³ Communication on Developing the European Dimension in Sport, European Commission 2011

¹⁴ Employment Outlook 2003 – Towards More and Better Jobs

Guideline 26 – Public authorities should invite chambers of commerce and businesses to actively cooperate with sport organisations to raise awareness of dual careers in the labour market and encourage partnership with the business world.

Guideline 27 – Public authorities and stakeholders in sport and education should promote balanced pathways for retiring athletes so that they can prepare, initiate and develop a vocational career after the end of their sporting career.

Guideline 28 – Sport governing bodies and other stakeholders should organise specific events (e.g. seminars, conferences, workshops, networking events, job markets) to assist athletes in gaining insight into a vocational career in combination with their sporting career or after their sporting career.

Guideline 29 – Social partners should include dual careers on the agenda of the social dialogue at national and European levels (profiles of competences, education, services).

2.6. Financial incentives for athletes

Many reports and studies confirm that high performance athletes and their families often face long-term financial challenges, frequently from an early age. The training and sports equipment require large investments, often provided totally or partially by parental support. Scholarships, fees and other compensation measures are often indispensable for talented young athletes whose families cannot afford to have them living away from their homes.

There is a very wide range of different models of how athletes can get financial support in EU Member States, based on (legal) frameworks on compensation of costs, scholarships, minimum income or income depending on sporting results, and sponsorship. In the educational stage of a dual career, scholarships and specific fees for recognised talented athletes are the main sources of income. For elite athletes other income models are accessible because of contracts, prize money and sponsorships. Social security, including pension plans and insurance, are a great concern because of the specific career of an athlete and exceptional circumstances in (international) sport competitions, not always covered by health services and insurance companies.

2.6.1. Scholarships

A majority of Member States offer sport scholarships to students to support them financially throughout university and enable them to combine higher education with their sporting ambitions. The sources and sizes of the scholarships vary considerably. Whether academic, sporting or both in nature, scholarships are often indispensable to ensure that dual career athletes can concentrate on their two main areas of focus, sport and education.

Dual career friendly scholarship programmes can be developed. Apart from certain eligibility criteria, they may require ongoing compliance with certain rules pertaining to academic and/or athletic performance. It should be considered that a scholarship should not give an athlete special status or treatment over fellow students other than what is required to help him balance the challenges he faces in pursuing a dual career. The following elements could be included:

- Financial assistance for certain sport-related expenses (e.g. sporting equipment or travel to sporting competitions);
- Tuition fees for specific education programmes;
- Supporting services (see section 2.4.2 above).

Scholarship programmes may include criteria to incentivise athletes to excel academically or in sport in return for reward. They may also include budgets for student-athletes planning to travel abroad (for sport and/or education). Contributions of private undertakings to scholarships could be promoted through tax deductions.

Example of good practice

The University of Lisbon supports students who simultaneously obtain academic and sport success by offering them an annual scholarship (€400). To receive this financial support, the student must pass the academic year and obtain the title of “National” or “European” University champion by representing the University of Lisbon. At the “annual university gala of sport” students receive their scholarships from the Rector as a public recognition for excellence in sport and study.

2.6.2. Other financial support for elite athletes

In a number of countries athletes who do not receive scholarships or have regular income, are supported by a national programme for elite athletes, while others receive support from the lottery.

Examples of good practice

Sport Aid Austria distinguishes between Olympic and non-Olympic athletes and has 5 different categories: W - world class, L - performance class, S - special class, N - junior class, F - women in sport. About 460 athletes are funded.

Around 3,800 young and elite athletes in Germany get support from Sport Aid with a total budget between € 10 and 12 million per year (65% from donations, events, funding; 20% from the lotteries and 15% from a sport stamp).

In Bulgaria athletes in the national elite athletes programme in preparation for the Olympic Games receive a monthly support (depending on medals won). An Olympic medal winner gets a sport pension.

In most Member States, athletes may only be entitled to receive a fee or compensation if they sign a contract. Sometimes national associations or sport clubs allocate scholarships to young athletes. In professional sports, the contracts are signed within professional collective sports arrangements and the compensation will be granted by a club. In some sports and countries, young athletes enter into contracts with their national associations while in other countries, a compensation may be awarded to the athletes by the State in the form of financing based on sports results or scholarships granted independently from sports results or payment upon participation in competitions. Exchange of good experiences and principles behind the various national support systems could help sports authorities and stakeholders to set up, or further develop, a more coherent system of financial support in which the different stages of dual careers are recognised.

2.6.3. Social security, health protection and pension plans

Elite sports require intensive physical efforts, injuries of young athletes may be frequent and accidents leading to the end of a profitable career may occur. It is therefore recommendable that measures are taken in every Member State to ensure efficient social protection of talented and elite athletes while they are training and competing.

In some Member States there is no specific fund or scheme open to young athletes in case of injury during their training period. In other countries, there are either State funds, such as in Denmark through Team Denmark, or through sports associations, public and private funds or private insurance contracts. It should be analysed whether private insurance coverage, which is very costly for a young athlete, is sufficient.

Another way of efficiently protecting talented and elite athletes may consist in recognising that athletes mentioned on lists established by the relevant sports associations practise a dangerous activity, which would place them under specific regulations similar to those applicable, for example, in France to firemen. This results in better insurance coverage.

Good practices in the field of injuries exist in some countries upon the initiative of the State or the Olympic Committee, where elite athletes, upon obtaining a sports licence, benefit from an injury insurance coverage, whether through the competent sports association or their club.

Examples of good practice

In Luxembourg and France the State subscribes an insurance policy protecting all athletes who own a licence issued by a national sports association. This insurance covers injuries related to sports activity.

The Italian Olympic Committee (CONI) introduced the Provident Fund for Athlete Insurance SPORTASS, which provides insurance cover and welfare payments for sports injuries. SPORTASS applies to professional athletes who are members of the 'Olympic Club'.

National regulations on this theme vary from one country to another and efforts should be made to generalise the coverage of young athletes by insurance policies. For example, Member States may choose to have a minimum insurance scheme subscribed by sports associations, to allow any injured athlete to get an indemnification. They may also opt for a system in which the award of a scholarship entails health insurance coverage.

For professional athletes and sports, this type of measures could be a theme for the social dialogue and could be included in collective bargaining agreements applicable to European professional athletes.

Regarding social security and pension plans, young professional athletes benefit from the general scheme of social security in a number of Member States, sometimes already from the age of 15. For amateurs, most countries do not have any specific plan with regard to their social security and pension plans. In the Czech Republic, the social security and health insurance premiums for pupils and students are paid by the State, including for student-athletes. In other Member States

specific provisions have been launched for elite athletes. There are specific social security regimes for professional sports such as football, cycling and basketball.

In Denmark, professional athletes may subscribe to pension plans with favourable tax regulations and spend the money on an education programme or to establish their own business. Some countries oblige young athletes to subscribe to private insurance policies or pension plans. The French government launched in 2011 an athletes' funding scheme to support high-level amateur athletes by paying social security and pension allowances during their sports career. Between 2,500 and 3,000 sportspersons will benefit from this provision.

Guidelines for Action

Guideline 30 – Public authorities and sport stakeholders should set up, or further develop, a coherent system of financial support for student-athletes in which the different stages of the dual career are recognised.

Guideline 31 – Within a coherent system of financial support for athletes, sports and educational authorities should develop and support a specific dual career scholarship programme for the educational stage.

Guideline 32 – Public authorities should create a specific status for non-professional high-level athletes (multi-sport status), granting them a minimum of health protection and pension rights.

2.7. European dimension of dual careers in sport

2.7.1. Training and study abroad

Student-athletes represent one of the most internationally mobile parts of the European population. Student-athletes frequently travel abroad for sports training and stages, competitions (including long tournaments), and/or studies. They generally consider this mobility as temporary, having the intention to come back to their countries of origin. As a result, many aspects of dual careers have an EU dimension.

A lack of cooperation between sport federations and educational institutes at European level often makes the combination of education or vocational training with sports training or participation in sports competitions very challenging. Difficulties are faced in particular by athletes in sport disciplines with a high training frequency, athletes in disciplines with a need for specific facilities for longer temporary periods (e.g. winter sports, international tournaments in individual sports such as tennis), and athletes from smaller EU countries who cannot combine their preferred type of education and their sport in their home country because of a lack of high-quality facilities (in sport and/or higher education).

Student-athletes often experience organisational barriers to continuing their dual careers abroad. For example, when travelling for sport-related reasons, many student-athletes have to take a break from their education or try to study on their own since it is hardly possible for them to find educational support in the other country. When coming back to their educational setting in the

home country, these student-athletes typically find themselves behind other students and often experience a lack of understanding and support from their schools or universities. On the other hand, when student-athletes travel abroad for educational purposes they may experience a lack of opportunities to continue their sports training in the new country. When they return to their home countries, they find themselves behind their sport peers and often experience a lack of understanding and support from their coaches and sports organisations. The consequences include premature dropouts from sport or even incomplete education followed by low employability.

Closer cooperation, promoted by European sports federations, among high-performance training centres and between these centres and selected or accredited educational institutes in EU Member States could enhance and facilitate the mobility of talented and elite athletes. In this way they could fulfil their dual careers in specific European dual career locations. Cooperating sport and educational institutes could be registered in a database available for athletes, coaches and sports bodies.

Example of good practice

The Portuguese Winter Sport Federation involves the National Institute of Sport to contact athletes' schools and appoint tutors who keep in touch with the athletes and provide educational and psychological support while they athletes are training abroad and also when they return.

2.7.2. Curriculum development at EU level

Mobility of dual career athletes could be enhanced by the implementation of EU bachelor's and master's degrees in the field of sport, with different academic institutions and high-performance training centres contributing to a common curriculum. The European Union promotes cooperation in the development of common curricula through programmes such as Erasmus, where pooled resources can generate curricula to the benefit of providers (through enhanced resources) and consumers (through enhanced quality of programmes). The development of a shared curriculum to support the field of elite sport in areas such as sport science, management, policy and coaching offers significant potential for drawing together the strengths of different national systems, promoting economies of scale in the identification, production and review of curriculum planning and materials.

Competition between national systems to provide educational support which may provide a competitive advantage for certain athletes would have to be overcome to engender cooperation. Such cooperation might benefit disproportionately smaller EU Member States which would be likely to benefit most from the pooling of expertise.

Developing common distance learning programmes or even simply common elements to programmes at, for example, baccalaureate and degree levels could equally support the further development of common curricula and the mobility of student-athletes, provided that certain elements of the curriculum are available in all cooperating educational institutes. In smaller Member States where the resources do not exist to allow the development of materials, a Virtual Learning Environments platform for distance learning or for a whole programme, shared with other Member States, would allow student-athletes to opt for the European curriculum or even remain part of their national education system while training and competing internationally. In

addition, where seasonal variations in the demands of competition and training exist (e.g. one semester spent largely at 'home', the other engaging in international commitments), it may be possible to integrate distance learning and other forms of provision in a 'blended learning' approach which allows student-athletes to benefit from a mixture of face-to-face and distance learning methods and to interact with one another as part of a learning community.

Some distance learning projects in this field have been launched but results have so far not been convincing in terms of quality, level, accessibility, interactive character and languages. It seems to be difficult for international sports organisations to find the right cooperation mechanisms in the European distance learning market.

2.7.3. Quality framework at European level

Considerable concerns have been expressed at European level about the position of young talented athletes, in particular from third countries. Young professional athletes in training centres of professional clubs do not always have access to education and supporting services. Some young athletes may therefore get into precarious situations, especially if they do not fulfil the expectations and drop out without any guidance. They may end up without resources and with no means to go back to their countries of origin.

Regulations relating to the protection of minors differ considerably between Member States and sports. In professional sports such as football and basketball, many minors have been recruited in the past by foreign clubs which did not allow them to pursue school and/or vocational education. The situation has somewhat improved, but it remains crucial to follow up on these issues through European social dialogue discussions among the various actors (national sports associations, professional leagues, clubs, athletes' organisations).

Only few EU Member States make the financing of sport training centres conditional upon compliance with quality criteria. Even if they do so, athletes and parents coming from other Member States are often not aware of them. EU Member States are encouraged to establish control mechanisms for compliance with quality criteria including dual career services.

Guidelines for Action

Guideline 33 – The European Commission is called upon to stimulate cooperation between national sport training centres and educational institutes from different Member States in order to support the development and availability of dual career policies for student-athletes from other Member States.

Guideline 34 – The European Union is called upon to create opportunities within its programmes for education and training to provide financial and organisational support for dual career frameworks of cooperating sports organisations and educational institutes on behalf of student-athletes who move from one Member State to another.

Guideline 35 – The European Commission is called upon to encourage and support the leading sport institutions and universities in Member States to participate in consortia to develop shared

curricula and educational programmes for elite sportspersons. Such programmes could involve common degree programmes, common modules within degree programmes, or shared curriculum resources.

Guideline 36 – Authorities in Member States responsible for the validation of educational programmes should support the development of common programmes at European level such as a European bachelor's degree in sport (sports sciences, coaching, management and policy).

Guideline 37 – The European Commission is called upon to support the development of a European quality framework for dual career facilities and services.

3. Dissemination, monitoring and evaluation

3.1. Public awareness

The concept of dual careers can only be successfully implemented if athletes and their entourage (from coaches to parents) are aware of its importance. Approaching the matter from different angles (EU, Governments, sports governing bodies) will spread the message faster and in a more efficient way. Coordination between the different partners will be one of the key success factors. Existing networks can make an important contribution to disseminating the concept of dual careers.

Example of good practice

The International Olympic Committee has been passing the message of the importance of dual careers to athletes, coaches and athletes' entourage since 2008. This approach has been disseminated around the world to 69 International Sports Federations (IFs) and 205 National Olympic Committees (NOCs).

Actions at governmental level, including national sport agencies and councils and educational institutes, can make athletes, clubs, coaches and directors of educational institutes aware of the importance of dual careers. Young athletes including disabled athletes should get the message that it is possible to combine sport and education and that they can profit from it. Communication can focus on the success of the dual career athlete and the benefits of lifestyle management and life balance. It can take the form of information targeted at athletes and their relatives, press releases about new developments, advertisements, posters etc.

3.2. Dual career networks

The four transnational dual career projects supported in the framework of the EU's 2009 Preparatory Action in the field of sport illustrated on a small scale the value of cross-sectoral cooperation and innovative partnerships and approaches to spread good practices, to foster learning across national borders, to raise awareness at national and international level and to develop new ideas about challenges in specific sports or smaller EU Member States. The implementation of the dual career concept depends to a large extent on the existence of networks

that bring together athletes' organisations, educational institutions, sports organisations and private enterprises at national and international level.

One or more European networks representing all the main dual career stakeholders would be a good basis for further development of dual career policies in the EU. In view of the useful role already played by the existing networks, networks active in the future should not supplant the existing networks but rather build on them. The exchange of information and good practice in the EAS (European Athlete Student) Network provides a useful model to emulate. The European Olympic Committees, athletes' and coach organisations and career assistance organisations should continue playing an active role.

In the framework of EU funding streams for sport, the European Commission should provide support to the European activities of dual career networks. Project grants should be awarded on the basis of applications following a specific call for proposals. It should be kept in mind that the topic of dual careers is not an isolated topic that could be addressed exhaustively by networks created for that purpose. Organisations such as the European Association of Sport Management (EASM), the Association of Sport Performance Centres (ASPC) and the European Network of Academic Sport Services (ENAS) could also play a useful role.

3.3. Monitoring and evaluation

The implementation of policy actions for the promotion of dual careers should be monitored at national and, potentially, EU level. Indicators should be developed and could yield important information on policy implementation processes and outcomes at national level.

Indicators related to dual careers are not yet included in existing monitoring systems in the areas of sport and/or education in most EU countries. Recent research¹⁵ has investigated elements of dual careers based e.g. on comparisons between different models at secondary school level or between a limited number of countries. Further research should be promoted, covering e.g. the long-term impact of dual careers on their national sport environment including athletic, academic and vocational achievements, employers' perspectives of the employability of (former) elite athletes, and the competences of professionals active in career counselling programmes.

Guidelines for Action

Guideline 38 – Sports authorities should coordinate actions in cooperation with sports organisations to raise awareness among coaches, athletes and their entourage about the importance of dual careers.

Guideline 39 – Sports authorities and sport organisations should support athletes' commissions and national athletes' organisations to spread information on dual career services to individual athletes during training and competitions.

¹⁵ Bosscher & Bottenburg SPLISS (2011), Radtke & Coalter (2006), Aquilina & Henry (2007)

Guideline 40 – The European Commission is called upon to support one or more European dual career networks bringing together stakeholders representing athletes, sports organisations, educational institutions, supporting services, national authorities, coaches and businesses, in order to further the dissemination and implementation of these Guidelines.

Guideline 41 – Sports authorities should have a monitoring and evaluation system in place, in cooperation with sports and athletes' organisations, to follow progress regarding the implementation of dual career policies. They should notably monitor the effectiveness and quality of the system of sport academies or sport centres run by federations, Olympic Committees or private companies and clubs. They should also support corresponding research.

Guideline 42 – Regular monitoring of the implementation of these Guidelines on the basis of pre-defined indicators should be considered.

ANNEX: List of experts

These Guidelines on Dual Careers were drafted by an ad-hoc Group of Experts consisting of the following experts:

- (1) [Name, institution, country]
- (2) [Name, institution, country]
- (3) TO BE COMPLETED

The Group of Experts was chaired by the Sport Unit of the Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission, which also played the role of a secretariat. The EU Expert Group "Education and Training in Sport" appointed the members of the Group of Experts and supervised the drafting process.

The logistical expenses of the Group of Experts were covered by the European Commission.