

## The Contribution of the European Athlete as Student Network (EAS) to European Dual Career ERASMUS+ Sport Collaborative Partnerships: An update

La Contribución de la Red European Athlete as Student (EAS) a las European Dual career ERASMUS + Sport: Una actualización

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Recepción: junio 2020 • Aceptación: octubre 2020

### CÓMO CITAR EL ARTÍCULO:

Capranica, L., Figueiredo, A., Ābeļkalns, I., Blondel, L., Foerster, J., Keldorf, O., Keskitalo, R., Kozsla, T. & Doupona, M. (2020). The Contribution of the European Athlete as Student Network (EAS) to European Dual Career ERASMUS+ Sport Collaborative Partnerships: An update. *Cultura, Ciencia y Deporte*, 16(47), 7-17.

### Abstract

To inform on the objectives and progression of the AMiD, EMPATIA, DONA, Ed Media, More Than Gold, Starting 11 and SOS ERASMUS+ Sport Collaborative Partnerships in which EAS cooperates with sport bodies and educational institutions to envisage novel solutions for the development of opportunities in education and sport paths of athletes. Dual career dimensions, evidence- and eminence- based methods include literature reviews, and desk, gap, SWOT and PESTEL analyses, focus groups, surveys, semi-structured interviews, workshops, and concept mapping. A limited implementation of the EU guidelines emerged. The findings underline the necessity of maintaining dual career among the European priorities in the field of sport and to envisage a surveillance plan at various dual career environmental levels (e.g., policies, systems, programmes). Through its participation in European projects, EAS contributes to the development of relevant European dual career aspects and to strengthen the link between educational institutions and sports organizations for the benefit of student-athletes.

**Key words:** European dual career, athlete, EAS network, ERASMUS+ Sport, European Guidelines

### Resumen

Informar sobre los objetivos y la progresión de las asociaciones colaborativas AMiD, EMPATIA, DONA, Ed Media, More Than Gold, Starting 11 y SOS ERASMUS + Sport en las que EAS coopera con organismos deportivos e instituciones educativas para generar soluciones novedosas para el desarrollo de oportunidades en caminos educativos y deportivos de los atletas. Los métodos se basaron en evidencia y eminencia que incluyeron revisiones de literatura, SWOT y PESTEL análisis, grupos focales, encuestas, entrevistas semiestructuradas, talleres y mapeo conceptual. Los resultados subrayan la necesidad de mantener la carrera dual entre las prioridades europeas en el campo del deporte y de realizar un plan de vigilancia en los varios niveles de carrera dual (por ejemplo, políticas, sistemas, programas). A través de su participación en proyectos europeos, EAS contribuye al desarrollo de aspectos relevantes de la doble carrera europea y a fortalecer el vínculo entre las instituciones educativas y las organizaciones deportivas en beneficio de los estudiantes-deportistas.

**Palabras clave:** Carrera dual, atleta, ERASMUS+ Sport, EAS.

## Introduction

Following the seminal cross-national studies on the athlete's right of combining sport and education, the European Commission introduced the term "dual career" of athletes in the White Paper on Sport (Amara et al., 2004; INEUM Consulting & TAJ, 2008; European Commission, 2007; European Parliament, 2003). At policy level, the efforts of the European Parliament and the European Commission contributed to raising awareness of dual career arrangements in the Member States, nurtured a worldwide interest in this issue, and settled a widely use of the dual career term (European Commission, 2017; FISU, 2020). Through its Sport Office, the European Commission has become an indispensable player in dual career in Europe. In particular, a strategic role has been played by the European-funded studies, calls for tender, and the European community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (ERASMUS)+ Sport Collaborative Partnerships, which allowed a novel and fruitful dialogue between international dual career stakeholders of different sectors and the application of trans-disciplinary methodologies to the study of the European dual career phenomenon. In fact, the different dual career policies and arrangements between and within Member States represent a tremendous laboratory also for non-European countries, placing Europe in a central position as a global leader in the protection and social development of athletes (Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences et al., 2016; Aquilina & Henry, 2010; Bastianon & Grieco, 2018). Furthermore, at academic level the European scholars' interest in dual career contributes to the development of a European dual career discourse, as mirrored by the two systematic literature reviews and the special issues of international scientific journals (Guidotti et al., 2015; Stambulova & Wylleman, 2015, 2019) "Dual career development and transitions" (Psychology of Sport and Exercise) "European ERASMUS+ projects on dual career in sport" (Cultura, Ciencia y Deporte), and "Dual Career in sport: perceptions and challenges on diverse scenarios" (Journal of Latin-American Sociocultural Studies of Sport).

Since the European Year of Education through Sport (EYES 2004) the European Athlete as Student (EAS) network participated in numerous consultations of the European Commission on the athletes' rights to pursue their dual career, spanning from the White Paper on Sport to the implementation of the EU Guidelines on Dual Careers of Athletes (European Commission, 2007, 2012, 2017b). In particular, EAS provides a platform for an effective dialogue between

educational bodies (i.e., universities, high schools, sports schools) and sport organizations (i.e., clubs, sport federations, National Olympic Committees), and fosters collaboration in the development of innovative projects and research on dual career, and promotes the development of a European dual career culture (Capranica et al., 2015; Capranica & Guidotti, 2015; Condello et al., 2019; Stambulova & Wylleman, 2019).

Therefore, the present work intends to illustrate the contribution of EAS in the promotion the European discourse in sport towards the development of dual career of athletes through European-funded projects (e.g., ERASMUS+ Sport Collaborative Partnerships, Lifelong Learning Programme, Calls for Tenders). After briefly presenting the past experiences, a summary of the aims, methodological approaches, and achieved or expected outcomes of the current ERASMUS+ Sport Collaborative Partnerships will be discussed.

## The early contribution of EAS to the European initiatives in the field of sport and the current involvement in ERASMUS+ Sport Collaborative Partnerships on dual career

Since its establishment in 2004, EAS has been a partner of several European-funded initiatives in the field of sport, which provided information and guidelines pertaining the global dimensions of sport (Capranica & Guidotti, 2016). Originating at the level of the European Union, this top-down approach aimed to create effective alliances for raising awareness on relevant aspects of sport. Coherently, the contributions of EAS were mainly directed towards the development of European policies in the field of sports, in cooperation with the major European sport bodies and organizations. In particular, EAS collaborated in the *Better Boards Stronger Sports* project focused on the role of the boards of sport organizations as a key element for an effective organisation's governance, and the *ProSafe Sport (PSS)* project directed towards the promotion of the physical and mental well-being of youth athletes, including their rights to combine sport and education (Council of Europe & European Union, 2015; European Olympic Committee, 2011; Larsen, 2013). Specifically to dual career, EAS was a partner of the *Athletes2Business* project, which developed the *Guidelines Promoting Dual Career in the EU* to facilitate the athletes' transition to work at the end of their competitive career and to establish an effective network.

More recently, EAS contributed to two European-funded studies by the European Commission on *The*

minimum quality requirements for dual career services, and on Sport qualifications acquired through sport organisations and (sport) educational institutes, and supported the study on *Qualifications/dual careers in sports* (Capranica & Guidotti, 2016; PwC & CONI, 2016; University of Applied Sciences, 2016). These studies highlighted a multiplicity of national approaches to dual career and qualifications, which limits the possibility to gather harmonized data on the challenges, support, and opportunities of European student-athletes. Furthermore, the majority of countries present fragmented actions and policies in relation to the eligibility criteria of athletes for dual career programmes and services, when present. In considering that European recommendations tend to be contained in non-binding documents and fail to address the issue of whether compliance should be simply encouraged or whether it should be enforced through sanctions (Hoye & Cuskelly, 2007), the European Parliament maintained dual career in its political agenda to sustain the development of a European dual career culture (European Parliament, 2017).

To provide a better understanding of issues relating to dual career implementation from an operational perspective, EAS deemed relevant to be involved in collaborations with researchers, practitioners, and policy makers by embracing a bottom-up approach. To have practical influences on sport bodies' and educational institutions' approaches, policies, and activities, two main criteria were considered in relation to: 1) enforcement (i.e., the degree to which dual career can be enforced); and 2) conceptual scope (i.e., within a continuum from narrow-to-broad depending on the number of dual career dimensions having key consequences on operationalization and implementation). Table 1 summarizes the most recent involvement of EAS in European projects, including their partnerships, aims, methods, and the accomplished outcomes or expected ones.

Within the European Lifelong Learning Programme, EAS supported the project *Facilitating Higher Education for Athletes - WINNER Education model*, in the search of solutions to the challenges of educating talented youth with atypical learning paths. In particular, the WINNER project considered the student-athletes as a paradigmatic population for other atypical talented students, such as student-musicians, student-artists or student-performers (Zimbalist, 2001). Thus, a flexible educational model was developed taking into account the European dual career discourse, the differences in curriculum structures between academic institutions, various teaching methods, the students' perceptions and expected adjustments, the

teachers' perceptions of talented atypical students, and adapted studying environments (Fuchs et al., 2016; Guidotti et al., 2014, 2015). Consequently, the WINNER project could represent a starting point to structure effective flexible university programmes and the establishment of inter-institutional agreements to allow student-athletes to have access to supervision of inter-academic staff (European Commission, 2017b).

At present, EAS is partner of seven ERASMUS+ Sport Collaborative Partnerships, which address dual career issues spanning from the meso (i.e., interpersonal), macro (i.e., social, organizational), and global (i.e., policy) dual career dimensions (Capranica & Guidotti, 2016). At meso level, the projects *Education Model for Parents of Athletes In Academics project (EMPATIA)*, *DONA*, *Starting11*, and *SportOpensSchool (SOS)* focus on the parents, the sport staff, the service providers, and physical education teachers as relevant supporters of student-athletes, respectively. Indeed, parents play a pivotal role in sustaining student-athletes during and after their sport and academic careers (Condello et al., 2019; Elliott et al., 2018; Geranosova & Ronkainen, 2015; Harwood & Knight, 2015; Li & Sum, 2017). Thus, the focus of the EMPATIA project ([www.empatiasport.eu](http://www.empatiasport.eu)) is to empower parents in their role of emotional, logistic and financial supporters of dual careers of their children through an on-line education programme (Capranica et al., 2018). Second to parents, student-athletes highlighted their interpersonal relationship with coaches and sport staff supporting their dual career paths (Condello et al., 2019; Hakkers, 2019). In fact, during adolescence youth athletes tend to drop out sports considering the sport commitment too demanding when conflicting with the academic requirements and with their social life (Borggreffe & Cachay, 2012; Ryba et al., 2017). Unfortunately, this premature sport career termination is a loss of talents, more often affecting female athletes and it is important to have a gender specific approach to dual career (Baron-Thiene & Alfermann, 2015; Tekavc et al., 2015). Thus, EAS deemed relevant to cooperate to the DONA project, a unique and innovative effort to address several important development stages and major dual career transitions of female volleyball players ranging in age between 12 and 20 years. Surely, the student-athletes could highly benefit from a coherent entourage of well-prepared dual career service providers at sport, education and the labour market levels (Sanchez-Pato et al., 2014; University of Applied Sciences, 2016; Wylleman et al., 2017). Despite more than 120.000 European athletes are in need of dual career services during every Olympic cycle, several Member States offer a limited support, or are starting developing dual

Table 1. A Summary of the Contribution of EAS to European Funded Projects on Dual Career (in a chronological order).

Project's life course	Title	DC Dimension	Target	Coordinator (Country)	Partners	Countries	Aims
2013-2016	Facilitating Higher Education for Athletes - WINNER Education model	Macro	Higher education institutions (atypical students)	Lapland University of Applied Sciences	TASS, the University of Maribor, the University of Salzburg, and the University of Tartu, the University of Rome Foro Italico-EAS	AUT, EST, FIN, GBR, ITA, and SLO	To find solutions to the challenges of educating young athletes for a "dual career" and thus to establish a flexible study model for students with atypical learning paths.
2017-2020	Athletic Migration: Dual career and qualification in sports (AMID)	Global	EU policies	University of Salzburg	University of Hamburg, ADH, Lapland University of Applied Sciences, Finnish Olympic Committee, University of Ljubljana, EUSA Institute, University of Cassino and Southern Lazio, CUS Cassino, and EAS	AUT, DEU, FIN, ITA, MLT, and SLO	To develop DC guidelines for migrating student-athletes.
2017-2020	Education Model for Parents of Athletes In Academics project (EMPATIA)	Meso	Parents of DC athletes	University of Ljubljana (SLO)	INSEP, EUSA Institute, University of Limerick, Sport Ireland Institute, University of Rome Foro Italico, Italian Olympic Committee, Coimbra University, Ginásio Clube Figueirense, and EAS	FRA, IRL, ITA, MLT, PRT, and SLO	To develop an on-line educational programme for parents of DC athletes.
2018-2020	Media as a channel of Athletes' Dual Careers promotion and education (ED MEDIA)	Macro	Media	Lithuanian Sports University	Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași, University of Ljubljana and EUSA Institute, German Sport University Cologne, University of Rome Foro Italico, University of Valencia, and EAS	ESP, GER, ITA, LTU, MLT, ROU, and SLO	To develop an online educational programme to raise the awareness of athletes, sport organizations, and media on dual career communication.
2018-2020	SportOpenschool (SOS)	Meso	Physical education teachers	CUS Pavova	Budapest VI. Kerületi Kölcsey Ferenc Gimnázium, CONI, Inspectoratul Școlar Județean Bacău, Instituto N.º Sra. da Encarnação - Cooperativa de Ensino, IIS 'Newton-Pertini', Liceul cu Program Sportiv Bacău, and EAS	HUN, ITA, MLT, PRT, and ROU	To create innovative high school physical education teaching modules on health enhancing active styles, sports ethics, and life skills to favour the future employability skills in young people
2018-2020	More Than Gold	Global	EU policies	University of Latvia	Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași, the Fundación Universitaria San Antonio, University of Chieti-Pescara "Gabriele d'Annunzio", University of Coimbra, and EAS	ESP, ITA, LVA, MLT, PRT, and ROU	To develop DC guidelines for higher education institutes at early dual career stages.
2018-2021	DONA	Meso	Sport staff (women's volleyball)	Associació Esportiva Carles Vallbona	Malta Volleyball Association, Scuola di Pallavolo Anderlini Soc. Coop. Sociale SD, Associação Aventura com Carisma - Leixoes Sport Club, De SportMaatschappij Foundation, University of Ljubljana and EAS	ESP, ITA, MLT, NLD, PRT, and SLO	To address major development stages and DC transitions of youth female volleyball players.
2018-2021	Starting 11	Meso	DC service providers at academics, sports, and labour market levels	Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences	Sportlycée Luxembourg, ADH, TASS, CREPS Toulouse, and EAS; Project consultant: TW1N	FRA, GER, GBR, LUX, and MLT	To develop a European toolkit for DC service providers.

Methods	Participants/cases (n)	Findings/outcomes	Publications
Systematic literature review	47 papers	DC is an emerging multidisciplinary research area, which needs to be consolidated through longitudinal designs and integrated qualitative and quantitative methodologies.	Guidotti et al., 2015
Survey	79 university professors	Professors claimed that atypical students should be valorised, although they are not aware of them in the class. In general, positive teachers' perceptions towards student-athletes emerged.	Guidotti et al., 2014
Survey	221 student-athletes	National academic and sports systems influence student-athletes' perceptions of their dual career. In general, student-athletes demanded dual career implementations at academic level and support at sport level..	Fuchs et al., 2016
Educational method	Project's team	WINNER Study Guide.	Project's report
Systematic literature review	14 papers	Limited scientific interest in dual career athletic migration. A lack of a dual career friendly environment is the main reason for student-athletes' migration.	Palumbo et al. (submitted)
Survey	223 athletes	Student-athletes confirm the relevance of mobility in DC, with academics and sports equally considered reasons for relocation. Cooperation between institutions is needed to overcome major difficulties due to financial and organizational aspects.	Fusco et al., 2019
Semi-structured interviews	23 athletes	Challenges of migration of dual career athletes should foster specific EU policies and networks of support stakeholders.	In progress
Guidelines	Project's team	EU Guidelines on migrating DC athletes.	In progress
Systematic literature review	14 papers	A limited sample size, typology of sports, and countries. The thematic synthesis highlighted a two primary constructs: the individual and the inter-individual levels.	Tessitore et al (submitted)
Focus groups + workshop	115 parents + 32 DC experts	A list of 80 statements relevant to parenting dual career athletes.	Gjaka et al. (submitted)
Concept mapping	337 parents	A framework of parenting dual career athletes as a sound basis for practical decision-making to establish dual career alliances.	Varga et al. (in progress)
Educational programme	Project's team	EMPATIA educational proramme for parents.	In progress
Desk analysis of media coverage	93 newspaper articles	Media rarely feature athletes as students	Report
Gap SWOT and PESTEL analyses + Semi-structured interviews	Project's team + 25 athletes	Several aspects of EU guidelines have to be implemented at national level.	Report
Educational programme	Project's team	ED MEDIA educational proramme	In progress
Rapid reviews on critical topics	Project's team	SOS educational modules	Report
Refreshment courses for teachers	Teachers	In progress	In progress
Focus groups	77 athletes	There is a need of a recognition of the student-athletes status and scholarships, university sport infrastructures, DC centers and service providers, academic flexibility and cooperation between universities and sports bodies.	Report
Survey	71 experts of higher education institutes	At university levels, educational facilities, tutoring, psychological support, individualized study plans, programmes, have been considered relevant and modifiable DC services. The economic investments to improve university sport structures, scholarships and reductions of tuition fees are considered relevant for dual careers but less modifiable.	Report
Survey	467 athletes	Student-athletes considered home training and e-learning valuable resources to cope with the emergency of the COVID-19 pandemic.	Izzicupo et al (submitted)
Guidelines	Project's team	EU DC Guidelines for higher education institutes.	In progress
Desk research	250 players	State of the art study	Report
needs analysis (interviews, focus groups, questionnaire)	28+58 athletes, 18 club's staff, 8 parents	Pilot program and Evaluation toolkit	Report
Staff exchange	25 coaches	Policy recomendation report	Report
On line forum	8 women ambassadors	Videos	
Focus groups	9 athletes	Student-athletes' needs include: DC tutorship especially at early stages of their sport career; coaches and teachers educated to support DC; DC services close to the university, visivility of DC athletes.	Report
Survey	159 stakeholders	Four areas of dual career service provision emerged: 1) Management (the promoting the political, theoretical and infrastructural know-how to implement and administrate dual career services); 2) Framework (educational programmes); 3) DC counselling to foster the coping, decision-making and planning capability of athletes; and 4) Communication skills to effectively interact with different DC stakeholders.	Report
Toolkit	Project's team	Starting11 DC toolkit	In progress

career policies and partially implementing dual career services (Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, 2016; Capranica & Guidotti, 2016; European Commission, 2017b). To stimulate national, regional and local dual career delivery in Europe, the Starting11 project aims to develop a European Dual Career Toolkit for service providers at academic, sports, and labour market levels. This is particularly relevant when considering that dual career policies and provisions originally focused on elite athletes could be extended to the general population of students (Portuguese Parliament, 2019). In line with this novel approach, EAS contributed to include dual career issues in the educational tool of the SportOpensSchool (SOS) project, which aims to create innovative high school physical education teaching modules on health enhancing active styles, sports ethics (fair play, integrity, fight against bullying), and life skills to favour the future employability skills in young people. In enhancing the combination of sport and academic commitments, high school is a valuable setting for guaranteeing physical and health literacy and for offering sport opportunities for all students, especially for young people with financial difficulties that limit their access to private sport facilities and extracurricular sport activities. In particular, the education of youth on the possibility to combine sports and study/work/life commitments is envisaged to increase the levels of sport participation with advancing years and to counteract the secular trend towards sedentary behaviours of European citizens (European Commission, 2018). Thus, skills relevant to manage dual career could be considered an important heritage for all the individuals, well beyond talented and elite athletes (Portuguese Parliament, 2019).

At macro level, media and social media have a tremendous pervasiveness and power of shaping society's perceptions of sportswomen and sportsmen so that the narrative around student-athletes in the media could be particularly relevant (European Commission, 2012). Thus, EAS deemed relevant to contribute to the *Media as a channel of Athletes' Dual Careers promotion and education* (ED MEDIA) to educate media stakeholders and athletes on dual career. In fact, opposed to merely consuming media content, technology plays an increasing role in generating, communicating and sharing information. However, not all media and social media use is positive and many student-athletes might not fully understand the potential risks associated with their activities and actions taken online (Hopkins et al., 2013). In this respect, sport organizations could assist student-athletes in getting media attention for a positive intersection with their dual career, which will allow them to be inspiration for others.

At global level, EAS cooperated in two projects aimed to implement European DC guidelines specifically related to the quest of possible international arrangements facilitating dual career of migrating student-athletes (e.g., *Athletic Migration: Dual career and qualification in sports project*, AMID, [www.amid-project.eu](http://www.amid-project.eu)) and to facilitate higher education institutes to develop or implement structured dual career programme (e.g., *More Than Gold*). Indeed, short- and long-term mobility of highly skilled athletes across borders determines acculturation, experience, and professional opportunities in and through sport (Ryba et al., 2018), but without supplementary actions to facilitate dual career arrangements the cultural capital of this population could be dispersed at the end of the competitive years. The combination of good practices and learning experiences in the field of migrating dual career could be useful to finalize guidelines on student-athletes who relocate to pursue their academic and/or sport careers, and to foster supplementary actions of the European Union facilitating dual career arrangements for this population. According to the recommendations of the European Commission for the implementation of dual career (2017b), responsible authorities should recognise a coherent system of provisions for dual career athletes including student-athletes from abroad. Thus, formal trans-national agreements between sport bodies and education institutes can secure the implementation of dual career services. Trans-national cooperation could be effective also to facilitate the development/implementation of dual career at higher education institutes throughout Europe. In considering that Member States have the main competences in the field of sport and education, several national approaches to dual career and relevant sport-specific and education/work-specific peculiarities contribute to the kaleidoscopic dual career arrangements observed in Europe, with academic institutions presenting different eligibility criteria for athletes, as well as a wide range of flexible programmes and support services (Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences et al., 2016; Aquilina & Henry, 2010; Capranica & Guidotti, 2016). Thus, higher education institutes with a structured dual career programme of athletes could assist their counterparts with little or no dual career policy and services.

### Methodological approaches to the European dual career projects

To finalize the project's outcomes (e.g., educational programmes, toolkits, guidelines) and to disclose novel information on the dual career challenges and possible

solutions, a combination of evidence- and eminence-based knowledge is deemed crucial (Table 1). In relation to the evidence-based knowledge, literature reviews are performed not only to offer a summary of the state of the art of the scientific evidence, but also to generate inferences, highlight limitations, determine research questions, and indicate standard operating procedures for further data collection (Khan et al., 2003). To offer a base line and to influence the implementation projects' phases involving primary data collection, also desk research comprising the collection and a content analysis of documents containing information about policies, regulations and plans could be an excellent tool to uncover structural anchoring of dual career in different national contexts. Furthermore, the analyses of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT), and the political influence, economical factors, social impact, technology, environmental impact, and legal issues (PESTEL) analyses could be useful to gain insights into the current dual career problems and challenges.

Regarding the eminence-based knowledge, the international and multidisciplinary nature of projects' consortia facilitates a purposeful sampling of experts (e.g., former and actual student-athletes, sport and academic staff, policy makers) and ensures a proper representativeness in terms composition of participants, which enhance the quality of data collection (Callegaro et al., 2015; Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005; Parker & Tritter, 2006). Operationally, a variety of methodologies are used to gather the experts' opinions (e.g., focus groups, surveys, semi-structured interviews, workshops, and concept mapping), encompassing qualitative and quantitative data collections. Whilst semi-structured interviews, focus group, and workshops involving a small number of carefully selected participants allow discussions stimulating, building upon, and questioning ideas and concepts, online surveys enable to collect the views of a large number of individuals. In integrating evidence- and eminence-based information, concept mapping combines qualitative (i.e., literature review, focus groups, expert consensus, etc.) and quantitative (i.e., computation of a binary symmetric similarity matrix of the individuals' ranking and sorting of relevant statements) data to identify a conceptual framework (Kane & Trochim, 2007; Trochim, 1989). In line with the literature, this methodology could be useful to develop on online educational programmes and to increase the understanding of the complex nature, structure and interaction of relevant aspects pertaining dual career (Condello et al., 2016; Cousineau et al., 2008; Visek et al., 2015; Van Slingerland et al., 2019). Finally, in considering that

technology is commonplace for the latest generation of athletes, virtual tools and narrative-informational videos of dual career experts (e.g., former and actual student-athletes, academic and sport staff, and policy makers) are used to spread dual career experiences, point of views, and positive messages.

### Towards the future of a European dual career culture

Despite the current ERASMUS+ Sport Collaborative Partnerships are still ongoing, some preliminary phases offer interesting findings and applications, which could impact the advancement of dual career in Europe. At policy level, the desk, gap, SWOT and PESTEL analyses of the EU dual career guidelines performed in the ED MEDIA partners' countries (e.g., Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Romania, Slovenia, and Spain) confirmed a kaleidoscope of sport-specific and education/work-specific dual career landscapes and a limited implementation of the EU policies (Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences et al., 2016; Aquilina & Henry, 2010; Capranica & Guidotti, 2016; European Commission, 2012). These findings underline the necessity of maintaining dual career among the European priorities in the field of sport and to envisage a surveillance plan of various dual career environmental levels (e.g., policies, systems, programmes, etc.). Also the findings of the AMiD project call for further European actions. In fact, the systematic literature review and the survey administered to migrating student-athletes confirmed the athletes' determination to pursue an academic career in non-European countries offering consolidated dual career services (Palumbo et al, in press; Fusco et al., 2019). Thus, trans-national agreements between sport bodies and education institutes to allow the athletes' mobility within Member States are urged. In this framework, the ERASMUS+ Sport programme and trans-national cooperation between higher institutions could play a relevant role in supporting the mobility of student-athletes as the principal tool for building a European identity and citizenship also in elite sport (European Commission, 2017a). Actually, the More Than Gold project proved a valuable cooperation between higher education institutes with a structured dual career programme of athletes and their counterparts with little or no dual career policy and services. In fact, during the project's life course the Italian and Romanian partner universities introduced for the first time a dual career path based on the best practices of the other project's partners, the student-athletes' opinions and

expectations collected in the five Member States participating in the More Than Gold project (e.g., Italy, Latvia, Portugal, Romania, and Spain), and the opinions of 71 representatives of higher education institutions from 12 European countries. Not only the More Than Gold project proved to be sustainable but also showed its potential applicability and generalizability for real changes at European higher education institutions. Among the identified highly relevant and highly modifiable factors for starting and/or implementing dual career policies and services at university level, distance learning was deemed important, despite only few athletes competing in the last Winter (24%) and Summer (17%) Universiades declared to be offered this support from their universities (FISU, 2020). In this respect, an extensive More Than Gold survey administered during the COVID-19 pandemic to student-athletes indicated that higher education institutions widely increased distance learning and flexibility opportunities for their students (Izzicupo et al., submitted). In light of this massive implementation, it is possible that teachers could be prone to keep offering flexibility and distant learning for dual career athletes (Guidotti et al., 2014).

At social level, the findings of the ED MEDIA project confirmed that student-athletes rarely feature in media and this limited representation minimizes the relevance of their academic commitment, with media not shifting the focus from their athletic achievements. Despite social media are particularly relevant to student-athletes for both athletic and self-promotion to connect with a wide variety of stakeholders, a lack of scientific interest on the role of media and social media on attitudes towards dual career emerged. Surely, further dual career research is needed to shed more light on this relevant dual career topic, which could contribute to the general awareness of the crucial role of media stakeholders in and beyond Europe. Hopefully, the ED MEDIA findings, recommendations, and the online educational programme for athletes, sport organizations, and media stakeholders are going to foster a positive exposure of student-athletes and a better understanding of their capability to meet the dual career demands for gathering competencies that can increase future professional opportunities at the end of their competitive career.

Interesting outcomes related also to the dual career inter-personal level. In applying a system-based methodology to the development of a theoretical framework of parenting student-athletes, the findings of the EMPATIA project uncovered the complexity of the parenting support (Gjaka et al., 2021; Tessitore et al., 2021). The wide representation of European parents

of talented and elite student-athletes competing in different sports uncovered specific topics in common with each other and highlighted specific aspects that might help differentiating dual career approaches to parental support in relation to the type of sport, and the competitive and the academic levels of the student-athletes. These findings not only informed the EMPATIA education programme currently under development but will also raise the understanding and awareness of scholars and policy makers of the unique challenges faced by parents of dual career athletes. Indeed, a representation of parents in the sport decision bodies is strongly encouraged to stimulate a climate of listening, questioning, and negotiation, and to ensure a coherent supporting entourage for athletes. In line with the literature (Condello et al., 2019), the survey of More Than Gold project administered to student-athletes during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown confirmed the relevant supportive role of coaches. Coherently, the outcomes of the DONA project prove to be effective in strengthening the dual career capabilities of the sport staff, who delivered dual career club-based services to their female volleyball players during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown (Stradi, 2020). These findings substantiate the need of well-prepared dual career service providers. In addition to the recent framework of competences for dual career support providers (Wylleman et al., 2017), further resources could be the foreseen toolkit of the Starting11 project, which is based on the combined recommendations of the European study on the minimum quality requirements for dual career services (Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences et al., 2016) and the opinions of nine elite student-athletes and 159 dual career stakeholders from the 28 Member States of the sport, education and labour market. In particular, the toolkit will be freely accessible at the project's website ([www.starting11.eu](http://www.starting11.eu)) and will address four areas of dual career provision (i.e., Management: focusing on promoting the political, theoretical and infrastructural know-how to implement and administrate dual career services; Framework: targeting programmes at school and higher education levels to contribute to conditions for a full implementation of dual careers educational programmes; Dual Career Counselling: aiming at inter-personal counselling services to foster the coping, decision-making and planning capability of athletes during transitions and fundamental changes of their career; and Communication: identifying efficient communication towards the most relevant dual career stakeholders).

In joining innovative ERASMUS+ Sport Collaborative Partnerships with sport bodies (e.g., sport clubs, feder-

ations, and sport-related organisations) and educational institutions (e.g., schools, universities, vocational educational and training institutes), EAS has been actively working in close alignment with the long-term and progressive process of implementing the European dual career policies of the European Commission. By embracing and leading the communication between main dual career stakeholders, EAS corroborates the European vision of an increased impact of dual career on a wide scale, and helps the dissemination of best practices, novel solutions for the development of opportunities in education and sport life of athletes, and the up-scaling of the findings of European projects. In considering that EAS is not involved in all the European dual career projects addressing relevant issues for the benefit of student-athletes, the official EAS website ([www.dualcareer.eu](http://www.dualcareer.eu)) and the annual EAS conference represent knowledge-hubs and means for dissemina-

tion of the dual career initiatives and scientific findings of European-funded projects on dual career at local, national and European levels. Thus, in establishing collaboration with International institutions and sport bodies EAS plays a relevant role in the long-term process of policy implementation to develop, educate, train, and employ elite athletes in Europe (Capranica et al., 2015).

Indeed, dual career fully meets the 2019-2024 European policies towards an inclusive and connected higher education, which urge the provision of the right conditions for students of different backgrounds to achieve a degree (European Commission, 2019). In investing effective actions in the next generations of educated student-athletes, the Sport Office of the European Commission could not only consolidate its international leadership in support of dual career but also further advance the European sport culture in and beyond Europe.

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