



# *LIFE AFTER SPORT*

**GUIDEBOOK**

**TO THE 3-STAGE DUAL CAREER PROGRAMME FOR YOUNG ATHLETES**



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of the European Union

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# LIFE AFTER SPORTS GUIDELINES (10-3)



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University of Thessaly - Greece  
Istanbul Culture and Sport Association - Turkey





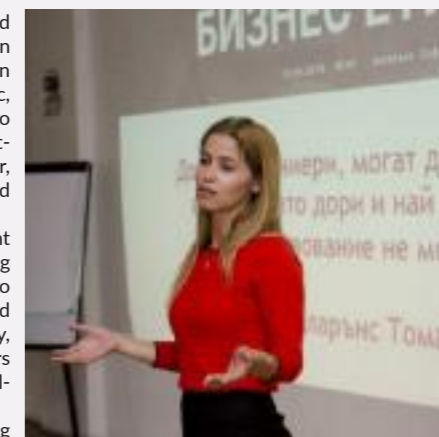
# PREFACE

Shirin Amin is the General Secretary of Champions Factory Ireland Ltd, and the mastermind behind the concept of the "Life after Sport" project. Shirin holds a Bachelors' degree in Sports Management and a Masters' degree in Youth Activities and Sport from the Bulgarian National Sports Academy "Vasil Levski". She is highly invested in the Dual Career thematic, and her goal is to inform and reshape the response of sports stakeholders and educators to the reasonable needs of talented and elite student athletes running two full-time commitments. That is, their academic learning toward qualifications for their post-athlete career, plus their athletic practice and participation in prestigious international competitions and matches. In her own words below, she describes the source of her inspiration.

When I was younger, sport was an extremely important part of my life, but at a certain point I came under pressure to choose between continuing a promising competitive swimming career or keeping up with my studies. At that time, the concept of Dual Careers was yet to emerge and was practically a taboo subject. Eventually, I had to make up my mind. I decided to keep studying, but I made a promise to myself that I would work hard so that one day, other young athletes would not have to make such heart-breaking decisions. Some years later, here I am, fulfilling that promise. Fortunately, I am not alone -- Dual Career development has become a priority for the European Union and for many sport stakeholders. That said, I sense that we can build a more efficient and informed approach to building solutions for the athlete students and their educators. This project and its outputs are the products of this mission, and they will help us perceive and tackle problems at an early stage and with the right tools. Much inspired by the EU Guidelines on Dual Careers of Athletes of 2012 that laid out a global view of issues and produced high-level guidelines, our project zooms in close into the experiences of student athletes in six European countries, to "take the temperature" of Dual Careers development at the working level.

During my long and varied experience with the Erasmus + sport programme, I had the chance to meet many organizations working on different ideas from varied points of view and this fed into my ability, together with other great five organizations, to develop Life After Sport. It has been a fantastic journey, where all partners have worked hard to produce excellent results and I want to thank them for sharing this dream and working with me to reach our objectives.

This Guidebook to implementing and using the 3-Stage Dual Careers Programme is one piece of a much more comprehensive work that can be accessed on our project website <http://lifeaftersport.eu/> I wish you inspiring reading!



Shirin Amin  
Champions Factory – LAS project coordinator



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>PREFACE WRITTEN BY PROJECT COORDINATOR SHIRIN AMIN</u>	<u>05</u>
<u>ABOUT THE "LIFE AFTER SPORTS" PROJECT</u>	<u>09</u>
<u>Project Partners' Perspective</u>	<u>09</u>
<u>On Designing More than a Curriculum</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>Identifying Issues in the Student-Athletes' Environments</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>Reiterating the Benefits of a Dual Career</u>	<u>14</u>
<u>Some Dual Careers Numbers</u>	<u>14</u>
<u>Introducing LAS 3-Stage DC Programme for Young Athletes</u>	<u>15</u>
<u>GUIDEBOOK Q&amp;A</u>	<u>17</u>
<u>Guidelines for Educational Institutions</u>	<u>17</u>
<u>Guidelines for Sports Associations</u>	<u>18</u>
<u>Guidelines for Coaches</u>	<u>19</u>
<u>Guidelines for Sports Federations</u>	<u>19</u>
<u>Some Final Conclusions</u>	<u>20</u>
<u>Use of materials and Citations</u>	<u>21</u>

## FIGURES IN THE TEXT

<u>Fig. 1 - Progression of partner actions leading to the compilation of the Guidelines</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>Fig. 2 Abbreviated version of all 31 research questions posed to high-school athletes</u>	<u>11</u>



# THE PROGRAMME HELPED BY 120 STUDENT ATHLETES FROM THE SIX PARTNER COUNTRIES

## ABOUT THE LIFE AFTER SPORT PROJECT

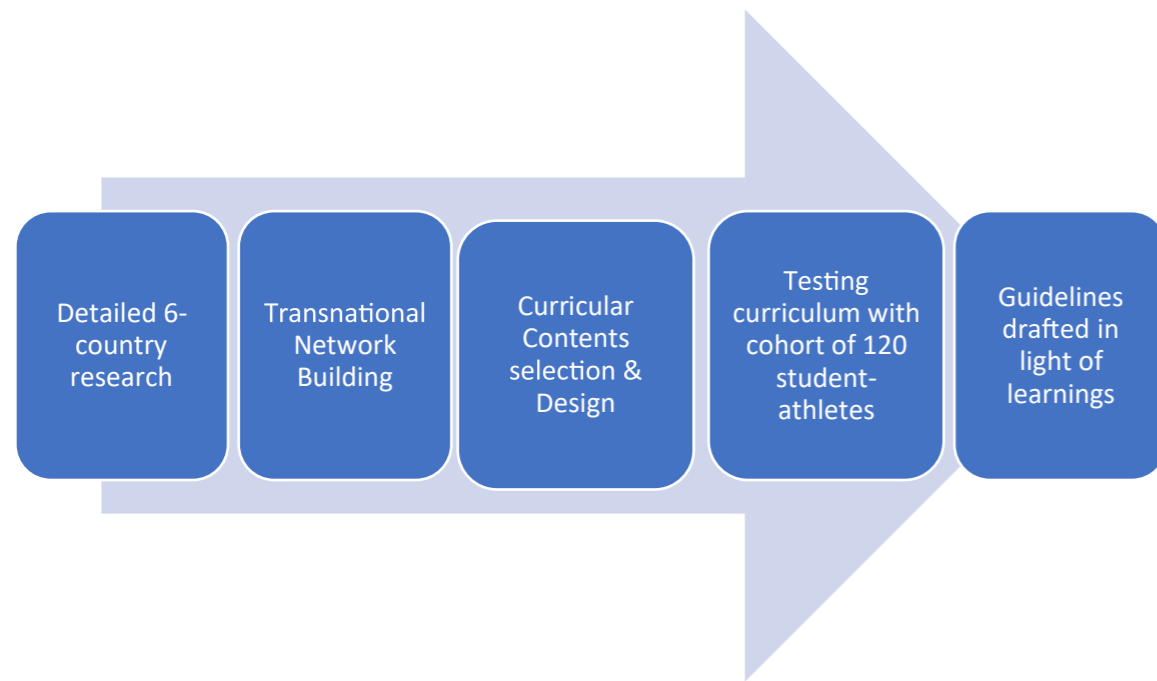
### 603311-EPP-1-2018-1-BG-SP9-SCP

The Life After Sport Project has been a two-year pilot (2019-2021) implemented by a Collaborative Partnership and supported by the European Commission under the Erasmus + Sport line of funding. The main activities were research (including the shaping of the underlying methodology and educational design), the building of a transnational network working on the Dual Careers development for the future, the assembling of unique elements for what would become the 3-stage dual career programme for young Athletes, as well as trialling and troubleshooting the programme helped by 120 student athletes from the six partner countries. These tasks together informed the creation of the new three-stage training programme for students between the age of 15 and 18. Students from five EU member states and partner country Turkey helped shape the modelling of the course, assisted in turn by non-government organisations, lending the project local detail and insights but ensuring and universal applicability.

### PARTNERS' PERSPECTIVE

The necessity of preparing an athlete's transition into the working world is important for enriching the athletics and sports fields with new talent, and also for giving athletes a fair chance to find a decent livelihood for which they are qualified. Positive experiences in EU Member States where youth academies of professional sport clubs already cooperate with Vocational Education and Training (VET) institutes, lead to sport-related qualifications, proving that dual career arrangements should include a curriculum leading to a profession in sport, as recommended in the EU Guidelines on Dual Careers of Athletes, Brussels, 2012. Project partners note a marked tendency to formalise cooperation between stakeholders from professional clubs/teams and VET institutes. Such partnerships or link-ups can be extremely beneficial for the athletes and should therefore be promoted. National athletic organisations (e.g. members of EU Athletes, FIFPro and athletes' committees) could also be invited to contribute as they would bring important added value. Conscious opting in to dual career is an outlook-changer for student athletes, but also for the communities they live in, fostering understanding through exchange, teamwork and cross-fertilisation of ideas.





**Fig. 1** Progression of partner actions leading to the compilation of the Guidelines

# 1. ON DESIGNING MORE THAN A CURRICULUM

When we look at the outcomes of the usage of sport in the life of the young people, we can clearly see much more than technical skills and physical prowess: we see much more that will impact a student's outlook for life: the development of **leadership skills**, the sense of **active citizenship**, open space in which to **feel and realize their potential**, improving **socialization** with their peers, and **growth in self-confidence**. Sport can develop such skills and competences of young people, but it should be also balanced with an education path which can provide many other qualifications to enrich their perspectives and the way they see their future. Young athletes specializing in sports careers naturally follow a performance-oriented path. However, an elite athlete's sports career generally ends by his/her mid-30s.

The Life after Sport team thus set out to create an extraordinary curriculum for extraordinary students, fostering self-reliance, leadership, and self-confidence the "Inner student-athlete" so that their ability to cope with the massive transition ahead to working life will be retained

and bolster the students in times of difficulty, and helping them keep their sense of identity through transition. This curriculum will get the students into the habit of planning and managing their ongoing and future lives. In the words of our Turkish partner Istanbul Culture and Sport Association (IKOS): "In the light of a 3-stage dual career program for young athletes who are between 15-18 years old, they will be able to supported by their coaches, teachers and trainers to focus on life skills, learning to learn competence, self-awareness, self-esteem, future planning on their dual career and evaluation of new experience.

Thanks to this opportunity under Erasmus+ Sport Program, we have had the opportunity to come together with various stakeholders in the sport field to contribute ongoing and novel methods of organization, and to develop the mindset to naturally lead the young athletes, not only in physical/technical trainings, but into a wider vision to make youth plan their career for "life after sport".

# 2. IDENTIFYING ISSUES IN THE STUDENT-ATHLETES ENVIRONMENTS

As mentioned above, accurate research involving qualified student-Athletes answering unambiguous questions were key to the formulation of the LAS Guidelines for running the 3-Stage Dual Career Programme. The research covered the six countries of Bulgaria, Greece, Croatia, Italy, Turkey and Spain, and in most countries the cohorts collected were gender-balanced, involved 30 or more current high-school attendees who 2020 were involved in county, national, European or world championships.

The full and complete results can be found on the project website at <http://lifeaftersport.eu/> In order to capture a quick sense of the questions and answers, and how they potentially feed into the formulation of 3-Stage Dual Career Programme and the Guidelines, we have first set out (below)the entirety of the questions in slightly abbreviated form. The box below shows a slightly abbreviated list of questions. The focus of the project research was to understand the educational needs and the various obstacles encountered by our six-country cohort composed of both current student athletes and former athletes.

- Age, gender, principal sport, length of time spent perfecting sport, type of residence, etc.;
- Sports achievements (eg. participation in Olympic, World/European/National Championships); training frequency, type of school attended; changes of school and reasons for change;
- Any grade repetitions due to failed exams; student appraisal of own ability to manage the sport/education combination; assessment of ability to coordinate academic obligations and Sports commitments; frequency of missing educational classes due to sports events; student assessment of support received for dual career development; student perception of people/groups who have been most supportive of dual career development;
- Student perception concerning whether better communication between their coach and significant others such as family members, teachers and school staff would help development of dual career; what are the two most helpful types of people for athlete students in high school (multiple choice)?
- To what extent Athlete/students need a mentor to help with transitioning and dual career development; student intentions to attend higher education; to what extent does the athlete/student feel like he/she has been put in a position to choose between sport and academic studies; what makes the student believe this is the case; preference of the student for different weightings of sport/education in their life;
- Student's preferences for study content such as social studies, creative artistic study, technical/biotechnic studies, or biomedical and natural studies; does the student aspire to attending a training programme (eg. as coach, umpire or referee) in order to continue working in the sports field? if the student has this aspiration, which other professional sports career would be attractive (multiple choice)?
- To what extent does the student sense encouragement of dual career development in his/her country; some countries are developing strategies to help athletes progress on the academic path. Indicate which strategies would help you (multiple choice)? what else could help you develop a dual career in your sport of choice? Does the student think it is important for sports/academic teachers to learn how to support young athletes?

**Fig. 2** Abbreviated version of all 31 research questions posed to high-school athletes

## CROATIA

### Baseline of school-age participants:

30 participants, 15 male and 15 female between 15 and 18 years old.

### Sports commitment indicators:

40% of participants had been actively engaged in their sport for 10 years.

### High performance events:

40% of the participants had competed at World/European championships; 60% had competed at the national or county level.

### Time spent in practice:

almost 37% practiced twice a day, and 60% practiced 5-6 times a week.

### Coordination issues between academic and sport commitments:

70% respondents said they sometimes had problems coordinating; 20% said they often had such problems.

### Getting help/support for development of Dual Career:

43% said they either had no support or inadequate support; 57% said they were satisfied with the support they received.

### Most supportive individuals:

Most mentioned coaches, parents, teammates and friends. Almost no one cited individuals from school, other than a lone psychiatrist.

### Inter-Communications:

more than 50% of the participants believe that better communication and collaboration between the coach and other significant people such as parents and school staff would help in the development of their dual careers.

### Is there a context in Croatia that encourages development of dual careers?

62% of respondents said no, leading project partners to understand that the legislative framework and the lack of inter-institutional dialogue is failing to enable the development of dual careers through logistical or financial support.

### Concerning the conflict of academic obligations and sports commitment:

Close to 50% of respondents said there was a great need for flexible exam timetables, 26% wanted online education platforms; 26% wanted two kinds of compressing: intensive modules that could shrink two-year courses into one year; and adjustment of curricula resulting in a smaller volume of learning materials.

### Interest in attending training in a sports-related profession:

56% of respondents declared an interest in attending.

## TURKEY

### Baseline of school-age participants:

32 participants, 15 male and 17 female, between 13 and 18 years.

### Sports commitment indicators:

On average, the respondents who mainly specialized in tennis, basketball, table tennis and volleyball, had been actively engaged with their sports for seven years.

### Time spent in practice:

97% of respondents practice every day and the remainder train more than 3 times a week.

### To what extent does the athlete/student feel like he/she has been put in a position to choose between sport and academic studies:

50% of the respondents felt pressure to favour high-performance sport over academic studies, and the other 50% of the cohort said they felt pressure to favour academics over high-performance sport. Pressures involving these kinds of decisions included financial difficulties, need to secure his/her future, professionalising in one area of activity (rather than being average in two activities); the risks and difficulties that come in a sport career in terms of stress and injury.

### Coordination issues between academic and sport commitments:

More than half of the respondents had changed schools; reasons given were availability of scholarships, team change (transfer), unqualified education, change of family location, and superior training availability. The majority of respondents are/were having difficulty combining their sports activities with their school obligations. However, the survey revealed that 60% of them believe they can overcome these problems even though 75% of the students said they frequently miss their lessons at school.

### Getting help/support for development of Dual Career:

75% of the respondents think that there is not yet a context to encourage the development of a dual career for Turkish athletes. 80% of respondents said they felt supported in their process of developing a dual career—however, this support is mainly provided by their parents or their coaches. (This concurs with the literature review conducted by our Turkish partner that found that neither the Turkish school system, nor the Turkish sports system are supporting the dual career concept.)

### Most supportive individuals:

Most mentioned coaches, and parents.

### Inter-Communications:

93.75% of the respondents think that a better communication between the coach and other significant people such as family members and school staff would help develop dual careers.

### Is there a context in Turkey that encourages development of dual careers?

The majority of respondents reflected negatively.

### Concerning the conflict of academic obligations and sports commitment:

Asked about the strategies used to ease the lack of support for for mal dual careers implementation, the favoured strategies and tools for the Turkish athlete student were:

- online education platform focused on self-training at your own tempo;
- extension of educational cycles;
- flexible exam timetable;
- the possibility to attend only certain modules in university studies, certifying competencies
- opportunities to volunteer in sports organizations aiming to develop a related career
- getting additional education support/tutoring.
- adapted curricula;
- academic counsellor who manages liaison between the sports club and the school;
- financial assistance for the student/athlete's family
- cooperation between the school and the sports club to work on scheduling.

### Interest in attending training in a sports-related profession:

Strategies for better organizing sports and study centred on opportunities to get training in a sport-related profession: 46.8% of respondents were interested in enrolling in a training programme such as coach, referee or umpire). The specialities they imagined developing included coaching, becoming the secretary/administrator of a sports club or institution, secretary of a sports/community alliance, or a sports psychologist

# 3. REITERATING THE BENEFITS OF A DUAL CAREER

Preventing loss of talent and abandonment of healthy regular exercise: According to international research, one-third of all participants between the ages of 10 and 17 withdraw from participation in 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). In order to prevent the loss of talent, more efforts need to be made by schools and other institutions to make it easier for older schoolchildren to operate a dual track up to high school graduation, at least. Based on our research, our consortium holds that it is important to invest in the development of dual careers because only 30% of talented athletes in the above age group typically develops into an elite athlete.

Benefits for athletes involved in dual career programmes (as compared with athletes thwarted by lack of coordination between sport and education sectors) are clearly articulated in sport research. Benefits include:

- Health-related benefits (e.g. balanced lifestyle, reduced stress levels, and increased wellbeing);
- Developmental benefits (e.g. better conditions to develop life skills applicable in sport, education and other spheres of life, development of personal identity, 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 life after sport (e.g. better career/retirement planning, shorter adaptation period, prevention of identity crisis);
- Enhanced future employment prospects (e.g. higher employability and access to well-paid jobs).
- Society and sport will benefit from the positive image of educated athletes who make sport more attractive for others, function as positive role models for young people and express the importance of excellence in society.

Dual Careers processes benefit member countries as a practice calling for cross-disciplinary ways of working, both in their own ministries but also across borders, bringing trans-national learning, innovations and best practices. The building of effective Dual careers at the community level demands an engagement in the sports, education, training/employment and finance domains. Local government introduced to the Dual Careers will witness the often voluntary engagement of other organisations from commercial, public and non-profit organisations, potentially resulting in more "joined-up" and enriched discussions to ensure that non-sport related needs of the athletes are met, and the members will become familiar with all facets of the dual careers. Dual careers take a (small and focussed) "village" to work seamlessly, but a simple habit of communication between a sports coach and class teachers can also make the student athlete's life much less stressed.

## Some Dual Careers Numbers

As of early 2021, it is estimated that across the European Union (EU) **only about 120,000 young individuals** are currently benefitting from formal dual career structuring.

Based on our project research, **only 50% of elite athletes** say they are satisfied with dual career support in the combination of elite sports and academic study.

Approximately **1 in 6 athletes** in this project's age range stopped practicing elite sport due to their academic study commitments.

1 in 5 participants in the Youth Olympic Games **opt for a lower level of education** in order to commit to their elite sports practice and training.

The average dual career of elite athletes starts when they are **12 years old**.

# INTRODUCING LAS 3-STAGE DUAL CAREER PROGRAMME FOR YOUNG ATHLETES

*"Athletes need to develop personal resilience, skills, an education and professional relationships. Hundreds of elite athletes do struggle with the transition to a post-sport career, even those who succeeded in professional sports and had shown their resilience, optimism and confidence. They also had a strong internal drive and were open to new experiences. While some athletes might naturally have more of these traits than others, it can be developed through relevant support and coaching."*  
**from the Manual of the 3-Stage Dual Career Programme**

The Life after Sport project (LAS) has developed an innovative programme to support dual careers. This programme facilitates an optimal combination of high-quality trainings and education to young athletes, using face-to-face workshops. The course, known as the LAS 3-Stage Dual Career Programme targets athletes between 15 and 18 years old, widely regarded as the critical age range during which sport and professional transitions take place. The objective is to facilitate a successful preparation for combining the sporting career of young athletes by bringing them the right supportive training and helping them learn to manage and balance their time and personal investment between sports training and current academic study, in preparation for a later transition to employment, or to higher education. (For detailed programming content details, please see the complementary LAS Manual on the project website <http://lifeaftersport.eu/>)

Briefly, we believe that the 3-Stage Dual Career Programme for Young Athletes (3-Stage DC Programme) with its specifically defined six steps will support young athletes to discover their own potential at than early age. This program will also help these athletes to prepare their mental and physical strength within more balanced way of their lives.

## STAGE 1: LEARNING

This stage has two important steps:

1. Creating Learning Environment
2. Learning Styles

We think that how we learn is how we live. When we look at the inevitable challenges of young athletes, we can clearly see the intense formal education and the struggle to balance it with their sport career. But, we support their learning process with tools based on Experiential Learning Theory. (For a more in-depth explanation of Experiential Learning Theory, please see the complementary LAS Manual pages 13-14 on the project website <http://lifeaftersport.eu/>)

## STAGE 2: LIFE SKILLS

This stage has two important steps:

1. Self-Awareness
2. Self Esteem



# GUIDEBOOK Q&A

Many top athletes and coaches believe that psychological factors have a crucial role in sport, as important as physical attributes and sporting skills. Mental strength is not enough to compensate for lack of skill, but if physical skills are matched, the athlete with the strongest control over their own mind will usually be the winner. Self-awareness is fundamental to the success of sport psychology interventions and a quality associated with both developing and performance excellence. It can help athletes to build self-confidence and self-esteem, take more responsibility for their actions, as well as make better decisions. As such, self-awareness is not only vital for sporting success but many other aspects of life, including school, work, and family.

We want to underline the importance of this stage by stressing the need to lead of young athletes to transform themselves into more self-aware and self-esteem athletes to enhance their life skills. Lack of self-awareness may lead athletes to struggle to regulate their own thoughts, feelings, and behaviours as well as assert self-control when needed. It may even cost an athlete by letting negative thoughts or emotions spiral out of control and getting distracted. Without self-awareness an athlete misses important cues and opportunities that can lead to a positive change in performance. Not only may being unaware harm performance, but it can also increase the possibility of other detrimental effects such as burnout or injury and negatively impacting interpersonal relationships (*For a more in-depth explanation of Experiential Learning Theory, please see the complementary LAS Manual pages 13-14 on the project website <http://lifeaftersport.eu/>*)

## STAGE 3: CAREER PLAN

This stage has 2 important steps:

1. Future Planning in Dual Career
2. Assessment & Evaluation

The transition to the post-sport career or athletic retirement is the one inevitable transition for athletes that mix athletic context (e.g. reasons for termination in sports, athletic career satisfaction) with non-athletic context relevant to starting a new life after sports. Retired athletes must accept retirement and adjust to the status of a former athlete, start/continue studies or work, reconsider their personal identity, and renew their lifestyles and social networks. In the light of this fact, we want to ensure of these young athletes will plan their dual career in the early ages of their life. By giving chance them to discover their strong and weak points or make them imagine themselves in following 10 years provide young athletes to believe themselves and imagine their future. It will help them to embrace their identity and thinking outside of the box to hold the control of their lives in their hands.

Regarding to the assessment and evaluation path; life is full of stories of successes and failures; that is how athletes progress, too. Their failures lead them to future successes, and this is where self-assessment comes into play. Feedback is essential in all aspects of life. Everyone who has been involved with sports understands the important lessons that come along with trainings, practices and games. Sports play such an integral role for young athletes because the lessons they learn in sports. To provide open space for athletes to evaluate themselves help to grow personally, academically and athletically

*"Many studies on elite athletes who are actively engaged in high-level sports have revealed that most of the athletes do not have any career plans. Elite athletes who do not make the necessary career plan during the active sports period cannot meet the needs of the labor market during the post-sports period."*  
**from the Manual of the 3-Stage Dual Career Programme**

## How will this Guidebook work?

This guidebook offers a set of actions for sports and educational stakeholder organizations seeking to successfully implement or support the 3-Stage DC Programme. The guidebook represents a standard of elements and actions needed for the efficient rollout of 3-stage dual career program, based on a combination of field research results and educational/sports theories of success.

## Why is this Guidebook important?

This guidebook serves not only as a set of internal guidelines for an organization, but also as an external statement of commitments with regard to the dual career subject.

This guidebook can:

- Define the organization's engagement with the subject;
- Set out recommended actions for the organization to follow to successfully implement the 3-stage dual career program.
- Let young athletes and social supporters know what to expect from an organization using this Guidebook so they can potentially work together in balancing and coordinating the dual career format, creating a high level of transparency and mutual understanding for a healthy working relationship.

## Who is this Guidebook for?

This guidebook was developed for all stakeholders who are hoping to initiate, or who are already involved in the process of developing dual careers of young athletes. At a minimum, this guidebook should be relevant such as educational institutions, educational or sports mentors, sports federations, sports associations, potential sponsors, government entities involved in sports investments, as well as clubs and coaches. It is a fundamental finding of studies around dual careers that a multiplicity of stakeholders communicating with each other effectively is a bonus to the student athletes.

## Best Practice Calls for a Cross-Sectoral Approach aka Cross-Fertilization

Although this document offers guidance for the successful implementation of the 3-stage dual career program from the perspective of individual interventions, successful dual careers by definition involves engagement of all. There is no single model to be recommended on how to include policy domains in the dual career framework, nor is there a particular sector that should take the lead coordination. The magic is in the conversation and the multiplied creativity.

## 1. Guidelines for Educational Institutions

### Reflections:

Not all students will be athletes, but it is guaranteed that at a certain stage in their life, all athletes were once students. Educational institutions are the central and critical players with the potential to initiate athletes' dual career development process. Or not.

It is these institutions and the teachers and mentors working inside them that are the most likely catalysts for implementing the curricular objectives associated with dual careers. Without the engagement of the educational institution to help the student athletes balance and coordinate their dual pursuits of academic learning and their sports commitments, the going will be rough and may end with the talented athlete forced to make impossible decisions that cut away one or another side of their young lives to date.

The main job of this document is to make educators aware that they hold the key to making dual careers for athlete students workable, preferably acting in concert with the other relevant stakeholders. The second job is to let teachers, professors, coaches and mentors know more about the guidelines below and to introduce the LAS 3-Stage Dual Career Programme for Young Athletes as an important component and pedagogical intervention in the dual careers framework.

## 7 Recommendations for Educational Institutions

- Ensure that your institution is aware of changes and updates of national/EU laws and policies relevant to sports and supporting measures for the dual careers concept;
- If you have student athletes who compete at the county, national, European or World championship level, it would be immensely helpful to them if the school/other place of formal learning were to establish a coordination work group to help the student with logistics and strategies to avoid missing classes or exams. Even more powerful would be for the coordination group to reach out and include the students' coach and family members for enrichment of two-way information.
- If you are not aware of such students, an effort could be made to canvas at least incoming new students so that committed athletes can be identified.
- Valuing and recognizing the practice of sports activities and sports values;
- Engage the School community to support the working group and celebrate athletes' successes.
- If your institution does include students following dual careers, initiate workshops exploring the LAS 3-Stage Dual Career Programme for Young Athletes.
- Promote and publicize success sports stories in school newsletters, at PTA meetings, etc.

## 2. Guidelines for Sport Associations

### Reflections

Sports associations frequently take on or make agreements with promising athletes who may be young and still studying, or athletes that may play for the association in order to continue training and competing in their sport, while also working elsewhere, both of which scenarios are forms of dual careers.

Sports associations are influential sports organisations well positioned to advocate for formalised dual career strategies and arrangements to keep more talented athletes in play, whether professionally or semi-professionally. Similarly, national sport bodies with member sport organizations contracting young players should also encourage continued learning and picking up of work-related skills and certification during their contracts, in the spirit of dual careers.

## 6 Recommendations for Sports Associations & National Sports Bodies

- Call for the member clubs to learn about the concept of social responsibility in general terms, and more specifically the concept of dual careers for young players.
- Invite coaches and managers of member sports clubs to do workshops on dual careers so that they can circulate this idea among the younger players. If this generates interest, offer to run the LAS 3-Stage Dual Career Programme for Young Athletes in workshops.
- Sports Associations could use their influence to work with finance companies to set up scholarship funds for young athletes to build work-related skills, as part of their social responsibility activities.
- National sports bodies and sports associations are in a good position to champion continued learning and skill-building among young athletes playing for member sports clubs. They can also stress that is very important for young athletes not to give up the studies when they finish their mandatory studies, even if they have a professional or semi-professional contract with a team or a sports association.
- Another important key point is that when athletes are in negotiations with a club, they should ask to have included in their Collaborative Bargaining Agreement words to the effect that the clubs will make best efforts to facilitate the dual career of their athlete, meaning either sport+education/skills building to transition to post-sport career, or other continued studies whilst playing sports for the club.
- Sport organisations need to bear in mind that athletes in dual track activity are juggling and dealing with a lot of pressure from two sets of obligations; they may therefore be confronted with conflicting requirements and needs at different levels of development. For example, needs may be athletic, academic, vocational, psychological, psycho-social, social, or financial.

## 3. Guidelines for Coaches

### Reflections

Coaches play a crucial role in the dual career process, whether in sports clubs or schools. Many coaches are also mentors and can exert important influence over a young athlete. As the guardian of the future of young athletes, it is essential that coaches be aware of the roles they play in guiding and teaching a young athlete and his/her potential career.

Likewise, good coaches view the athlete as a whole person and promote the development of life skills such as effective communication, dealing with success and failure, time/stress management, etc. so that these skills become part of the person as they deal not just with their sports careers, but also with their overall development and education. This type of training lies at the heart of the LAS 3-Stage Dual Career Programme.

## 4 Recommendations for Coaches

- At schools and in sports clubs, it is frequently the case that it is the coach's responsibility to guide the planning involved in a dual career and this is a great opportunity to teach self-management and instil self-discipline.
- With a good coach/mentor, everything is a well-received lesson, and people in such a privileged position with youthful athletes can leverage this power to motivate young athletes to appreciate all the benefits related to the concept of lifelong learning; this includes encouraging young people to be courageous and undertake a dual career as a demanding but deeply rewarding option. These young people could benefit from workshops centred on the LAS 3-Stage Dual Career Programme for Young Athletes.
- Coaches and mentors working at schools and universities are in a good position to create a positive and informative contact with a young athlete's parents to gain their support and commitment towards dual career. According to our 6-country research, this first link of a coach from a sports club with a school was reported to be crucial to improved communications on dual career management. This kind of link-up became even more dramatic when it sparked the formation of a dedicated work group at the school to work with the coach/mentors.
- The Dual Careers initiative is growing fast, partly pushed by the research work supported by the EU's Erasmus+ sport line of funding. Coaches would do well to follow this important movement and keep up to date with new developments and trends.

## 4. Guidelines for Sport Federations

### Reflections

Sports Federations are major reference centres that significantly influence athletes of all categories and ages in the European dual career process. They therefore have a fundamental role in the development of dual career programmes. As the national sport body, they have the obligation to promote and support the adoption of the concept of dual careers in the various activities of their members, taking into account the position of young athletes, a long-term strategic approach to dual career arrangements and the availability of supporting services and facilities.

In this sense, the guidelines for the sports federations stress the importance of strengthening their actions and raising the awareness of all related sports organizations about dual careers and interventions that they can stage for their athletes, including using the pedagogic methodology embedded in the presented in the LAS 3-Stage Dual Career Programme for Young Athletes.

## 7 Recommendations for Sports Federations

- Sport Federations should have in their Charter that Dual Career policies and long-term strategic approach to athlete development are priorities of the Federation;
- Sport Federations should ensure that their knowledge of national legislation in force is frequently updated; this is particularly important in the case of the rights of young athletes in terms of continuing their education.
- Sport Federations are encouraged to establish an internal working group dedicated to en-



suring that all the conditions for dual-career are in place in the institution and among its member groups.

- Every Sport Federation would benefit from regularly running a SWAT analysis in order to identify emerging good practices in dual careers to share with the dual career community of specialists.
- Committee members and employees of the Sport Federation need to be trained on the dual career status of individual sports talents.
- Sport Federation staff should be regularly trained on the purpose, benefits, impact and requirements of the Dual Career, and inform the community athletes accordingly.
- In each Sport Federation there should be an information office responsible for dual career matters and programme implementation (such as the LAS 3-Stage Dual Career Programme for Young Athletes) with a view to the future educational development of the athletes before the end of his/her sports career.

## **5. Some Final Conclusions**

- At first sight, making all the logistical arrangements, reaching out to local stakeholders and securely creating flexibility in classroom time and exam timetabling necessary for an effective Dual Careers programme in high school may seem somewhat overwhelming.
- However, the benefits brought by working differently are immense, most importantly allowing talented and elite student athletes pursue their competitive sports without missing out on the education and qualifications they will need post-sport career. As mentioned by project coordinator Shirin Amin, being forced to choose between the twin pursuits after years of personal investment can be destructive and disturbing.
- Spurred on and supported financially by the Erasmus+Sport line of funding, the repertoire of Dual Careers tools and specialized programmes like LAS 3-Stage Dual Career Programme for Young Athletes are gradually filling in the diverse needs of educators and sports clubs shaping our young talented and elite athletes. They are worth it.

This Guidebook (IO-3) is an output of the Life after Sports Project. It is an innovative programme designed to support dual careers by delivering the right supportive training to helping them learn to manage and balance their time and personal investment in sports training and current academic study in preparation for a later transition to employment, or to higher education.

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For further information on this project, as well as downloadable research and support material, go to <http://lifeaftersport.eu/>

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