

# «MORE THAN GOLD»

Guidelines to promote the dual career of athletes-students:  
**manual for authorities**

Ilvis Abelkalns, Pascal Izzicupo, Antonio Sánchez-Pato, Antonio J. Figueiredo,  
Liliana Elisabeta Radu, Laura Capranica, Francisco José Cánovas-Álvarez

EDITORS



Co-funded by the  
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**“MORE THAN GOLD”  
GUIDELINES TO PROMOTE THE DUAL CAREER OF ATHLETES-STUDENTS:  
MANUAL FOR AUTHORITIES**

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Ilvis Abelkalns, Pascal Izzicupo, Antonio Sánchez-Pato, Antonio J. Figueiredo,  
Liliana Elisabeta Radu, Laura Capranica & Francisco José Cánovas-Álvarez

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# INDEX

<b>GLOSSARY</b> .....	7
<b>1 · INTRODUCTION (BACKGROUND OF THE GUIDELINES MATERIAL AND CONTEXT CHARACTERISTICS)</b> .....	9
Ivis Abelkalns, Pascal Izzicupo, Antonio Sánchez-Pato, Antonio J. Figueiredo, Liliana Elisabeta Radu & Laura Capranica	
<b>2 · DUAL CAREER IN THE PROJECT PARTNERSHIP COUNTRIES: CURRENT STATE OF THE ART</b> ....	11
Ugis Bisenieks, Angela Di Baldassarre, Elena Conde Pascual, Hugo Sarmento, Cristian Mihail Rus & Mojca Doupona	
<b>2.1. The Role of EAS in Higher Education Institutions</b> .....	33
Laura Capranica & Mojca Doupona	
<b>3 · CASE STUDIES ON DUAL CAREER SUCCESS IN THE SELECTED COUNTRIES</b> .....	37
Pascal Izzicupo, Angela Di Baldassarre & Barbara Ghinassi	
<b>4 · CASE STUDY OF E+SPORT PROJECT SUCCESS ON DUAL CAREER</b> .....	41
Antonio Sánchez-Pato, Juan Alfonso García-Roca, Alejandro Leiva-Arcas & Francisco José Cánovas-Alvarez	
<b>5 · BUILDING DUAL CAREER SUPPORT IN HEI</b> .....	45
Anda Peagle, Janis Stonis, Barbara Ghinassi, Angela Di Baldassarre, Alejandro Leiva-Arcas, Juan Alfonso García-Roca, Lourdes Meroño, Francisco José Cánovas-Alvarez, Vasco Vaz, Hugo Sarmento, Dana Mihaela Rusu, Cristian Mihail Rus, Mojca Doupona & Laura Capranica	
<b>6 · CONCLUSION (CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS FOR THE USE OF THE METHODOLOGICAL MATERIAL)</b> .....	51
Ivis Abelkalns, Pascal Izzicupo, Antonio Sánchez-Pato, Antonio J. Figueiredo, Liliana Elisabeta Radu & Laura Capranica	
<b>7 · THE LIST OF HEI AND CONTACT INFORMATION OF PERSONS WHO HAVE APPLIED GUIDELINES MATERIAL IN THE PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE</b> .....	53
<b>9 · BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	57



## GLOSSARY

**High-Performance Athlete** (Elite athlete) - an athlete recognized by the Respectful sports organizations as a member/candidate of national team in the appropriate age group (or oldest/higher).

**University Athlete** - an athlete who studies at a university and engages in a specific sport at a university and represents a university in a specific level competition defined by university.

**Dual Career Athlete** - A High Achieving (Elite) athlete and/or university athlete studying in a higher educational study program.

**Scholarship** - a grant or payment made to support a **students-athletes'** education, awarded on the basis of academic or/and sport merit. This amount of award is supposed to cover tuition fees and/or sport related fees.

**Tuition fee** - financial cost set by university to be paid by students for educational services. Under dual career scholarships can be different kind of support, also, for example, tuition fee.





## INTRODUCTION (BACKGROUND OF THE GUIDELINES MATERIAL AND CONTEXT CHARACTERISTICS)

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In fact, an exponential interest in sport dual career both in academic and political fields is gaining its visibility. The European Commission (2012) defined the Dual career as the conciliation between education and sports. A well-balanced dual career can help to maximize the contribution of athletes to society, building on the capabilities athletes have developed during their careers, and can be seen as good preparation for becoming potential role models in society. Students often face challenges to combine their educational activities with sport. Naturally, the aim to succeed at the highest level of a sport demands intensive training/competitions, which can be difficult to reconcile with the challenges and restrictions in the educational system and the labor market (European Commission, 2012).

Nevertheless, the student-athlete definition is differently used between European countries. Naturally, this fact enhances the existence of very different policies with regard to the support that is given to these athletes by governmental structures, but above all by higher education institutions. Despite the exponential interest in this topic, as we have previously reported, the existence of national policies to support student athletes is not yet a reality in all member states of the European Commission and clear terminology and interpretation across Europe for this new policy domain is an urgent need. Additionally, those policies should respect cultural diversity. There is also an appeal to national authorities to develop culturally and country-specific guidelines for dual career that would take into account the Guidelines but also the specificities of the national education systems and sports (European Commission, 2016; Geraniosova & Ronkainen 2015). The European Union Guidelines on Dual Careers of Athletes (European Commission,

2012) provided a minimal standard of facilitators and conditions for athletes in member state countries and contributed to research in dual career development at a national level (Li & Sum, 2017).

A review of policy and practice in higher education in European Union Member States concerning elite athletes identified four positions: (1) state-centric provision, (2) the state formally via free access connecting educational and sport bodies, (3) national sport organizations directly contacting educational bodies, and (4) no formal structures (Aquilina & Henry, 2010). On the other hand, Caput-Jogunica and colleagues (2012) analyzed the role of higher education institutions in athletes' dual career across the European Union. The authors highlighted some specific practices in Europe such as admission of Olympic athletes to any university or college without entrance examination, scholarships for athletes on the Olympic list, annual scholarships, and The Talented Scholarship Scheme. Additionally, the authors emphasized that the development of dual career support systems was at different levels between European Union members and underlined the importance of flexibility in studies for a successful dual career (Geranosova & Ronkainen 2015).

This is well established that the opportunity to combine sports and education increases the motivation to pursue a professional and sports career, facilitates the life transitions and improves the life quality of the athlete (European Commission, 2016). Nevertheless, although sports participation is strongly encouraged, young athletes have severe difficulties in making sports compatible with educational requirements and the available scientific evidence reveals that the European athletes tend to abandon sport and prioritize education in order to prepare for future job opportunities or, in opposite situations, to abandon academic training because of competition, economic resources or lack of support through the dual career (Fernandes, Moreira & Gonçalves, 2019).

The available literature showed that there is no uniformity in the application and development of the dual career in all member states of the European Union and that some countries are still not interested in the development of the European Commission guidelines. In this sense, there is an urgent need to share good practices between the European countries in order to harmonize the dual career strategies.

Thus, this document will present a set of strategies that are currently being developed in a set of higher education institutions from different countries of the European Union and that may constitute a reference of general application for the generalities of the institutions of the member states.

## DUAL CAREER IN THE PROJECT PARTNERSHIP COUNTRIES: CURRENT STATE OF THE ART

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In the last years, the interest in dual career topics increased enormously in the European Union (EU), leading to several initiatives in different countries aimed to develop dual career programs. According to European Union (EU)'s lexicon, the term dual career describes *"an athlete that combine, without unreasonable personal effort, their sporting career with education and/or work in a flexible way through high-quality training in order to protect their moral, health, educational and professional interests without compromising either objective, with a particular focus on the continued formal education of young athletes (European Commission, 2012)"*. Thus, dual career programs aim to allow student-athletes (SAs) to combine education and high-performance sport. A dual career program is needed since both activities are time and energy demanding and often require travelling or living abroad for long periods. Without support, athletes may find themselves in the situation of having to choose between study and sport, thus compromising his right to an education, moreover, established by article 26 of the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (United Nations, 1948), as well as the possibility of a potential elite sports career. To date, each country in the EU is addressing the issue with their own methods. The wide diversity of legislative settings has been described by Aquilina and Henry (2010) as: 1) State-centric regulation, in which government legislation or statutory regulations place responsibilities on higher education institutions to provide flexible academic paths (i.e., France, Hungary, Luxemburg, Poland, Portugal, and Spain); 2) State as sponsor/facilitator, in which states promote formal agreements to meet athletes' needs at the educational level (i.e., Belgium-Flanders, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, and Sweden); 3) National

Sporting Federations/Institutes as an intermediary, in which national governing or sports bodies negotiate flexible academic paths with educational institutions (i.e., Greece and the United Kingdom); and 4) Laissez-faire/No Formal Structures, in which individually negotiated agreements are arranged, when possible (i.e., Malta, Austria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Malta, Slovakia, and Slovenia). The latter case can also be attributed to Romania, although not included in Aquilina and Henry's (2010) study. The following is a detailed description of the current situation in each Member State.

## Portugal

Dual career measures and arrangements are relatively recent in the majority of European Member States as well as in the majority of the universities. Professors are not familiar with this framework and challenges and it becomes difficult to sensitize them. Agreements between the sport system and the educational sector are needed to support the goals related to dual-career process, this way should be followed by a legal framework and a sustainable governmental policy.

Sport is inseparable from education, both physically and intellectually, as it enables the achievement and exchange of skills of leadership, that may be addressed in classrooms but must be consolidated through an experience acquired on sport grounds.

From the added experience in Portugal, student's athletes can face different profiles:

- Students and high-performance athletes: Students that combine their academic path with high performance in sports (national team in Continental, World and/or Olympic and Paralympic competition). These students have daily training sessions and regular competitions. They also have a regular monitoring in the areas, such as sports periodization, performance analysis, health monitoring and other recovery needs.
- Students athletes and sport regular competition: Students athletes that have regular training sessions and participate at regular competitive calendar.

Both profiles fit student-athletes that are full-time students and athletes at the same time.

The aim to succeed at the highest level of sport demands intensive training and competitions, sometimes abroad, which can lead to difficulties to cope with the

challenges and restrictions in the educational system. Nowadays the labor market is very competitive, and student's athletes do not want to lose time to assure their position on the labor market. Most of them aspire a different professional career upon the completion of the sport career. High levels of motivation, commitment, resilience and responsibility from the athlete are not enough. A high level of performance is required for both sides, athletic and educational ones. This is essential as they need to be excellent athletes and good students at the same time to assure their professional future.

Another point that must be taken in account is related to the fact that most of those student-athletes move from their home for new cities during their academic studies. It can mean also more instability for them.

University of Coimbra (UC) was one of the first Universities in Portugal to have an internal Rule Book for students-athletes, recognizing the rights such as priority in choosing classes timetables, dates for exams according to their training or competition schedule. These Rules were the first stone for a National Law for students' athletes with the same goal. UC was also innovative to celebrate agreements with National Federations that aimed to have their top athletes studying and training in the faculties of the UC, using its sports facilities, dormitories, areas of knowledge (ex. control training) and administrative tools to ensure a smooth procedure for all internal situations that may harmonize the issues within the academic and sport dimensions.

Portuguese governmental bodies believe that this kind of measures is essential to promote equal opportunities and better prepare students athletes to combine academic path with sport path. Therefore, they created a national Dual Career policy involving government departments, National Sport Federations and the National Olympic Committee to help elite athletes to combine the sport training and competition demands and their academic activities or professional demands. This policy is under the control of the Portuguese Institute for Sport and Youth and allows some benefits in the school activities. In particular, tutoring measures at school for training and competitions and educational benefits (absence and extra support with tutor (in several educational institutions), awards for excellence (in some higher education institutions), absence from classes in case of official competitions or special training periods) are in place. Finally, there is some governmental support to facilitate the transition into the labor market. The Portuguese Olympic Committee has also some programs related with ACP program from IOC/ADECCO.

In Portugal there is a national law that regulates the benefits of student athletes.

The XXI Constitutional Government Program establishes as a priority the articulation of sports policy with the school, reinforcing physical education and sports activity in schools and higher education establishments and making them compatible with school and academic pathways, in line with the recommendations of the European Union for the adoption of mechanisms to support the development of dual careers for student athletes.

The regular practice of physical and sports activity, in a school and academic context, is recognized as an important complement in the course of the student, with a view to their integral formation as an individual, promoting the development of healthy habits throughout life.

For that reason, Decree-Law no. 129/93, of April 22, which establishes the principles of the policy of social action in higher education, in its current version, and Law no. 62/2007 of 10 of September, which approves the legal regime of higher education institutions, determine that social action in higher education includes support for sports activities, to be provided to all students, regardless of their degree.

For some years, a system of support has been in place for students who are high-performance athletes or who regularly represent national teams, provided for in Decree-Laws no. 272/2009, of October 1 and 45/2013, of April 5, which was recently complemented by the implementation of the pilot project called “High Income Support Units in School”, created by Order No. 9386-A / 2016, dated July 21, of the Assistant Secretary of State and Education and the Secretaries of State for Education and Youth and Sport. It is time to extend support to other student athletes, contributing to the improvement of the reconciliation of study, training and competition plans for young people who want to an involvement in formal sporting practice within the framework of the organization of sport in higher education.

The status of the student athlete of higher education that is now approved, following Resolution of the Assembly of the Republic No. 128/2017, of June 22, aims to support the development of dual careers in higher education institutions and the academic community, promoting the sporting representation of higher education institutions and student associations, representing an incentive to practice sports in this context.

It also provides support to students who develop their sports in the federated system and those who intend to continue the practice developed in the field of school sports.

Thus, within a framework of autonomy in which higher education institutions and student associations define the very terms of the organization and development

of the practice of sport, the set of minimum rights of access to sports practice by all students of higher education is standardized, such as the assessment of absences, alteration of evaluation dates, priority in the choice of schedules and the possibility of requiring special examinations.

The aim is to establish a legal and regulatory framework that improves the conditions of participation in competitions that are integrated in the sporting context of higher education, also contributing to increasing the relevance of these competitions.

The Council of Rectors of Portuguese Universities, the Coordinating Council of the Polytechnic Institutes and the Academic Sports University Federation were consulted.

## **Article 1**

This decree-law establishes the status of the student athlete of higher education (statute), defining the eligibility requirements and the corresponding minimum rights.

## **Article 2**

Scope of application

For the purposes of the provisions of this decree-law, students of higher education are students enrolled and enrolled in higher education who cumulatively:

- a) Participate in the championships and competitions provided for in the following article;
- b) comply with the requirements of sporting merit applicable to them in accordance with Article 4;
- c) achieve the minimum school performance provided for in Article 5

## **Article 3**

Participation in championships and competitions

1.- Students who, in the academic year in which they require the attribution of status, benefit from the student athlete status:

- a) Have participated, in representation of the higher education institution in which they are enrolled and registered or of the association of students in or integrating national university selection, in:

- i) National university championships organized by the Academic Sports University Federation (FADU); or
- ii) International university competitions organized by the European University Sports Association or the International University Sports Federation;
- b) Have participated in the most recent ones:
  - i) Competitions for the attribution of national titles by sports federations, pursuant to paragraph h) of paragraph 1 of article 13 of Decree-Law no. 248-B / 2008, of December 31, current writing; or
  - ii) international competitions for the award of European and world titles by international bodies in which national sports federations are integrated; or
- c) Are enrolled as athletes in the sports service of the higher education institution in which they are enrolled and enrolled or in the respective student association and have participated, in the academic year prior to the year in which they require the attribution of the statute, in:
  - i) National school championships; or
  - ii) International competitions of school scope.

2.- Under the terms regulated by each institution under the provisions of article 8, students may also benefit from the statute, among others:

- a) They have participated, in the academic year in which they require the attribution of the status, in regional championships and in the other tests of qualification for the national university championships; or
- b) Be affiliated to a sports federation governed by Decree-Law no. 248-B / 2008, of December 31, in its current version (federated athletes).

#### **Article 4**

##### **Sports Merit**

1.- In the academic year in which they require the attribution of the status, students referred to in paragraph a) of paragraph 1 of the previous article practitioners of collective sports must have:

- a) Represented his team or selection in at least 60% of the games of one of the competitions referred to in paragraph a) in paragraph 1 of the previous article; and
- b) Participated in at least 75% of their team's or team's training, or 25% in the case of federated athletes, provided that at least one training per week is carried out, except for vacations or examinations.



2.- The minimum requirements for participation in training and representation of the team or selection applicable to the students referred to in paragraph b) of paragraph 1 of the previous article practitioners of collective sports modalities integrated in other sports federations are defined by protocol between the institution of higher education and the respective sports federation and provided for in the regulations referred to in Article 8.

3.- The students referred to in sub-paragraphs a) and b) of paragraph 1 of the previous article practicing of individual sporting modalities must have been classified in the first third of the league table of the national championships and competitions foreseen in the mentioned subparagraphs.

4.- The students referred to in sub-paragraph i) of paragraph c) of no. 1 of the previous article must have been classified in the first third of the league table of national school championships referred to in the said sub-line.

## **Article 5**

### School performance

1.- In order to benefit from the status, the students of higher education must have obtained at least 36 credits, or all the credits in which they have been enrolled, in the academic year prior to the one in which their number is less than 36.

2.- The provisions of the previous number do not apply to students who require the assignment of the status in the school year in which they are enrolled for the first time in a given study cycle.

## **Article 6**

### Duration

The statute shall have the duration provided for in the regulations referred to in Article 8, which may not be less than one year, and shall enter into force from the time of its attribution.

## **Article 7**

### Rights

The student athletes of higher education are holders of at least the following rights:

- a) Priority in the choice of schedules or classes whose frequency scheme best suits their sporting activity, provided that this is duly proven by the applicant;

- b) Relief of absences that are motivated by participation in official competitions of the modality they represent;
- c) Possibility of changing dates of formal moments of individual evaluation that coincide with the days of the championships and competitions referred to in a) and b) of paragraph 1 of article 3;
- d) Possibility of requesting the accomplishment of at least two annual examinations or equivalent in special time of examinations.

## Article 8

### Regulation

1.- The legal and statutorily competent body of each higher education institution regulates the institutional application of this statute until the beginning of the 2019-2020 academic year, defining in particular:

- a) the criteria for the award of the status to students who are enrolled and enrolled for the first time in a course of study;
- b) The criteria for the award of the status to students who participate for the first time in the championships and competitions referred to in Article 3 (1) (a);
- c) The criteria of academic and sporting merit necessary for the extension of the status to other students, in accordance with paragraph 2 of article 3;
- d) The duties of student athletes in higher education;
- e) The procedures for requesting, assigning, renewing and terminating the statute;
- f) The duration of the statute, which shall comply with the provisions of Article 6;
- g) Mechanisms for monitoring compliance with statutory and regulatory provisions relating to status;
- h) The body or service that assures the management of procedures related to the statute in the higher education institution.

2.- The norms issued under the terms of the preceding paragraph may go beyond the provisions of this Decree-Law with respect to the rights of student athletes of higher education and their eligibility criteria, provided that in a more favorable sense to students, with the exception of of the minimum school use provided for in Article 5.

3.- The regulations referred to in paragraph 1 shall be drawn up in close liaison between higher education institutions and sports federations and their clubs with a view to strengthening mutual collaboration and pursuit of the objectives of increasing the development of dual careers.

## Spain

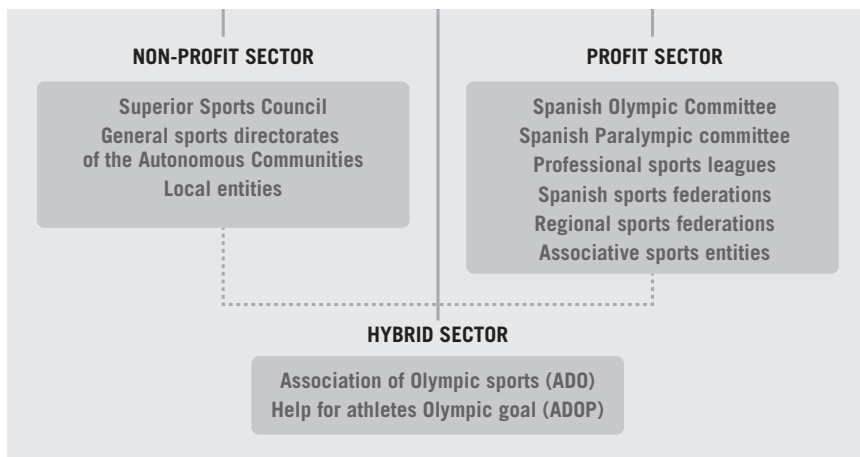
The intense social change that Spanish society has experienced since the first years of the democratic transition to the present has a faithful reflection on the changes that have occurred in the Spanish sports system. “In the field of democratic and advanced societies, among which is the current Spanish society, sport and the entire network of behaviors and interests that characterize it reflect, to a large extent, its growing structural and institutional complexity, the becoming itself of the society to which they belong” (García & Llopis, 2011, p. 19).

For the Spanish Government, the promotion of sport is an essential matter, reflected at the legislative level from the Spanish Constitution (1978); “Public authorities will promote health education, physical education and sports. They will also facilitate the proper use of leisure” (Title I, Chapter III, art. 43.3). The response to the constitutional duty to promote sport came, first, through the Physical Education and Sports Law 13/1980, of extraordinary importance at the time and which was replaced by the Sports Law 10/1990, by demands derived from the agreed interpretation of the autonomous process, and by the evolution of the sports phenomenon itself. Law 10/1990 and subsequent Royal Decrees have legislated the situation of high-level athletes (hereinafter, DAN) in Spain; both the particularities of the athletes who carry out the activity, and the institutions involved. Law 10/1990 specifies that: “It is considered of interest to the State, as it constitutes an essential factor in sports development, due to the stimulus it implies for the promotion of base sport, by virtue of the technical and scientific requirements of its preparation, and for its representative function of Spain in official sporting events or competitions of an international nature” (Title I. General Principles. Art. 6.1).

The promotion and development of high-level sport in Spain correspond to the Higher Sports Council (CSD), in collaboration with the Autonomous Communities (CC. AA), the Spanish Sports Federations, Spanish Olympic Committee (COE) with the final objective of improving the sporting successes of Spain at international level. The performance of the State Administration in the field of sport corresponds and is exercised directly by the CSD as specified by Law 10/1990, “except for the cases of delegation provided for in this Law” (Title II. Art. 7).

Regarding the competences on sport and promotion of sport in Spain, Law 10/1990 specifies that it is, first of all, in the different Statutes of Autonomies through a strict connection with the territorial areas of the CC. AA, and, secondly,

it constitutes a matter on which several competing titles affect. In this sense, Law 10/1990 specifies, “There are several coordinated and cooperative actions between the State Administration and the CC. AA for those competing competitions that will undoubtedly lead to a more dynamic sports policy with multiplier effects” (Preamble). With regard to the sports organization in Spain, it is based on a system of mutual collaboration between the public and private sectors in which both share responsibilities in the promotion, promotion and development of physical-sports activities and practices.



It should be emphasized that Law 10/1990 on Sports explicitly includes the need to provide, from different administrations, aid for the integration of DANs outside the sports field, incorporating athletes into the education system. “The State Administration, in collaboration with the Autonomous Communities, when appropriate, will seek the necessary means for the technical preparation and scientific and medical support of high-level athletes, as well as their incorporation into the education system and their full social integration and professional” (Title I. General Principles. Art. 6.2).

### **The High-Level Athlete (DAN) and High Performance (DAR)**

The use of the term “DAN” and its definition, appear in Spain explicitly in the current Sports Law of 1990, under the following terms: “high-level athletes are

considered those who appear in the relations drawn up annually by the Superior Council of Sports, in collaboration with the Spanish Sports Federations, and, where appropriate, with the Autonomous Communities, and in accordance with the objective criteria determined, taking into account, among others, the following circumstances:

- a) Classifications obtained in competitions or international sports events.
- b) Status of the athlete in official lists of sports classifications, approved by the corresponding international Federations.
- c) Special conditions of a technical-sports nature, verified by sports organizations” (Title VI, Article 52).

In the aforementioned Law, in addition to establishing the criteria that define a DAN, the importance of the measures that facilitate its technical preparation, its incorporation into the educational system and its full social and professional integration, both during its sports career and at end of it. After it, a series of Royal Decrees (hereinafter, RD) and extensions to Law 10/1990 have appeared with the objective of specifying the particularity that high level sport is the main activity in a person’s life.

RD 971/2007, of July 13, on high level and high-performance athletes:

- The criteria that define the condition of high-performance athlete and the promotion measures associated with these athletes are modified.
- It is intended to improve the insertion in society and facilitate its dedication to high competition sport.
- Different measures are adopted, including those related to tax benefits, measures for labor insertion and support for the DAN from the CSD.
- The extension of flexibilization and adaptation measures in the education system to areas other than those already included in the previous norm and which refer to Compulsory and Post-Compulsory Secondary Education, the Baccalaureate, Education for the University that is promoted in a novel way Adult People or Artistic Teachings.
- A support service for the DAN called PROAD is created within the CSD, for specific attention and dedication to the DAN during their sports life and at the end of it, in coordination with the institutions and entities involved.

In Spain, the DAN relationship is published in the Official State Gazette (BOE) with a periodicity of six months by resolution of the President of the CSD and its number has been increasing in recent years.

## Legislation Regarding High-Level Athletes in Spain

Although there have been several legislative documents that during the last decades have referred to sport and DAN in Spain, these issues are specifically crucial in the current legislative documents reflecting the growing concern of the Spanish State for the integration of athletes in the educational system, the reconciliation of sports and academic life and their subsequent insertion in the labor market.

### **Law 10/1990, of October 15 of Sport**

“The CSD exercises its powers in sports and coordinates them with the CC. AA and local corporations when it directly affects the general interests of national sport.” (First Title. General Principles. Art. 2).

“High level sport is considered a priority interest for the State and is a stimulus for different sports levels.” (First Title. General Principles. Art. 6). This same article of the Sports Law outlines the need to look for the necessary means for its preparation, its incorporation into the educational system and its integration into the social and professional system.

### **RD 971/2007, of July 13**

This rule replaces RD 1467/1997 and its annexes, modified by the Order of April 14, 1998. In line with the social and legislative changes that have taken place over the last few years, it was considered necessary to review the aforementioned promotion measures in order to update them, expanding some existing ones and promoting new ones to further facilitate the technical preparation of high-level athletes and their full integration in the education system, and in social and work life, both during the sports practice, as well as after it. The definition of a high-level athlete and the high-performance athlete are addressed, for the purposes of applying the support measures provided for in the field of studies, with the aim of expanding the beneficiaries of these measures. These measures are specified in article 9 of the aforementioned RD called “Measures to promote training and education”, and facilitate access to the different training offers of the education system, for high-level and high-performance athletes, for example:

#### ***Access to university studies***

Annually, the CC. AA will reserve, for those who accredit their status as a high-level athlete, and meet the corresponding academic requirements, a minimum

percentage of 3% of the places offered by university centres in which the circumstances provided for in RD 1742/2003, of December 19, which establishes the basic regulations for access to official university studies, or regulations that replace it. The Government Councils of the Universities may increase the percentage of places reserved for high-level athletes. Universities will assess the records of these students in accordance with the provisions of the applicable regulations.

The centres that focus on Physical Activity and Sports Sciences, Physiotherapy and Physical Education Teacher programs will reserve an additional quota equivalent to at least 5% of the places offered for high-level athletes, which will be maintained until September call, then quota may be increased.

High-level athletes will be exempt from performing physical tests that, where appropriate, are established as a requirement for access to teaching and studies in Physical Activity and Sports Sciences.

**Sixth additional provision. Modification of RD 971/2007, of July 13, on high level and high performance athletes.**

The fourth paragraph of article 9, paragraph 1, has the following literal wording: “the centres that teach and teach in Physical Activity and Sports Sciences, Physiotherapy and Physical Education Teacher or the degree teaching that replaces them, they will reserve an additional quota equivalent to at least five percent of the places offered for high-level athletes, which quota may be increased by agreement of the Higher Sports Council with the Universities.”

**RD 439/2007, of March 30, which approves the Regulation of the Income Tax of Individuals and modifies the Regulation of Plans and Pension Funds, approved by RD 304/2004, of February 20.**

Reference is made to article 4., “Exemption of aid for high-level athletes. For the purposes of the provisions of article 7. m) of the Tax Law, financial aid for training and sports technification will be exempt, with a limit of 60,100 euros per year

**RD 637/2010, of May 14, which provides for the incorporation of high-level athletes to the State Security Forces**

This RD is based on the aforementioned RD 971/2007, dated July 13. Its purpose is the individualization, homogenization and extension of the merit regulation of having been a high-level athlete for the access and provision of destinations in the field of State Security Forces and Bodies.

A series of measures are approved that allow the promotion of high competition sport by offering an insertion in the labor market in a sector that has the requirement of an adequate physical condition as one of its pillars, while at the same time allowing enrichment of the management staff General of the Police and Civil Guard.

## **Support Programs for High-Level Athletes**

At present, there are different programs in Spain to support athletes from the state, regional, educational and private sectors whose main objective is to promote the reconciliation of the world of high competition sports with the academic life of the athlete. Among them we highlight:

### **High Level Athlete Service Program (PROAD)**

It is a program for the improvement of the labor integration conditions of Spanish high-level athletes. The main objective of the program is to reduce the difficulty of athletes in the development of professional careers complementary to their sports careers, and thus ensure that sports successes are complemented by professional successes. The program depends on the CSD High Level Athlete Service. PROAD offers face-to-face and telematics individualized attention that integrates and offers information, advice, guidance, intermediation and management of all the resources that DANs may need to facilitate their professional transition process at the end of their sports activity. To this end, a network of tutors-consultants assigned to athletes and supervised by some coordinators has been created, which together with the athletes analyse their professional and training itinerary based on the needs identified. The PROAD aims to: 1. Detect the needs of the DAN. 2. Integrate the different resources that cover the needs and demand. 3. Generate resources and / or tools that do not exist to meet specific needs. 4. Provide DAN access to these resources. 5. Reach collaboration agreements with institutions, entities, organizations or companies that participate directly or indirectly in this process.

### **Office of Attention to the Athlete of the COE**

Within the contents of this office, the areas of training, information, the job bank and other services are provided with advice to Athletes (OAD, 2009):



1. Psychological counselling.
2. Legal advice.
3. Scholarships for training granted by the COE scholarship working group.
4. Socio-sanitary aid for former athletes granted by the Commission of Athletes of the COE.
5. Proposals of the athletes themselves for the improvement of the services provided.
6. Research related to athletes or the services provided.
7. Athlete tutoring.

### **Autonomous Offices of Attention to the Athlete**

In Spain, there are high-level sports counselling offices in some Autonomous Communities.

### **Offices of Attention to the Athlete at Universities**

In general, the Spanish Universities introduced the so-called “offices of orientation and attention to the student”, which have among their functions the one to inform high-level and high-performance sports students about the benefits that they can have in the university provided that they comply with certain requirements. Some universities also have programs to help high-level athletes.

### **Office of Attention to the High-Level Athlete of the Civil Guard**

The idea originates from the need to promote and support civil guards with special qualities and dedication to high-level competition, who may represent the institution in the various national and international sports events. The members of the Civil Guard who participate in these tests will be considered high-level athletes when, individually or as a team, they obtain marks or results of a higher level than the amateur athlete.

Among the functions of the office is recognition of the status of a high-level athlete of the members of the Civil Guard who request it and assess the marks and results they have accredited, facilitate assistance in training and competitions in which they take part, promote the necessary economic resources and support to facilitate the activities of high-level athletes.

## Adecco Foundation

Its main objective is the insertion in the labour market of those people who, due to their personal characteristics, find it more difficult to find a job, including athletes and former high-performance athletes. The “Career Towards Employment” program is based on the development and learning of job search and career guidance techniques. The athletes are thus helped to define their professional objective and design their “career plan”, focus their skills within the work environment. Among other skills, they learn how to do the job search, how to, develop a network of target companies, job interviews etc. Likewise, the program is complemented by taking advantage of the synergies of the network of 370 offices that the Adecco Group has in Spain and that in the selection processes and job searches, all the applications of the athletes are present. The Adecco Foundation presents companies as an active proposal for open selection processes in which they can contribute all their values: effort, teamwork, improvement, etc.

## Latvia

In Latvia, sports issues are responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science. At the national level in Latvia, there do not exist specific Dual Career policies in higher education. There is general support for Elite athletes –potential participants in the Olympic games– from the Latvian Olympic Committee, but that does not include any support for an athlete if he or she is a student.

There is currently no specific support for DC athletes in terms of psychological assistance, medical aid, and prevention programmes.

The only official support comes from The Latvian Sports Federation’s Council as a special funding programme to support top athletes in vocational and higher education. Still, the total amount of the funding is limited, and it does not cover all DC athletes. In fact, this support comes as a single payment based on educational merit, and it is supposed to cover tuition fees.

Active role in promoting Dual Career ideas in Latvia has the Latvian Universities Sports Federation.

Dual Career issues are on the institutional level. Universities (or other HE institutions) support DC athletes, but this support and attitude differ depending on the institution and their strategies.

## Italy

Up to recent years, no attention was paid to the topic of dual career in Italy. Current efforts in this direction led to: i) a legislative reference represented by the Art. 1(7)(g) of Law No. 107 of 13 July 2015 which states that the protection of student-athletes' right to education must be a priority; ii) a Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Italian Olympic Committee (CONI), the Ministry for Education, University and Research (MIUR), the Rectors' Conference of Italian Universities (CRUI), the Italian University Sports Centre (CUSI), the Italian Paralympic Committee (CIP) and the National Association of Bodies for the Right to Education (ANDISU) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which states that the parties undertake to promote the university career of student-athletes in compliance with the fundamental right to education (MIUR, 2016). Unfortunately, such references are vague and purely programmatic and, together with the principle of the Universities' autonomy, make every single institute follow its own path.

The support services offered to SAs by the Italian Universities are summarized by Bastianon and Greco (2018) into nine categories: 1) financial support (scholarship, fee exemption); 2) learning support (tutoring, E-learning); 3) flexibility (exams schedule, lessons schedule); 4) gap year; 5) ECTS; 6) part-time; 7) accommodation facilities; 8) sports facilities; and 9) job placement. The same authors have assigned a score based on the number of support services offered by each university and then grouped universities into four categories: (i) basic (n=1 to n=3), (ii) intermediate (n=4 to n=6), (iii) high (n=7 to n=9) and (iv) top (n=10 to n=12). Briefly, 22 universities (representing 31%) formally offers support services for the dual career. The most common support service is tutoring (19 out of 22 universities), whereas the less common is e-learning (3 out of 22 universities). The intermediate level group includes 14 universities; the high-level group consists of four universities; the basic level group consists of three universities, while no university belongs to the top-level group. Most of the universities that offer basic and intermediate levels of dual career support services are located in Northern Italy. In contrast, high-level services are almost equally distributed: 2 in Northern Italy, 1 in Central Italy, and 2 in Southern Italy. Finally, it is worth noting that 10 Italian universities joined the European Athletes as Students (EAS) to share best practices in Europe and to support research and European collaborative partnerships in dual career. In conclusion, the Italian dual career situation is quite heterogeneous and mainly based on single universities'

own initiatives. Formally, just 31% of the Universities are offering support services for dual career. Still, it is important to note that there is a growing awareness on the topic of dual career, and a large number of universities adopted informal initiatives.

## Romania

In the context of belonging to the European Union as a member, Romania has the obligation of aligning its national legislation to the common European legislative framework. The process is ongoing and it began on January 1, 2007.

The sport-oriented EU policies are regulated in the European Sports Charter, The Sports Ethics Code, the Anti-doping Convention, the White Paper on sport, directives of the European Commission and of the European Council.

The recommendations of the European Commission (2012) highlight – besides the importance of sports activity – the importance of quality education, covered in parallel with the training of sports performance under the generic name of the dual career of athletes.

Nowadays, Romania is at the beginning of developing the dual career of athletes, favoured by the projects of the European Commission through the Erasmus+ Sport program, by the European Guideline for the dual career of athletes, by the Guideline for promoting the dual career in the European Union.

Until Romania joined the EU in 2007, the legislation regarding the dual career of athletes was vague, inconsistent and general. The Law 69/2000 reprised an OMEC 5159/1998 and it referred only to the granting of lifelong annuities after retreating from the sports life for the athletes who had won medals in major international competitions and it comprised provisions regarding the absence of motivations for athletes who were also higher education students. Government Decision 1004/2002 brought along the possibility of enrolling in a faculty without a contest for the medalists in international school Olympiads, athletes with international medals included. Furthermore, the Minister's Order 4799/2010 allowed athletes to pass their GED in special sessions.

However, all these details comprised within legislation cannot avoid a series of shortcomings: overlapping between the important sports competitions and the exams (NC, EC, WC, OG, etc), or the overlapping of centralised training programs at the national teams and the faculty schedules comprising teaching activities. A June 2017 Report stated that in Romania, former athletes are generally absorbed

by the sports system and that there are no concrete initiatives or a legal framework regarding the dual career of athletes.

The Strategy for performance sport (2016-2032) introduces instructions concerning the creation of a long-term educational system for the high-performance athletes, as well as their social reinsertion. Nonetheless, there is no methodology for application, no funds allocated in collaboration with the institutions involved or agreements/partnerships between various partners (COSR - federations – clubs – universities). Consequently, state intervention is minimal. The Ministry of National Education approved state-subsidised spots only for bachelor's studies and limited scholarships only during the schooling period for student-athletes. Moreover, occasionally, other institutions (economic agents, nongovernmental organisations) may sponsor the athletes in this period individually.

The intervention of institutions such as sports federations, the Romanian Olympic Sports Committee, clubs and sports associations to support the dual career of athletes is limited to the status of intermediary between the athletes and the university, thus supporting sports performance only, not the professional performance.

Pursuant to Art. 151, Para. (2), of the Law No. 1/2011, The Law of National Education, "In their own methodology, the higher education institutions can decide upon special facilities and conditions related to the admission of the candidates to the bachelor's degree education, who have obtained during high-school awards at the national and international school Olympiads and or other national and international contests."

On the Romanian territory, 23 state and private faculties provide accredited programs of professional training (bachelor's, master and doctoral studies) in the field of the Science of physical education and sport and facilities for the admission exam for performance athletes.

Henceforth, universities provide the athletes with the possibility of being enrolled – by differentiated criteria – only for full-time and part-time bachelor's studies – depending on the performance level and on the sports results based on a specific methodology, based on the Law of National Education 1/2011, Art. 151, Para. (2).

For instance, at "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University in Iași, the performance athletes who obtained during their high school education great results at Olympic, world, European or national level may benefit from enrolment for the specialties of Physical and Sporting Education and Sport and Motor Performance. The

opportunities are as follows: (a) on state-subsidised spots: the Olympic athletes: 1st, 2nd and 3rd at WC, EC in the four prior years; (b) on spots with tuition: 1st and 2nd place at NC in the previous calendar year in Olympic sports ; 4th, 5th and 6th place at WC, EC (seniors, youth, juniors) in the two prior years at Olympic sports.

The West University in Timișoara has 10 state-subsidised spots for the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport. These spots may be claimed by athletes without a contest if they are high school graduates with GED and if they obtained notable sports results. Tie break criteria are related to the sports performance level.

In addition, Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj has facilities for enrolling in the first year of studies. They refer to specific criteria for high performance athletes (for the following Specialties: Physical and Sporting Education and Sport and Motor Performance). The candidates with notable results at international contests may be enrolled without admission contest, on the spots allocated by the Ministry of National Education. This position also includes a scholarship for academic performance.

A series of benefits – particularised for each institution pursuant to national legislation and to institutional autonomy – may be identified for bachelor's and master studies. Consequently, a series of measures meant to support dual career during the studies are included in internal regulations based on the supporting documents presented at the beginning of each academic year. These measures include different percentages of absence justification for the disciplines included in the curriculum each semester, special exam sessions at the end of each semester, and at the end of the study cycle (bachelor thesis/master thesis), as well as an agreement between the teacher holder of the discipline and the athlete concerning an individualised schedule by the specific of the discipline in question.

The only specialised University in Romania, namely the National University of Physical Education and Sport, supports the student-athletes by justifying their absence from lectures and seminars in various percentages, by their sports performance levels: 80% justification for national and Olympic athletes, 50% justification for national athletes and 30% justification for athletes in lower-ranked teams. In addition, athletes benefit from a separate exam session, besides the classical one at the end of the semester.

Whereas the legislation is vague and it may be annotated and improved, the first steps in supporting the student-athletes by observing the existing legal framework have already been made by the Romanian universities. Besides admission criteria, a series of measures have been adopted and included in internal regulations for the schooling period of student-athletes.

Hence, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University in Iași adopted the Regulation regarding the organisation of the teaching activity for performance student-athletes, enrolled in the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport, from the academic year 2018-2019. Facilities have a wide spectrum, from the possibility of particularising the calendar dates for exams to absence justification, all depending on the sports performance levels.

Thus, whereas other national reports mentioned that the decision makers had no views for the dual career of athletes, today the universities in our country have not only understood the situation, but also developed a legal framework (Senate decisions, state-subsidised spots, spots without admission contest, burse, absence justification, prolonged exam session, etc.) meant for the student-athletes to graduate favourably for themselves, for their group and for society.

As a general conclusion, Romania has made the first important steps in acknowledging the phrase DUAL CAREER OF ATHLETES and in developing the legislation in the field.

Considering the lack of homogeneity in dual career policies among the project partner countries and, more generally, in the EU, a survey was implemented to provide a descriptive picture of the situation at the level of individual HEIs in the different member countries and to collect eminent opinions on the usefulness and feasibility of the dual career services that emerged in the various phases of the project. In particular, 26 dual career aspects were identified and organized in six thematic areas (i.e., financial support, logistic support, assistance/tutorship, curricula requirements, social support, and other). The questionnaire encompassed two sections to gather information on: 1) the country, institution of provenience and areas covered by the institution, academic position (i.e., administrative-technical staff, sport officer manager, lecturer, researcher, professor associate full professor, head of the study course, head of department, vice-dean, dean), area of expertise of the respondents (i.e., Social Sciences and Humanities, Physical Sciences and Engineering and Life Sciences) and 2) the actual availability of DC services in the respondents' institutions, and the respondents' opinion regarding the relevance of the individual 26 DC aspects and the feasibility of their implementation at HEI level by means of a 10-point Likert-type scale (lowest value=1; highest value=10). Furthermore, for each aspect respondents were allowed to suggest possible implementation, if any.





## 2.1 The Role of EAS in Higher Education Institutions

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In recognizing the value of educated athletes as human resources, the European Commission encourage the development of financial and logistic support specifically designed for student-athletes, which would support their dual career at sport (e.g., sports equipment, travel to competitions, etc.), academic (payment of tuition, tutoring, etc.), and work (e.g., employment, sport leave, etc.) levels (European Commission, 2012). In fact, Member States have full competence in the field of sport and education and sport disciplines vary in requirements and organization. However, despite the fact that most of the Member States offer a wide variety of support measures (e.g., academic, sports, or military, etc.) (Amara et al., 2004), European student-athletes are presented with serious disparities in pursuing a successful dual career.

Established during the European Year of Education through Sport 2004 to facilitate the recognition of the educational needs of student-athletes, the European Athlete as Student (EAS) network provides a platform for a fruitful dialogue between universities, high schools, sports clubs and federations, and agencies of the labour market in support of the promotion of the European Guidelines on Dual Careers of Athletes (European Commission, 2012). In particular, EAS aims to encourage the exchange of dual career best practices, to strengthen the link between educational institutions and sport organizations, and to support European projects and research on dual career (Capranica et al., 2015).

In line with the recommendations of the European Commission (2012), EAS supports educational institutions (e.g., high schools and universities) and sport bodies (e.g., National Olympic Committees, sport federations, and clubs) within and beyond Europe to develop Dual Career guidelines for advancing curricula, sharing resources and structuring educational programmes for athletes. In particular, networking is considered crucial to progress towards the implementation of dual career actions and policies, and to raise awareness of

best practices and methodological advances in European dual career. Due to its extensive networking role, at policy level EAS is a stakeholder of the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS) of the Council of Europe, the European University Sports Association (EUSA), and the International University Sport Federation (FISU).

To promote cooperation between different dual career actors at micro, meso, macro and policy levels (Capranica & Guidotti, 2016), EAS participated in several European projects (EAS participated in the “Athletes2Business”, “Better Boards Stronger Sport Project”, and “ProSafe Sport”, “Better Boards Stronger Spots”, and “Facilitating Higher Education for Athletes – Winner education model”), and studies (“Study on the Minimum Requirement for Dual Career Services”, “Study on Sport Qualifications Acquired through Sport Organisations and (Sport) Educational Institutes”, and “Qualifications/Dual Careers in Sports”). Currently, EAS is an active partner of ongoing Collaborative Partnerships (“More Than Gold”- MTG, “Media as a channel of Athletes’ Dual Careers promotion and education - Ed Media”, “Athletic Migration: Dual career and qualification in sports – AMID”, “Education Model for Parents of ATHletes in Academics – EMPATIA”, “Dual careers for wOMeN Athletes – DONA”, “Sport Opens Schools – SOS”, “STARTING 11 The European Dual Career Toolkit”), which aim to implement different aspects of European dual career of athletes.

To help the dissemination of project findings, the annual EAS conference represents an effective knowledge-hub in which academic institutions and sport bodies converge and discuss key aspect of dual career. In placing a relevant role to innovative aspects of dual career, the Conference also stimulates young researchers to present their recent research and awards a scholarship to the best scientific contribution. In fact, the need for more research in dual career is substantiated by three literature reviews (Guidotti, Cortis, & Capranica, 2015; Stambulova & Ryba, 2014; Stambulova & Wylleman, 2018). Finally, during the Conference several workshops are organized to discuss roles and responsibilities of individuals and well-structured cooperation between organisations to implement dual career programmes.

Indeed, dual career is particularly challenged when athletes face the transition from high school to higher education, which also coincides with the transition from youth to senior sport categories, which, in its turn, implies increased demands and commitment (Stambulova & Wylleman, 2018). This peculiar phase results in longer absences from home due to increased training volume and less motivation to study. Therefore, the adoption of legal provisions is particularly envisaged at

university level to determine the scope and type of individualized adjustments for top athletes pursuing a higher education (Kerstajn, 2018). In considering that different sports disciplines require specific training and competition schedules, facilities, and locations (especially for environmental sports), it makes sense that universities also offer different adjustments, lectures, and tutoring to top athletes. In particular, it is urgent that higher education institutions provide flexibility for class attendance and exams, adjust the curricula based on a dual career pedagogical study model (Lapland University of Applied Sciences et al., 2017), and arrange specific services (career counselling, psychological and health assistance, accommodation and sports facilities, distance learning) and tutoring (Sánchez-Pato et al., 2014). In considering the peculiarities of high school and higher education systems, in addition to the relevant different approaches to education and sport between countries, EAS represents a valuable encounter for European high schools and universities to share topical dual career approaches and best practices, to envisage implementations of dual career provisions, and to engage in a shared European dual career vision. In particular, this dialogue could contribute to the establishment of European dual career guidelines for higher education institutions, which is necessary to assist the holistic development of student-athletes in their transition from high school to university and during their academic path for the accomplishment of a university degree.



## CASE STUDIES ON DUAL CAREER SUCCESS IN THE SELECTED COUNTRIES

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### Chieti – Pescara University case study

The More Than Gold project proved to be a successful cooperation between HEIs and its implementation was well beyond its initial challenging objectives. In fact, during the project's life course the Italian partner university introduced dual career policies for the first time.

At "D'Annunzio" University of Chieti – Pescara, the regulation, issued by Rectoral Decree n. 141/2020 of 27/01/2020 ([https://www.unich.it/sites/default/files/d.r.141-2020\\_emanazione\\_reg.to\\_carriere\\_studenti\\_atleti\\_uda.pdf](https://www.unich.it/sites/default/files/d.r.141-2020_emanazione_reg.to_carriere_studenti_atleti_uda.pdf)), is the final act of a process started with the participation in the MTG project. In just one year, the draft regulation was reviewed by the teaching offices and subsequently approved by the academic senate and the board of directors. The regulation can be consulted on the University web page: [https://www.unich.it/sites/default/files/regolamento\\_carriere\\_studenti\\_atleti\\_uda.pdf](https://www.unich.it/sites/default/files/regolamento_carriere_studenti_atleti_uda.pdf). Briefly, the status of Student-Athlete is attributed to students who are regularly enrolled - in the course or out of course - in degree courses, master's degrees, specialization schools, research doctorates, university masters – and who play sports at high competitive levels, participating in competitions of particular importance at national or international level. The Student-Athlete benefits from the following support measures:

1. Possibility of option for the part-time scheme according to the procedures defined by the specific University Regulations and by the Tax and Contribution Regulations.
2. Opportunity to take the exam on a date other than already set in the academic calendar if the appeal of interest coincides with the date of a certified sporting commitment.
3. Possibility to resolve the issues related to the absence from compulsory lectures or practical exercises through negotiation on the availability of the laboratories and teachers.

4. Opportunity to benefit from a tutor for the resolution of any problems related to their career, such as, for instance, individualized schedule, study, and exams, didactic materials as well as support access to didactic services and internships, information on exam programs.
5. Possibility to apply for the recognition of ECTS - from a minimum of 3 to a maximum of 8 - for winning the Olympic or Paralympic medal or obtaining the title of the absolute world champion, absolute European champion or absolute Italian champion.
6. Possibility to obtain the assignment for an additional score to the final graduation evaluation.
7. Possibility to request and obtain the suspension of the university career for no more than one year for the preparation and participation in relevant sporting events.
8. Opportunity to benefit from the exemption from university tuition fees for “sporting merit”.

Furthermore, based on the Rector’s proposal and within the limits of budget availability, the Academic Senate and the Board of Directors annually evaluate the award of prizes and/or recognition.

## Evaluation form

As recommended by the European guidelines on dual career, the monitoring of dual-career policies and services implemented within member states and HEIs is of great importance. Constant monitoring of the actual Dual Career services could help implement strategies for the development and / or maintenance of adequate support for the student-athlete.




In addition to their relevance, an essential aspect of dual-career services is their feasibility. Therefore, based on a survey we conducted among HEI experts on dual career services already implemented in member states or those emerged during focus groups with student-athletes, we present a visual five-point evaluation scale for dual-career services, based on their relevance and feasibility. This tool can be applied within the evaluation of the current situation related to dual career services implementation in HEI.

Books represent the actual implementation as follows:

- Red Books = Not existent: the service is not considered in the HEI;

- Orange Books = Weak: the service has been considered, but it is not currently in place;
- Yellow Books = Needs implementation: the service is in place but at an initial level;
- Light green Books = Good: the service is in place and consolidated;
- Green Books = Outstanding: the service is recognized as a best practice.

**Table 1. Evaluation of the HEI status quo in Dual Career. Books represent five levels, ranging from red (not existent) to green (outstanding).**

Service/Dual career factor	Category	HEI Status Quo				
						
<b>High relevance - high feasibility</b>						
Access to educational facilities (e.g., gymnasium, internet, e-mail services, e-libraries, labs, research centers)	Logistic support					
Tutorship/mentorship	Assistance/tutorship					
Individual study plan	Curricula requirements					
Distance learning	Curricula requirements					
DC programmes based on individuality (adaptable to individual needs)	Assistance/tutorship					
Publicity for S-As representing the university	Social support					
DC programmes based on integration (unifying academic department, sports or professional services)	Assistance/tutorship					
Psychological support	Assistance/tutorship					
Local to international seminars, workshops, and meetings on up-to-date DC issues	Social support					
<b>High relevance - low feasibility</b>						
Sport facilities	Logistic support					
Scholarship for S-As	Financial support					
Remission of tuition fees for S-As	Financial support					

Service/Dual career factor	Category	HEI Status Quo				
Economic investment for university facilities	Logistic support					
low relevance - high feasibility						
Sport observatory of the university (controlling and monitoring the application of the DC statute)	Other					
Institutional DC committee	Social support					
Publicity on the S-As and their characteristics suitable for the labor market	Social support					
peer to peer support	Social support					
<b>low relevance - low feasibility</b>						
National legislation	Other					
Accommodation facilities for S-As	Logistic support					
DC proactive programmes (capable of acting autonomously, even anticipating needs)	Assistance/tutorship					
Other forms of financial support	Financial support					
Recognition of ECTS for the sport career	Curricula requirements					
Untraditional learning strategies (e.g., creating digital portfolios, using social networks)	Curricula requirements					
Salary	Financial support					
Seminars, workshops, meetings with parents and coaches	Social support					
Special access contingent (reserved for actual or ex high sport performance practitioners)	Other					



## CASE STUDY OF E+SPORT PROJECT SUCCESS ON DUAL CAREER<sup>1</sup>

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The European project ESTPORT, in which 188 student-athletes from 23 different sports modalities participated, was developed in 2015-2016 by the UCAM. The participants of the scholarship program were 139 student-athletes (89 male and 50 female); 32 of them were enrolled in a postgraduate Official Master's Degree studies and 107 in a pre-graduate University Master's Degree studies. It should be noted that not all student-athletes who were part of ESTPORT were part of the university scholarship program, as it depended on their sporting level. The students were affiliated to the Faculty of Sport (35.5%) followed by the Faculty of Health Sciences (18.7%) and the Faculty of Legal and Business Sciences. In addition, the sport modality with the highest demand was soccer with 28.8% (33 undergraduates and 7 enrolled in master's degree studies), followed by athletics with 9.4% (8 undergraduates and 5 in master's degree studies).

The objective was to explore, in addition to the support provided by the University, the opinions of student-athletes about sport and their studies in order to establish links between different universities and other areas related to sport. This was intended to develop a European model of "Sports Mentoring" and thus, high-level athletes could be provided with facilities in the university context while maintaining their sporting career. The project participants acknowledged awareness of what being a student while developing their sport at the highest level implies. At the same time, UCAM students and athletes were free of tuition fees for the duration of their studies and, the vast majority were representatives of the university in various competitions at European and international level, as well as in Spanish championships and some even participated in the Olympic Games. In the same way, the students of professional or semi-professional level, apart from

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1 Sánchez-Pato, A., García-Roca, J.A., Isidori, M. & Leiva-Arcas, A. (2021). An innovative European sports tutorship model (ESTPORT) for the dual career of student-athletes, *Journal of the Latin American Socio-Cultural Studies of Sport* 12(2), p. 181-198.

having counted on the UCAM for their dual career, received help from other sports societies, and from the “Consejo Superior de Deportes” through governmental aid, but to a lesser extent.

Within the research framework, the Spanish program “SURVEY ESTPORT” was applied which was a “questionnaire on the perceptions of dual-career student-athletes” (Sánchez-Pato et al., 2016). The research was conducted within the 2 stages, that is, a pre-test and a post-test with 84 questions on “Academic life”, “Sports life”, and “Sports tutor”, in which, the respondents answered anonymously, relaxed atmosphere without any external and individual pressure was ensured. The duration of the procedure was 30 minutes. Complementary information on the questionnaire was not provided, still, they did have an informative document on the functioning of the ESTPORT project.

In relation to the perception of coordinating sports performance with a successful “academic life”, the student-athletes found it difficult, although the UCAM students positively appreciated having distance learning and a sports tutor, and one of the students’ motivations for their studies was “enjoying studying” and “willingness to improve their education” with the aim to get a job once they had finished their sports career. In general, students defined themselves as athletes-student rather than student-athletes, as they tend to see sport as a more important priority than their studies at university because of the time they dedicate to it and its relevance to them at that specific moment (Debois, Ledon, & Wylleman, 2015).

In addition to this, the respondents, affirm that once they finish their studies, they would like to be able to work in what they have been trained in and confessed that this was of importance for them to be able to rely on external support, such as their families, friends and even from the University itself and in this case from UCAM since the athletes were grateful for the methodologies carried out to positively support the dual career. In fact, there was only one year difference in the pattern of study with those students who were not athletes.

On the other hand, it would be of great importance for the respondents to have knowledge about certain regulations that affect them as elite athletes, since the vast majority of them, and even students of the UCAM, have a great ignorance of both the national and regional regulations as well as the academic regulations of the University.

To conclude, the athletes have stressed the importance of having knowledge about the different methodologies and virtual tools that would be beneficial for their study and the employment opportunities in the future. From the other viewpoint, the “sports career” was presented as an aspect that positively influenced

the “academic career” provided that UCAM athletes considered that training did not influence their academic performance, even if they had 4 to 5 training sessions per week with a high training load. The literature shows the importance of developing both ethical and sustainable practices as well as an elite sports system that addresses the necessary education/training issues of young athletes and even promotes the usefulness of support tools, such as the virtual campus as it helps to obtain positive results (David, 2004). To proceed, and to clarify previous paragraphs, the results show that athletes would give preference to work in the field they were trained in upon completion of their “sports career” and in the future in general. They highlight the importance of being able to earn a living by doing something they like. Before introducing the tutor as a fundamental factor in the individualized support to student-athletes in the dual career, it was necessary to learn their perception of the “Sports Tutor” (Álvarez et al., 2014). In this project, there were differences in perception between amateur, semi-professional or professional athletes. However, in general, they valued positively the “University Sports Service” with the dual career and also, the “Sports Tutor” since the data obtained from the student-athletes were related to the need to have a person who was available to listen to them on a regular basis, mainly via email.



## BUILDING DUAL CAREER SUPPORT IN HEI

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Among the various actions implemented during the project, we administered a questionnaire that aimed to provide a descriptive picture of the situation at the level of individual HEIs in the different member countries and to collect eminent opinions on the usefulness and feasibility of the dual career services that emerged in the various phases of the project. Details about the questionnaire, administration, and recruitment have been illustrated in the previous section on state of the art on dual career in project partner countries and the description of dual career situation. This section reports the experts' opinion on the usefulness and feasibility of the dual career services that emerged during the project.

For each of the 26 items, the respondents' opinions regarding the relevance and the feasibility of their implementation at HEI level using a 10-point Likert-type scale (lowest value=1; highest value=10) were collected. Furthermore, for each aspect, the respondents were allowed to suggest possible implementation, if any. According to the literature (on behalf of the DEDIPAC consortium et al., 2016), the mean ratings of the relevance (x-axis) and feasibility (y-axis) for the identified DC aspects were used to plot the position of each factor relative to all other factors. The resulting scatterplots identified four quadrants (i.e., I. II. III. and IV) of "Go-Zone", reporting factors deemed feasible but considered to have a low relevance (Quadrant I), factors that have been attributed low ratings for both relevance and feasibility (Quadrant II), factors deemed relevant but considered to have low feasibility (Quadrant III), and factors believed to be most feasible and having the highest relevance (Quadrant IV), respectively. In particular, Quadrant IV identified the factors HEI experts rated as highly relevant for feasible implementation of DC programmes at the university level.

## a. Study and training plan

The highest values emerged for relevance ( $7.6 \pm 0.5$ ) concerning feasibility for implementation ( $6.5 \pm 0.5$ ). Of the 13 aspects showing the highest ratings for relevance (Table 1), nine were included in Quadrant IV (Figure 1), four belonging to the category of Assistance/tutorship (i.e., tutorship/mentorship; psychological support; DC programmes based integration of academic departments and sport services; DC programmes able to adapt to the specific needs of each S-A), two aspects included in the social support category (i.e., initiatives for increasing the awareness of S-As and knowledge of DC issues through seminars, workshops, and meetings, publicity for S-As on the university webpage, the realization of a S-A hall of fame, etc.; the logistic support to access education facilities), and two aspects related to the curricula requirements (i.e., individual study plans; distance learning).

The main results of the present survey are that nine factors are considered both relevant and feasible for DC programmes at HEIs level, belonging to the category of assistance/tutorship (tutorship/mentorship, psychological support, programmes integrating university department and sport services/apparatus according to individual needs of S-As), social support (publicity for S-As representing the university and local to international seminars, workshops, meetings on DC issues), curricula requirements (distance learning and individual study plan), and logistic support (access to educational facilities). Furthermore, four factors included in Quadrant III are considered relevant but less feasible (sport facilities and economic investments for university facilities, belonging to the category of logistic support, and scholarship and tuition fees, belonging to the category of financial investment). In particular, answers to open-ended questions suggest a strict interdependence between the identified categories. Each factor needs infrastructure, funds, competences, and organization to function properly, such as tutorship programmes, IT services and infrastructure, growing awareness of DC issues, and collaboration with federations/clubs, government (local to international), and other universities are cross-cutting.

## b. Suitable study forms

Also setting up individual study plans, and distance learning is believed necessary for this purpose. These latter two aspects belong to the curricula requirements category, together to ECTS recognition for sports commitments

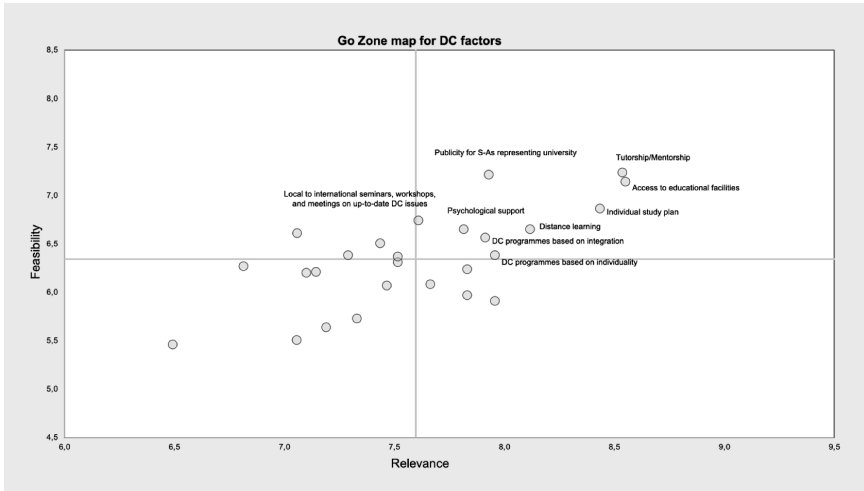


Figure 1. Go zone map of relevance and feasibility of implementation of DC aspects.W

such as international training campus and competition, and the adoption of untraditional learning strategies. While the implementation of individual study plans needs elective courses (15%), a tutorship programme (21%), or a written agreement between S-As and university (43%) and interactions with sports bodies (21%), distance learning relies more on the availability of IT services, depending on the subject (theory vs. laboratory). The recognition of ECTS for sports commitments should be based on the level of the competitions and a conversion table has been suggested. However, it is not clear if it should recognize sport results (e.g., a call-up to the national team, sports qualifications and results) (67%) or soft skills (33%). Social networks (45%), dedicated software/webinars (9%), and digital portfolio (9%) have been suggested as instruments/strategies for the adoption of untraditional learning strategies, as well as the recognition of soft skills (19%), mentoring (9%) and pedagogical development (9%). Regarding social support to S-As, it is believed that the academic staff (33%), student community (27%), and federation (27%) are the main recipients of local to international meetings, workshops, and seminars (also on-line) directed also to stakeholders/employers (9%) and local (2%) and national government (2%). On the other hand, meetings, workshops, and seminars with family members and coaches should be performed regularly (47%), informally (5%), with family and team members together (16%) or not (5%), depending on the situation. Furthermore, it has been suggested

that individual consultation (16%) with family members and coaches could be more useful to inform on individual requirements and career path. Teams and federation should also be involved (11%). Press office and interviews (56%), social media (19%), and web pages (14%) are need for publicising S-As representing the university. Also, publicity for university games (3%), the hall of fame (3%) and a marketing office/sponsorship (5%) have been suggested. To introduce S-As into labour market, letters of recommendation (17%), internship (8%), business collaboration with companies (25%) and federations (8%) have been suggested, alongside with advertising on dedicated web pages and social media (42%). The institution of a DC committee should be included in the university regulation (15%), depending on academic decision makers (15%) and working tables (15%), developed at various levels (40%), and connected to the development of a tutorship programme (15%). The implementation of peer-to-peer support to be recognized through awards should be based on sports merit boards (22%), hall of fames (35%), web pages (35%), ECTS (8%).

An important aspect that emerges from this survey is that distance learning is considered as relevant and feasible. This was surprising because, during the focus groups, there was a general idea that professors are not prone to adopt untraditional learning strategies. On the other hand, the recent COVID-19 pandemic emergency required universities a rapid change from face-to-face to distance learning, with teachers supporting students on-line and adopting flexible learning (Izzicupo et al., 2021).

### **c. Financial aspects-motivational discounts or studies for free for athletes**

According to the HEI experts' opinion, collaboration between HEIs, sport bodies (i.e., sport federations, clubs and other actors of the sport system), and governments (i.e., sports and education ministries) has been envisaged to offer financial support to S-As. In particular, universities (47%) and sport bodies (40%) should provide scholarships, vouchers for meals, travels, services (e.g., physiotherapy), awards, and salaries. Based on sporting merit or personal income of the S-As, HEIs (53%) and governments (32%) are recommended to allow tuition fees remission, sport clubs/federations (31%), HEIs (27%), and governments (27%) are expected to provide a salary. Concerning logistic support, accommodation and sport facilities in or close to campus are envisaged (87%), possibly free for S-As especially if not on campus (13%). Educational facilities should be implemented mainly in terms



of Information Technology (IT) services (64%) and logistic support should also include other infrastructures (36%) such as libraries, guesthouses, and cultural centres or transportation (e.g., car or transport service).

**Table 1. Highest rated factors considered relevant for Dual Career in descending order.**

Question	Category	Quadrant	Relevance
Access to educational facilities (e.g. gymnasium, internet, e-mail services, e-libraries, labs, research centers)	Logistic support	IV	8.6 ± 2.3
Tutorship/mentorship	Assistance/tutorship	IV	8.5 ± 2.2
Individual study plan	Curricula requirements	IV	8.4 ± 2.6
Distance learning	Curricula requirements	IV	8.1 ± 2.4
Sport facilities	Logistic support	III	8.0 ± 1.6
DC programmes based on individuality (adaptable to individual needs)	Assistance/tutorship	IV	8.0 ± 2.1
Publicity for S-As representing university	Social support	IV	7.9 ± 2.4
DC programmes based on integration (unifying academic department, sports or professional services)	Assistance/tutorship	IV	7.9 ± 1.7
Scholarship for S-As	Financial support	III	7.8 ± 2.3
Remission of tuition fees for S-As	Financial support	III	7.8 ± 2.3
Psychological support	Assistance/tutorship	IV	7.8 ± 2.0
Economic investment for university facilities	Logistic support	III	7.7 ± 2.4
Local to international seminars, workshops, and meetings on up-to-date DC issues	Social support	IV	7.6 ± 2.6

#### **d. Financial aspects-possible sources of funding**

Another important aspect is that factors in quadrant III all belong to categories that need economic investments to be implemented and this could explain their limited feasibility. As suggested, increasing the awareness of DC and potentiating collaborations is important to find necessary funds to

implement interventions that are considered relevant, such as improving university facilities and the access to sports facilities for S-As, or increasing scholarships and reducing tuition fees.

### **e. Appropriate environment-infrastructure**

In terms of investment, improvement of existing infrastructures or building new ones are considered a priority (71%), followed by investments for improving transportations (15%), management (7%), and research projects (7%). In terms of assistance and tutorship, HEI experts suggested that professors (49%) or dedicated positions (23%) should act as tutors in a dedicated office (9%), whereas other S-As and former S-As as mentors (4%). Sport psychologists (88%) should offer psychological support for S-As in a dedicated office (6%). Courses and seminars dedicated to S-As were also suggested as support (3%).

### **f. Other recommendations-such as various bonuses-free parking place for athletes, etc.**

Regarding the national legislation, it is crucial to increase the awareness on the thematic of DC (23%) and involve sports (6%) and education ministries (6%), as well as the council of rectors (6%). National legislation should adhere to the European guidelines (18%) and involve high-level athletes (29%) and mid-high level (6%), as well. It is also believed that national legislation is important to ensure equal opportunities in all universities (6%). Web pages (22%), hall of fames (9%), and tutorship programmes (13%) play a central role also in the institution of a sport observatory responsible for controlling and monitoring the application of the Statute of S-As of the University. However, the implementation of existing observatories is also suggested as a strategy (35%). An agreement among universities (4%), the creation of a national databank (9%), and scientific research (4%) and surveys (4%) have been suggested as useful for this purpose. Finally, special access for actual or ex high sport performance practitioners should be reserved to high-level athletes (41%), but also to all the athletes and artists (6%) included in the national legislation (12%) and achieved by means of dedicated programmes/webpages (35%) and mass media (6%).

## CONCLUSION (CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS FOR THE USE OF THE METHODOLOGICAL MATERIAL)

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The analysis of the current situation regarding the actual legislation and strategies developed by each of the member states involved in this project enabled an in-depth understanding of the theme of sport dual careers. It seems unanimous that this is an issue that has been given increasing importance over the past few years, motivated not only by the stimulation of the European Commission itself, but also by greater awareness of the imperative need to create adequate conditions for the dual career development. In addition, the sharing of experiences about the effectiveness of the implemented strategies and the way in which the European Union guidelines are (or are not) being implemented by the different member states allowed to acknowledge the diversity and heterogeneity of the implemented measures.

The analysis performed allowed us to understand the disparity of support and measures that are implemented in each member state and in each higher education institution, topicalizing the need to standardize good practices across the different higher education institutions that collaborated in this study, in order to advance in this subject of tremendous importance for thousands of student athletes in Europe.

There are countries where the publication of a general law unifies the strategies and support of higher education institutions for student athletes. On the other hand, there are member states where such regulation is not yet as effective, and there is an arbitrariness in the way as the support and strategies for student-athletes are defined and implemented. To date, a very large number of experiences exist ranging from countries where dual career is at an early stage (e.g., Latvia, Romania)

to countries with national law on dual career (i.e., Portugal). Additionally, in some countries (e.g., Italy), the initiatives of implementing dual career programs are left to the single institutes, when in some other countries (e.g., Portugal) those initiatives are defined by a general law.

The key support provision measures in dual career implementation identified within the project framework were as follows:

- *Financial support* focusing specifically on investments and funding;
- *Fee exemption/Scholarship* aimed at covering expenses related to dual career implementation;
- *Infrastructure support* related to the provision of sports facilities and organization of the infrastructure which would contribute to the well-being of student-athletes promoting their effective integration in the new environment;
- *Mentoring/Tutoring* aimed at the coordinated action aimed at building the grounds for the student-athlete to succeed;
- *Curricula requirements* focusing specifically on the effectiveness of the measures applied to achieve the goal of the dual career process;
- *Social support* targeted at shaping the physical, psychological and socio-emotional development of athletes;
- *Other support* measures based on examples of best practice and research introduced in the Project Consortium countries.

In this sense, the documents developed within the project framework provide valuable information for the management of higher education institutions, being a precise reference that can assist in the implementation of effective strategies in order to support student athletes. The project Consortium recommends to incorporate the Dual Career as one of the components of the mission of each higher education institution at institutional and national level providing certain funding for Dual Career implementation support for both high-performance competing and reserve athletes.

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## THE LIST OF HEI AND CONTACT INFORMATION OF PERSONS WHO HAVE APPLIED GUIDELINES MATERIAL IN THE PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

The list of HEI and contact information of persons who have experienced the use of guideline material

Higher Education Institution	Faculty/Department/Area
<b>Croatia</b>	
University of Zagreb	Education
<b>Denmark</b>	
Business Academy Aarhus	Marketing
VIA University College	Sport
Aarhus University	Dual Career
<b>Germany</b>	
University of Gothenburg	Sport Science
<b>Ireland</b>	
TU Dublin Tallaght	Sport and Recreation
Athlone Institute of Technology	Sports
Waterford Institute of Technology	WIT Viking Sport
<b>Latvia</b>	
University of Latvia	Sport Science Education
Latvian Academy of Sport Education	Sport Science
Ventspils University of Applied Sciences	Sport
Transport and Telecommunication Institute	Sport Center
Rezekne Academy of Technologies	Physical Activity, Healthy lifestyle
State Police College	Sport
Riga Stradins University	Medicine
Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies	Sport
State Border Guard College	Sport

Higher Education Institution	Faculty/Department/Area
<b>Latvia</b>	
Daugavpils University	Education and Management
Stockholm School of Economics in Riga (SSE)	Sport
National Defense Academy of Latvia	Military
Riga Technical University (RTU)	RTU Sports Center
Liepaja University	Sport Pedagogy
<b>Poland</b>	
Academy of Physical Education in Katowice	Didactics and Students
<b>Portugal</b>	
ISCTE - Lisbon University Institute	Sport
University of Lisbon	Sport Science
Instituto Politécnico de Viana do Castelo	Desporto
Escola Superior de Educação - Instituto Politecnico de Viseu	Sport Science
Universidade de Lisboa	Motricidade Humana
University of Porto	Sport
University of Madeira	Sport Science
Instituto Politécnico da Guarda	Sport Science
Polytechnic Institute of Setúbal - School of Education	Sport
Instituto Universitario da Maia (ISMAI)	Sport
School of Education and Social Sciences, Polytechnic Institute of Leiria	Human Kinetics
Instituto Superior de Ciências Educativas	Sport Science
<b>Romania</b>	
„George Enescu” National University of Arts from Iasi	Physical Education
Technical University “Gheorghe Asachi” Iasi	Physical Education
“Dunarea de Jos” University of Galati	Physical Education and Sport
University of Medicine, Farmacy, Science and Technology G.E. Palade from Targu Mures	Physical Education and Sport
“Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iasi	Physical Education and Sport
“Grigore T. Popa” University of Medicine and Pharmacy from Iasi	Physical Education
University “Stefan cel Mare” of Suceava	Physical Education and Sport
Transilvania University of Brasov	Physical Education and Sport
“Ovidius” University of Constanta	Physical Education and Sport

Higher Education Institution	Faculty/Department/Area
<b>Romania</b>	
University of Pitești	Physical Education and Sport
“Babeș-Bolyai” University of Cluj-Napoca	Physical Education and Sport
University of Craiova	Physical Education and Sport
West University of Timisoara	Physical Education and Sport
“Vasile Alecsandri” University of Bacau	Movement, Sport and Health Science
<b>Serbia</b>	
University of Nis	Sport Science
Spain	
Universidad Politécnica de Madrid	Sport Science
Catholic University of Valencia	Sport Science
Universidad Católica de Murcia (UCAM)	Faculty of Sport
<b>Switzerland</b>	
Franklin University Switzerland	Office of Student Life (OSL)
Universidad Luzern	Sport
University of Applied Sciences of the Grisons	Sport
University of Neuchatel	-





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