



Workshop Report  
"Sport Organisations"

Project: AthletesToBusiness (A2B)

9 October 2010

Excelsior Hotel & Spa  
Dubrovnik, Croatia



## Participants

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## **CONTENTS**

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Workshop “Sport Organisations”**
  - 2.1. Ideal Situation
  - 2.2. Recommendations
  - 2.3. Priorities, Follow-up
- 3. Conclusion**

### **1. Introduction**

On 9 October 2010, the third AthletesToBusiness workshop on the topic of sport organisations has been held on the platform of the 13th ENGSO Forum hosted by the Croatian Olympic Committee in Dubrovnik, Croatia.

The forum on “Social Inclusion and Education through Sport” collided more than 40 specialists from European sport, notably National Olympic Committees and Sports Confederations who provided first-hand advice on how an enabling environment for dual career in Europe could be promoted.

Bart Ooijen from the European Commission introduced the workshop participants to dual career from an EU perspective by stressing that the topic will remain an EU priority issue in future. Furthermore, the Croatian swimmer, Mihovil Španja, shared his experience on successfully reconciling sports and education. Following the preliminary A2B survey findings on sport organisations, the floor was given to ENGSO members to present national initiatives and best practices in the field of dual career.

In the second workshop session, the participants gathered to discuss the role of sport organisations in the promotion of dual career in the European Union.

This report will summarize the discussions of the workshop by providing concrete recommendations on an ideal framework for dual career in Europe. It focuses in particular on the responsibilities allocated to sport organisations towards this approach.



## 2. Workshop “Sport Organisations”

### 2.1. Ideal Situation

Prior to establishing concrete recommendations and defining priorities for follow-up actions, an ideal situation was elaborated in the workshop sessions.

#### **Awareness and Commitment of Sport Organisation**

In the ideal case, the national sport organisation responsible for dual career concerns is fully aware of and actively committed to the topic. Demonstrating strong support, the executive board acts as a thought leader and statutes comply with the objectives and principles of dual career. To engage staff members it implements internal problem recognition (e.g. by reunions, intranet, e-bulletins) and furthermore communicates the message to partner organisations.

#### **Role of Initiator**

The national sport organisation develops a wider framework and approach to the activation of dual career and provides a platform for related initiatives. This includes the following measures:

- **Action Plan**

In a detailed action plan, the sport organisation has ideally elaborated a systematic approach for the activation and enhancement of dual career programmes. In doing so, it is helped by a team of experts (see below) functioning as an advisory group. The plan includes approaching national authorities to lobby for regulation as well as businesses and higher educational institutions to establish cooperation.

- **Financial Plan**

The amounts needed to realise targeted activities (employ workforce, provide communication, etc.) are evaluated in a financial plan. While taking over partial financing, sport organisations should identify other sources of funding. In ideal circumstances, the European Union and national authorities are principal contributors to the pilot implementation of dual career programmes.

- **Communication Plan**

A communication plan aims at providing greater publicity on dual career and related programmes on a national level. In particular, it focuses on sensitizing as many athletes, higher educational institutions and potential employers as possible. In the ideal case, athletes, athlete commissions and chambers of commerce serve as multipliers. The concept additionally includes a presence on social media platforms (i.e. Facebook, YouTube, Twitter).

#### **Expert Guidance**

EU experts should advise Member States on the development of dual career structures. Nationally, sport organisations should initiate the formation of a team of experts. This group ideally consists of athletes, specialists from national authorities, businesses, chambers of commerce, educational institutions and sport federations. It takes on a mentor role giving advice about the implementation and enhancement



of dual career programmes. Furthermore, the group provides businesses and educational institutions with guidance on the integration of athletes.

### **Commitment of Athletes**

Athletes are responsible persons in planning their lives beyond a sporting career and ideally seek counselling, attend information sessions and share knowledge with their environment. Successful dual career athletes encourage younger peers in seminars and consider to participate in networks.

### **Availability of Dual Career Guidance**

Any athlete should have the opportunity to receive dual career support. This should be guaranteed by a central body per country, collecting and disseminating available information. Services should consist of personalised career development, networking possibilities for job placement and training sessions. These services are regularly reviewed and evaluated by the national sport organisation. Exemplary, athletes are introduced to career planning in their teens by enjoyable, interactive sessions.

### **Collaboration with National Authorities, Higher Educational Institutions and Businesses**

- **National Authorities**

In matters of combined education and training, sport organisations establish cooperation with national authorities, including ministries for sport, education and commerce. This should involve governmental support in developing athlete-friendly education, approaching enterprises and creating public problem recognition. In an ideal case, the State foresees a budget to co-finance dual career programmes implying incentives for athlete friendly educational institutions and enterprises.

- **Higher Educational Institutions**

Prior to approaching higher educational institutions, sport organisations have a clear concept about the benefits (e.g. publicity) they will provide as a return on investment.

In their efforts to integrate athletes, higher educational institutions are provided guidance and best practices by assigned mentors.

Agreements between the two sides should contain customised services and scholarships for enrolled student-athletes.

- **Businesses**

Overall, businesses are attracted by shared values and engagement in sport sponsorship. To approach non sport sponsors and business associations, sport organisations seek the help of chambers of commerce.

Sponsorship contracts should imply a clause on dual career with enterprises committing to offer career opportunities (e.g. internships, part-/ full-time employment) to sportsmen fulfilling the profile requirements.

In advance, the sport organisation should develop a benefit package (incentives, increased publicity, etc.) to leverage the engagement of businesses.

### **Dual Career Networks**



Exemplary, the actors involved in dual career cooperate through a network at European, national and regional level. Such networks regroup athletes, federations, national and municipal authorities, educational institutions, businesses, sport clubs and providers of services related to sport and education.

As a forum for cooperation and exchange, they ideally contain signed agreements on the commitment to dual career. National sport organisations should assume a coordinative role in this event.

### **Commitment of the Athlete Entourage**

Ideally, sport organisations make concrete efforts in sensitizing the athlete's environment involving families, coaches, sport federations, clubs and teachers to gain commitment on dual career. Such efforts consist of education, training and information sessions. In particular, sport federations and coaches should be required to demand a professional career plan from their athletes.

### **Support from National Authorities and the European Union**

In order to improve structures for policy and system development, sport organisations achieve support from national authorities and the European Union. This includes coordinative, regulatory and financial assistance. The two actors should also contribute to implement public problem recognition.

Furthermore, European authorities ideally initiate the formation of a European network on dual career.

## **2.2. Recommendations**

Based on the discussions of an ideal situation, the following recommendations have been addressed to:

### **Sport Organisations**

- Be committed
  - The executive committee of the sport organisation should be fully committed to the topic and consider dual career as a priority issue. This should include adapting statutes to the principles of dual career and engaging staff.
- Initiate the movement
  - Take the lead in establishing a basic framework by creating a platform and an action plan for dual career programmes
  - Elaborate a financial plan considering to take over partial financing and employ personnel responsible for dual career
  - Produce framework agreements and benefit concepts for higher educational institutions and businesses willing to cooperate



- Have a positive attitude and be open for collaboration with sport organisations, businesses, educational institutions and governmental authorities at European, national and regional level
- Communicate initiatives
  - Provide athletes with visibility on current programmes using athlete commissions, coaches, clubs and sport federations as multipliers
  - Create a website on dual career and have a presence on social media platforms (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter)
  - Set up information meetings for athletes, businesses, higher educational institutions, sport federations and coaches
  - Run internal campaigns to engage staff
- Form a team of experts
  - Consider a team of experts acting as an advisory group involving experts from businesses, national authorities, chambers of commerce, educational institutions, sport organisations and athletes
- Sensitize and guide athletes
  - Ensure the availability of career guidance to every athlete, ideally consisting of personalised career development, networking possibilities for job placement and training sessions
  - Appoint a central entity per country to collect and disseminate information on dual career and direct athletes to appropriate service providers
  - Implement information meetings, interactive seminars and provide role models sharing experience and insights
  - Motivate athletes in their teens when being potentially most receptive
  - Consider regular reviews and evaluation of dual career services
- Approach key stakeholders
  - a. European Union
    - Engage Ministers of the EU, Sport, EPAS (Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport)
  - b. National Authorities



- Discuss with national authorities a national legislative framework on combined education and training
- Examine with national authorities the co-financing of dual career programmes
- c. Partner organisations
  - Require sport federations and clubs to provide care for their athletes' dual career by statute
- d. Businesses
  - Meet company executives of sport sponsors, business associations and other enterprises to initiate partnership and reach agreements
  - Provide appropriate mentor service to help businesses develop relevant and targeted athlete recruiting programmes in line with their objectives
  - Support the implementation of employer fairs to help join athletes and businesses
  - Formulate a "product" for businesses to leverage their engagement with athletes
- e. Higher Educational Institutions
  - Initiate cooperation agreements focusing on the provision of customised athlete services and scholarships
  - Consider to approach recently established higher educational institutions which are potentially more open for change and training
  - Extend already existing agreements with partner educational institutions to customised athlete services
  - Support the formation of alliances of teachers, sports scientists, career counsellors and service providers of sport and education
  - Set up sport forums to provide a basis for networking and exchange of dual career practices
- Sensitize the athlete entourage
  - Educate, train and provide knowledge transfer for families, coaches, clubs, sport federations and teachers to support dual career objectives



- Provide a platform for synergies between these stakeholders and consider signed agreements as seen in the Finnish "Sport Academy" system
- Form a network
  - Initiate the formation of national and regional networks of assigned stakeholders including athletes, national and municipal authorities, businesses, educational institutions, federations, coaches, sport and education service providers
  - Be the responsible coordination entity

### **Athletes and Athlete Commissions**

- Be open towards dual career and become an active responsible in developing a life project
- Seek counselling services and attend information meetings initiated by sport organisations
- Communicate available services and promote success stories to athletes and society

### **Businesses**

- Open up recruiting processes to athletes and consider to offer flexible working arrangements
- Be open to participate in a dual career network and attend information sessions

### **Higher Educational Institutions**

- Attend information sessions and show flexibility for change and training
- Appoint guidance counsellors for enrolled student-athletes
- Award student-athletes for outstanding academic and athletic achievement to enhance motivation and promote role models
- Be open to participate in a dual career network

### **Member States**



- Obtain wider problem recognition on combined education and training in particular from national sport organisations
- Enhance collaboration and communication between governmental and non-governmental sport organisations
- Assemble Ministries of Sport, Education and Commerce together with the sport organisation's executive committee to create a basis for networking and action-taking
- Implement a national legislative framework to secure the development of dual career programmes
- Initiate framework regulations with higher educational institutions providing care and customised services for student-athletes
- Promote the increased use of e-learning programmes
- Facilitate contact between sport organisations, business associations and other potential athlete employers
- Consider to grant scholarships to student-athletes with outstanding academic achievement
- Provide a budget for dual career programmes
- Raise the general recognition of sports among society, employers and educational institutions

### **The European Union**

- Implement problem recognition of combined education and training among Member States
- Enforce the exchange of good practices of existing national programmes and support the formation of a European network to set out a guideline on dual career
- Fund the pilot implementation of transnational programmes (min. 2 years)
- Encourage Member States to make appropriate investments in e-learning programmes to facilitate combined education and training
- Organize evaluation conferences at EU level

### **2.3. Priorities, Follow-up**





Workshop members clearly underlined the fact that dual career has to become a priority issue among sport organisations. While advocating for internal, public and private support, their key role should be to initiate and coordinate the movement. In this regard, the European Union should sensitize Member States on the significance of combined education and training. National authorities should further emphasize the issue on a national level and facilitate to assemble the relevant actors. Especially the formation of networks on a European, national and regional level appears significant to expand on existing practices and profit from a wider guideline. National sport organisations could then develop a more integrated approach adapted to the local circumstances of their home countries. To carry such initiatives forward, regulatory and financial support of both, the European Union and Member States remains essential.

The action points identified in this workshop will be presented to the relevant stakeholders.

### **3. Conclusion**

Presentations of national initiatives during the ENGSO Forum as well as past activities in the framework of AthletesToBusiness have illustrated that the majority of Member States has certain dual career attempts in place. They could provide good practice examples in a European network encouraging the development of a wider guideline.

However, in most nations, greater problem recognition has to be obtained primarily. Therefore, initiatives should aim at raising awareness and extending the knowledge base in particular among national sport organisations. Once commitment has been gained, sport organisations should take the lead in establishing the movement and developing a more holistic approach to dual career. In the interest to support Member States in this objective, European authorities should take into account the recommendations of this workshop.

