



Workshop Report
"Educational Institutions"

Project: Athletes2Business (A2B)

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International Olympic Committee
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1. Introduction

In the framework of the AthletesToBusiness initiative, the final workshop on “Educational Institutions” was held on 26 and 27 January 2011 at the premises of the International Olympic Committee in Lausanne, Switzerland.

Enriched by a large group of experts, the seminar envisaged to capitalize on the amount of experience and expertise at hand to produce recommendations on dual career in the European Union, in particular with regards to educational institutions. The conference was chaired by A2B project manager Michael Trinker.

Participants of the workshop were, among other, representatives of the IOC and European Commission, specialists of education, national sport associations and businesses as well as top-level athletes.

Prior to the workshop, presentations on dual career from the perspective of the European Commission and the European Athlete as Student network (EAS), as well as good practice examples from the Netherlands and the UK aimed at introducing the given circumstances and generating discussion input. This was complemented by an athlete panel discussion providing valuable insight on the viewpoint of athletes.

Special to the workshop was the hosting at the premises of the International Olympic Committee, as such putting a strong effort into dual career steered by its Athlete Career Programme.

This report shall summarize the round-table discussions of the seminar illustrating an ideal situation and concrete recommendations on how to effectively integrate education with high performance sports within the EU Member States.



2. Workshop “Educational Institutions”

2.1 Ideal Situation for Athletes to be Successful in Dual Career with Regards Education

Legislature

In the ideal case, national legislature provides supportive conditions for educational establishments offering the freedom and possibility to be sports friendly.

Commitment from Educational Institutions

Educational institutions are committed to be athlete friendly by recognizing the challenges athletes face when combining education with a high performance-sporting career. They assist student athletes in achieving their potential academically by facilitating flexibility in areas such as exams and attendance. In addition, understanding staff provides a strong support base for student athletes.

Given Structure

In optimum conditions, the educational institution already has an existing architecture that could facilitate the integration of sportsmen. As a determinant of providing the capability to support athletes, this should be a pre-selection criterion when looking for athlete friendly educational institutions. Exemplary, this structure contains a specific staff contact person with the skills and knowledge to support athletes within the educational institution. This person ideally holds a senior position to effectively negotiate and implement principles that could assist athletes pursue their dual career ambitions.

Tools

Tools are essential elements within the structure comprising support options such as flexibility or nominated mentors who athletes could link to. This is where sport organisations could come in to assist athletes.

Athlete Support

Ideally, the educational establishment provides a central staff contact who works with athletes and acts as an information base for all inquiries, including course information, career advice and counselling. This contact person is escorted by a student athletes’ network attached to the institution providing simple advice on studies and study organisation.

Next to this, there is a central advisor or entity who consults on dual career in a wider frame. This person or team navigates athletes to career, educational and professional development services. Acting as a central knowledge base, it is backed by a network of actors that appear locally relevant to dual career.

Flexibility

The ideal educational establishment provides athletes with flexibility in time and process. Flexibility in time should include special attendance arrangements, postponement of exams and flexibility in learning options. Ideally, the institution has policies and practices in place incorporating these needs. Processes should in



particular involve distance education offering a wide choice of online courses in internal and external mode.

Financial Support

Student athletes should benefit from financial public support to assist with tackling some of the financial issues they might encounter during their academic studies. This assistance can happen in terms of monetary support but also in the provision of specific services such as specialist career guidance and counselling made available to athletes.

Effective Relationship between Sports and Education

In optimum conditions, the relationship between sport and education is harmonious. However, conflicts occur when both parties consider they are experts. Setting the parameters for these partnerships is a complicated field. Ideally, there is an independent actor who mediates between the two.

Partnership

Once educational institutions have been approached and committed to provide a system friendly to athletes, they are ideally recognized as partner educational institution of sports. This recognition is a component of the national sport organisation's effort to enforce dual career reflecting that the educational establishment has responded to the specific needs of athletes.

Return of Investment for Educational Institutions

In the ideal case, educational institutions are given an outcome to feel ownership of regarding their engagement in dual career. Promotion involving the local media could be one of the outcomes provided to educational institutions.

Networks

In the optimum case, there are dual career networks both on local and national level, comprising educational institutions and stakeholders that seem relevant in each country.

A network of athlete friendly educational institutions could contain signed agreements in which institutes state their commitment to dual career and indicate the specific arrangements provided to athletes. These networks have an assigned contact person acting as a link between athletes, professors, coaches, sport organisations and further relevant actors. They could further advice newcomer institutions in providing a better understanding of the specific needs of student athletes and on the implementation of support services. Ideally, these networks are steered by a central coordinator on a national level.

Identification of Athletes

For athletes to receive individual student athlete support, they are identified and recognized as such by a responsible stakeholder. Unless there is another pre-existing process, athletes are nominated for support by the governing body of their sport, i.e. the national or international sports federation.

Evaluation and Monitoring



Evaluation of the services offered by educational institutions is conducted on a regular basis. In this context, also the compliance of the aspects driving an athlete friendly educational institution is monitored.

2.2. Recommendations

Considering the analysis of the present situation and the outlook of an ideal situation, the following recommendations have been addressed to:

Educational Institutions

- Educational institutions should show flexibility for change and training and be open to attend informational sessions in a University Sport Forum.
- Educational establishments should sign agreements with the national sport organisation to support the integration of student athletes' sporting and academic ambitions.
- Educational institutions should provide athletes with flexibility in time, options and process to successfully pursue higher education. This should in particular include the opportunity for distance and e-learning.
- Educational institutions should sign and implement guiding principles accepting to support athletes within the establishment. Ideally, this should include a nominated staff contact providing advocacy within the institution environment.

Sport Organisations

- Sport organisations should identify educational institutions and seek cooperation based on the existence of a structure as a core base that could support dual career within the establishment. Tools such as flexibility and assigned mentors should be vital elements within this structure.
- In the approach to collaborate with educational institutions, sport organisations should produce a template defining rights and obligations of cooperation.
- Once cooperation has been established, national sport organisations should recognize educational establishments as partner institutions, possibly assigning a label such as "partner institution of sports".
- In the question of which athletes to support, national governing bodies should set out identification criteria to recognize student athletes that should receive tailored individual support.



- In the effort to handle and maintain effective partnership, there should be a neutral body to bridge in between sports and education to minimise potential conflicts.
- In the frame of combined education and training, there should be a central guidance counsellor who could navigate athletes to the appropriate service provider in both, sports and education. Unless there are pre-existing processes, the advisor should be supported by a network comprising the stakeholders that appear locally relevant. These networks should be nationally coordinated.
- A network of athlete friendly educational institutions could link tertiary education providers to athletes interested in dual career. It should contain signed agreements committing to support dual career and provide mutual advice on the integration of athletes. These networks have an assigned contact person acting as a link between athletes, professors, coaches, sport organisations and further relevant actors while being steered by a central coordinator, ideally a national umbrella sports organisation.

Athletes

- Graduate and undergraduate student athletes should build up networks attached to the educational institution assisting sportsmen new to the system with simple study advice.

The Member States

- National authorities should promote the dialogue between sports and education at both national and local level in order to develop flexible systems for combining high level sports and academic education.
- Legislature within the EU Member States should make it possible for educational institutions to have the freedom and possibility to be sports friendly.
- Ministries of Education should implement guiding principles for educational institutions to become and commit to be athlete friendly. These principles should highlight the key support areas athletes require to be able to successfully combine academic and sporting goals.
- National authorities should consider a budget for new technologies in education allowing educational institutions to develop athlete friendly systems such as distance education and e-learning.
- National authorities should make financial aids such as scholarships more easily available to student athletes to contribute towards the increased expenditures that may occur during academic studies.



The European Union

- EU commissioners of sport and education should assemble with leaders in sport that could include the president of the IOC, the president of the IPC, or federation presidents and motivated leaders in business to discuss the issues related to combine sports training and education that would result in a positive access to employment.

2.3. Priorities, Follow-up

In response to the deficits in dual career and education, a first step should include active promotion of partnership between education and sport. Cooperation should be created or maintained and strengthened at local, national and European level. While national sport organisations should possibly take the lead in developing dialogue, Member States should provide a broad base of support. Educational institutions should be open for change and be assisted with guiding principles, and potentially structural changes to be able to develop athlete friendly education. A broader network could identify and promote educational establishments who have responded to the specific needs of student athletes and enhance the exchange of good practices on an EU level.

3. Conclusion

The final A2B workshop has underlined the current deficits in dual career with regards to education. Oftentimes, the support provided lacks formal arrangements specific to athletes and initiatives only contain a limited number of agreements with educational institutions. Consistent feedback from the AthletesToBusiness questionnaire in particular reflects a need for more flexibility, lighter study conditions and better study advice. While some nations such as the Netherlands and the United Kingdom have good practices in place which diversify the ways of assisting athletes, the focus by nation varies significantly and there needs to be an improvement on a general EU level. To address these demands and support a stronger structure it must start with a stronger relationship with the educational organisations. Enhanced cooperation and structured dialogue among sport organisations, national authorities, the academic world, and potentially even business leaders could lead to the introduction of small changes that could deliver positive results across the EU.

