



Executive Agency, Education, Audiovisual and Culture



## **Facilitating Higher Education for Athletes – WINNER Education model**

Final Report

Public Part

## Project information

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## Project Objectives

The overall objective of the project was **to make Europe's economy and society stronger by increasing attainment levels and strengthening social dimension in European higher education** (talented and skillful human resources). The project aimed to contribute to the objective through **piloting the case of talented athletes studying at the higher education**. The project also aimed to contribute to the process of ensuring high quality education to athletes parallel to their sports career, and thus to integrate athletes into the labor market after their sports careers.

The purpose of the project was **to find solutions to the challenges of educating young athletes for a "dual career" and thus to establish a flexible study model for students with atypical learning paths**. The curriculum structures, teaching methods as well as needs for the students' own adjustments will be considered. **The project produces adapted studying environments and studying structures** in Europe in order to make European education system more inclusive for non-typical learners (the project makes a pilot based on the case of athletes).

**Specific aims** of the project were:

1. To create the **methodology and pedagogy of a study model** for athletes
2. To create **the enrolment practices** of "dual career" students
3. To **adjust the curricula based on a commonly developed study model for athletes**
4. To implement activities with highest possible administrative standards (project management) and organize project management meetings
5. To assure the **quality of the implementation** and evaluate the project
6. To **disseminate the information** about the results and promote the project activities
7. To **exploit the projects' results**

## Project Approach

The WINNER Education model project existed since the lead partner and the whole consortia wanted to develop their own education and EU education to meet better the needs of talented student-athletes who cannot study properly in regular higher education. The pilot of athletes was chosen since it is partnership's own priority (everyone has sport school/faculty or sport related education, facing the same problems and opportunities) and ideal pilot to test the informal learners problematic in higher education using the case of athletes as test environment. The consortia have created credible setting for this testing work and that's why EU decided to allocate resources to the project – in order to create benefit to whole education community in EU and in 3<sup>rd</sup> countries. The work is continuation of the preparatory project focused in winter sports “dual career”, financed from Preparatory Actions in the Field of Sport 2009 financing (DG EAC) entitled as INTECS Network. The work of ours aims to continue with Erasmus+ funded project (submitted in April 2017) that focuses on athletes mobility and in this sense is the next step in the wider process of developing “dual career” and inclusive education facilitated by the project.

In implementing the WINNER Education model project, we wanted to highlight the importance of having the approaches of all EU member states and 3<sup>rd</sup> countries visible. That's why the project has been cooperating closely with European EAS network and organized its meetings in parallel with EAS conferences. This has generated added value for the implementation, and for the EAS partners.

In implementing the WINNER Education model project, we wanted to highlight also the impact to European union policy making, after all the project was funded by the EU as pilot for this topic. To develop this aspect, we have been cooperating closely with the EU sport unit and also European parliament's committee of Sport and education whose event the project partner visited in autumn 2016.



Picture 1: Project presented in annual meeting of FISU (2016). FISU is the International University Sports Federation developed within university institutions to propagate sports values and promote sports practice in perfect synergy and complementarity with the university spirit.  
(See: <http://www.fisu.net/>)

## Project Outcomes & Results

According to the project plan, WINNER Education model project's overall objective was to make Europe and society stronger by increasing attainment levels and strengthening social dimension in European higher education (talented and skillful human resources). The project contributes to the objective through piloting the case of talented athletes studying at the higher education. The project also aims to contribute to the process of ensuring high quality education to athletes parallel to their sports career, and thus to integrate athletes into the labor market after their sports careers.



Picture 2. Project meeting in Salzburg, 21.2.2015

According to project plan, the purpose of the project was to find solutions to the challenges of educating young athletes for a “dual career” and thus to establish a flexible study model for students with atypical learning paths. The curriculum structures, teaching methods as well as needs for the students' own adjustments will be considered. The project produces adapted studying environments and studying structures in Europe in order to make European education system more inclusive for non-typical learners (the project makes a pilot based on the case of athletes).

According to the project plan, WINNER Education model project has promised to produce seven results, namely:

1. To create the methodology and pedagogy of a study model for athletes
2. To create the enrolment practices of “dual career” students
3. To adjust the curricula based on a commonly developed study model for athletes



4. To implement activities with highest possible administrative standards (project management) and organize project management meetings
5. To assure the quality of the implementation and evaluate the project
6. To disseminate the information about the results and promote the project activities
7. To exploit the projects' results



Picture 3. Project meeting in Tartu, 21.2.2016

Below the each objective and result have been reflected shortly based on the inputs of the project. The consortia found the **atomistic approach with multiple minor deliverables complicated and not holistic**, and therefore we decided in the PM meeting 3 that we will put together **one major deliverable that covers all sub-deliverables**, namely the **Study guide** for athletes that gathers all the results and their sub-deliverables together. It is available as **annex 1.** of the public report. The separate table on each deliverable is available as **annex 2**, that guides also to the files where each deliverable is available in the e-material provided (USB-stick).

### ***Reflecting the project overall objective***

WINNER Education model project has provided tools for making European education and society stronger, by developing inclusive higher education. Case of athletes has been used in this process in all partner countries. The project has also been developing the quality of the education and thus improving the possibilities of employability of the students who graduate from the partner universities, and with wider perspective from European universities in general.

We found the approach where the adapting methods and good practices were shared into our education model plausible, since in that way the results of the project will remain also after the project and they bring real added value to the participating organizations. Furthermore, when this approach was chosen we were able to avoid development of “additional degrees” that cannot be implemented without separate funding, an approach even more relevant in current financial situation of the EU.

The education model and the idea of tailored curricula of ours were modeled into the following scheme:

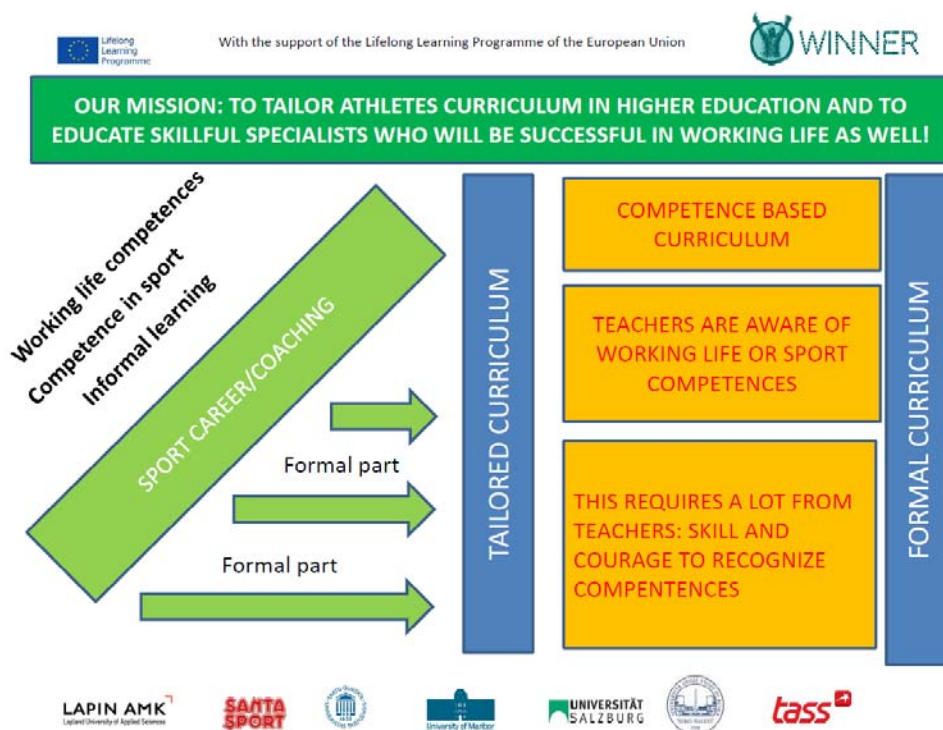


Figure 1. WINNER Education model

### ***Reflecting project purpose (specific objective)***

WINNER Education model has found solutions to the challenges of educating young athletes for a “dual career” and thus it has established a flexible study model(s) for students with atypical learning paths, in our case young athletes. The curriculum structures, teaching methods as well as needs for the students’ own adjustments were considered during the process. The project produced adapted studying environments and studying structures for the project partners and for the European education system, in order to make it more inclusive for non-typical learners, in our case young and talented athletes. Detailed descriptions and the approach, including establishing solid research base for the topic, are described in **annex 1. the Study guide.**



Picture 4. Project meeting in Salzburg, 19.2.2015

### ***Reflecting project results***

When the methodology and pedagogy of a study model for athletes (**result 1**) is discussed, the project produced an education model that is suitable for many kinds of degrees in tertiary level, many of them applicable in the VET level as well. The partner universities do have a sport BA programme that was chosen as a pilot topic, but they did not want to delineate the work only to that particular degree, since it does not bring best added value for the work. Instead, the model we developed is applicable to all kinds of degrees where the problems faced, according to our understanding based on result 1 questionnaire, are similar. The methodology we want to implement is tailored curricula for the athletes that takes into account the athletes skills, potential and needs, organizational questions (teaching resources) and in particular working life needs. Furthermore, the pedagogical approach implemented is competence based pedagogy that is also seen as relevant in whole EU level. In the methodology and pedagogy development we wanted to map clearly the current situation in EU and globally, and therefore the database on existing research on the topic was gathered and a questionnaire was implemented in all partner countries. The results of the questionnaire were published in the peer-reviewed article into which all partners specialists contributed. The ideas were published also in various popular for a (see **section Plans for the future in this report: list of publications**). These activities supported the result 6.

In creating the enrolment practices of “dual career” students (**result 2**) we firstly named the focus group students of ours as WINNER students. The consortia wanted to highlight the criteria of WINNER students involved, where the final decision must be made in the partner universities since the project cannot dictate their activities. Each partner (except TASS that is not an university) wanted to implement this test in practice during the project lifetime and enrolled WINNER

students into their system. Examples of student cases are downloadable in our project website (<http://www.winner-project.eu/winner-case-cards-published/>) and country-wise case-examples are available in the **annex 1. Study Guide**.



Picture 5. EAS conference poster in Rome where the project meeting was organized.

In adjusting the curricula based on a commonly developed study model for athletes (**result 3**) the project focused much of its attention, since it is the core WP of the project itself. The curricula adjustments of ours are suggestions, since the project cannot make direct impact to the pedagogical decisions of the partner universities. However, we have wanted to involve senior staff members and coordinators of education programmes to the project exactly for this reason, since it makes it possible for us to have an influence to the universities decision making and actual treatment of “dual career” students. The result 3 produced our main deliverable that is available in **annex. 1** that is the **WINNER Study Guide**.

The management issues were put to the result 4 (**result 4**) which also included the project management meetings. These were implemented according to the financing programme rules. The project had a steering group which helped us to steer the



project and who were informed about the financial situation and budget changes. However, the using of the steering group was found challenging during the implementation, perhaps the transnational character of the project was one key reason.



Picture 6. EAS conference in Rome, the project organized a workshop in the conference that was tutored by principal lecturer Heikki Hannola (P 1: Lapland University of Applied Sciences) and Ms. Alison Brown (P 6: Talented Athletes Scholarship Scheme)

Assuring the quality of the implementation and evaluating the project (**result 5**) was the task coordinated with utmost quality by the University of Salzburg. The aim was to gather internal and external feedback on the project progress in order to guarantee best possible results and relevance for our work. The project was assessed by three persons outside the consortia, namely Judit Farkas (Semmelweis university, Hungary), Wolfgang Stockinger (KADA, Austria) and David Bacharach (United States, St. Cloud State University). The peers opinions were analyzed in the last months of the project lifetime and therefore they supported the project.

Disseminating the information about the results and promoting the project activities (**result 6**) was implemented with project website ([www.winner-project.eu](http://www.winner-project.eu)), project brochure(s), project presentations in EAS conferences and multiple other events, local events, scientific publications, general public publications, ad hoc dissemination in professional networks and in Rio Olympic Games (not funded by the project). The comprehensive list of publications is available in **Plans for the future** part of this report.

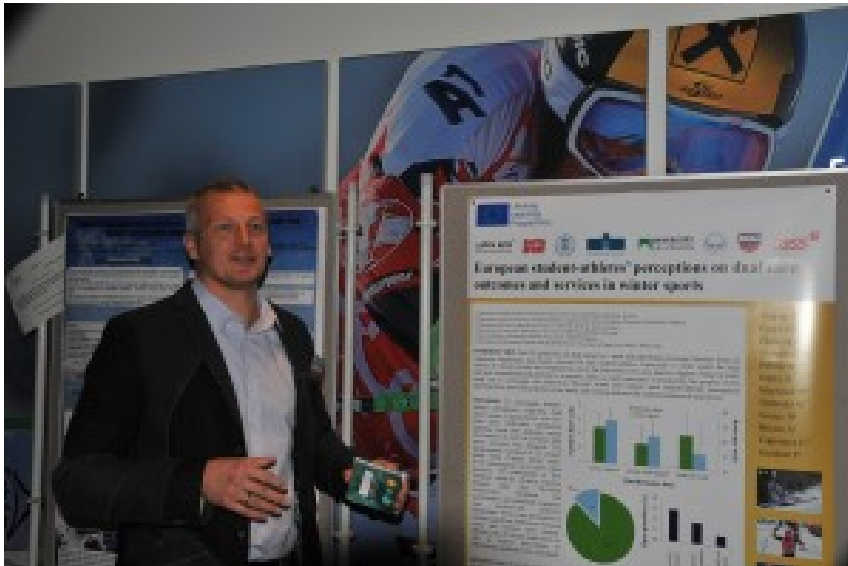
Exploiting the projects' results (**result 7**) links with the project impact that is how the project continues its activities after it ends. The results of ours continue to live since the enrolment of WINNER students continues and grows in partner organizations, the project has developed new ideas that relate to and continue the project idea.

The project has committed the staff of the partners to the project topics who continue the inclusive education of ours in their daily activities. The project results have been widely disseminated in various fora.



Picture 7. Project present in European parliament's sport intergroup in Brussels, 15.11.2016. Project represented in the panel by prof. Laura Capranica, University of Rome foro Italico.

The WINNER Education model project was implemented by the team members in each partner organization. In order to really change the education in EU level and in particular partner countries, the consortia wanted to include high level staff members (professors, leaders of education programme, Deans and senior level teachers) into the project and in so doing increase the value added and the impact of the project. These people have been reporting their work time to the category 1 and this approach explains the relatively high number of cat. 1 days. Furthermore, the separate tasks and developments within the project were implemented in many times as a separate sub-projects where e.g certain teacher have certain sub-group (e.g Petteri Pohja tackling WINNER students and other students in Finland who are under threat of dropping out from the tertiary education, Tommi Haapakangas leading the tutorship of WINNER students) whose education development work was implemented in practice as a separate sub project. This work is indeed very demanding, and managing these sub-projects was interpreted as category 1 work as well due to its demanding nature and tasks that include e.g leadership skills that go beyond the regular teaching work. Based on our results, the change we have been able to implement as well as the wide and insightful European visibility facilitated by the project we see this approach as sound and right from the project implementation point of view.



Picture 8. Project presented in ICSS conference<sup>1</sup>, 10-15.12.2016, presenter. assoc. prof Herbert Wagner, University of Salzburg (P4)

### ***Reflecting the cooperation with the students***

The cooperation with education is in the core of WINNER Education model project. The educational function of the project has been implemented via linking the activities of the practical teaching of the undergraduates in the partner universities, e.g giving learning tasks in various courses and modules. The students were in the key role also in organizing the EAS conferences we participated and co-organized.



Undergraduate session in Lapland UAS, April 2015. Tutored by Jouko Lukkarila. Another dimension of the project linkages with the education has been the WINNER questionnaire that was fulfilled by 221 respondents (Italy: 50; Austria: 46; Slovenia: 50; Estonia: 26; Finland: 49) aged 23.4±3.6 years and representing both genders (male: 53%; female: 47%). Participants were athletes competing in both individual (71%) and team (29%) sports at national (43%) and international (57%) levels. The

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<sup>1</sup> <https://icss2016.at/index.php?id=95>

questionnaire have influence to our project progress and the key elements of the established education model as well as its practical implementation in the partner universities. The results of the questionnaire were also published as common article of the project participants, published in scientific journals.

The enrolment of WINNER students has taken place in each partner universities during the project lifetime (around 10-15 students per university enrolled, per year) and the process continues in each university. The number of students is even going to grow in certain universities, such as University of Salzburg and Lapland University of Applied Sciences (see Annex. 3.3. e-mail from Salzburg) and the ideas to continue are listed to our STUDY Guide chapters Future plans and WINNER Student examples.

### ***Reflecting the possibilities to test the established education model***

In regards to student expectations, the tertiary level student benefits from the project findings by gaining the developed support structures and specialist support from their own university, as well as tutoring for distance learning and possibilities for the recognition of informal learning. The target group for the project are young studying athletes (and people/organisations around them) in the participating universities, whose aim is to simultaneously study and train at the professional sport level. The positive impact of including this target group in the model is that in developing accessible studying paths, we can generate more professionals in the regions, since the target group possesses skills and competences that are very valuable in 21<sup>st</sup> century working life. Furthermore, their involvement makes it possible for us to avoid drop-out and thus develop social inclusion at the tertiary education level. The purpose of the project is for young athletes to be used as a case study, with the findings then generalised to support the education and talent application of other “atypical” groups of learners, whose inclusion in education is challenging, yet important to 21<sup>st</sup> century EU societies, due to the talent they possess.

The regular method adjustment, from our perspective, follows the following main themes. The idea is not to create athlete degrees (as in curriculum development projects), as the financial situation in partner universities and in general is not designed to support the establishment of totally new degree structures. Instead, we think it is important to develop model(s) for adjusting existing degree structures for athletes (and other informal learners). The students’ assessment timetable follows that of the participating universities, since the project does not have the authority to go above universities and national authorities guaranteeing their authority to assess students. (summarise our assessment criteria here)

The testing of the WINNER Education Model has proved to be a challenging task, since we cannot, for example, implement separate studies. But the whole premise is around developing the **implementation** of existing degrees into the respective universities. Therefore we agreed that the testing of our education model /educational practices would take the form of WINNER students in each partner organisation (at least 5 per organisation), testing the education model, good practice and skills we have developed. Key issues here lie around the fact that the model cannot be systematically tested *in practice*, because the model will not be



rooted in practice until the last operating year of the project. What we can test now however, is the best practice developed and its operative relevance.

The testing therefore features as follows in WINNER partner organisations, whilst naturally respecting their daily operations and activities:

- Those WINNER students who are abroad write blogs about best practice and the challenges faced and therefore provide information about their own personal experiences. 2 blogs per WINNER country minimum; blogs are published on our website.
- Other WINNER students take part in the project and write/report/are interviewed about their experiences by the coordinator, meaning we can get input from the education model within its operative environment.
- Teachers who take part in the project report on their education model experiences to the coordinator. The teachers are interviewed before, during and after the project.
- Reporting of previous experiences, which is done constantly throughout the process.

## Partnerships

### *Partnerships within project*

The WINNER Education Model project has included partners from all European regions and is therefore able to provide a good overview of European approaches to the topic. In addition, we have also been able to include the regions not involved in the partnership in our knowledge gathering, via the professional networks of the partners and by distributing surveys in the countries not directly involved. Another channel in reaching these countries has been annual EAS conferences including countries from all EU member states as well as outside EU. The actual partners of the WINNER Education Model project are as follows:

#### **P1. Lapland University of Applied Sciences, <http://www.lapinamk.fi/en>**



P.1. The Lapland University of Applied Sciences is the northernmost university of applied sciences in the EU, specialising in Arctic conditions. It has 8,000 students across three campuses in Kemi, Tornio and Rovaniemi. Lapland UAS focuses on living with Arctic conditions and our activities are based on an entrepreneurial and business-driven approach as cross-cutting feature. It has been a privilege for our university to host the Lifelong Learning Programme's project with both wonderful European and international partners. The WINNER Education Model project supports the strategies of the university, as well as the special focus on "dual career" developed collectively between the Lapland UAS, the Lapland Sports Academy (which has been supported by European cohesion funds since 2004, but now exists as an independent structure) and the Santasport Institute<sup>2</sup>. The international networking in INTECS and the WINNER projects are important for the development of the academy and our sports centre, not to mention the regional development and sport movement of Lapland in general. Over the last three and a half years the WINNER Education Model project has been an endeavour that we have linked to our practical daily activities. We have a long tradition of sport and education and our alumni include multiple top-level athletes. Since 2014, we have had WINNER students enrol on an annual basis and our top-level professional staff have supported their "dual career" in all fields of sport, with the key focus being on winter sports, the priority of our regional sports centre and aligned with our regional strengths. The key experts linked with the project have been Principal Lecturer and Project Manager Heikki Hannola and teachers Mr. Petteri Pohja, Mr. Tommi Haapakangas, Ms. Kaisa-Mari Jama, Mr. Jussi Sirviö, Ms. Hanna Shemeikka and Ms. Piia Similä, who are specialists in sport and education practices and teach the Bachelor's degree in Sports and Leisure at the University. Another crucial stakeholder has of course been the Lapland Sports Academy, represented firstly by Mr. Reijo Jylhä and then Mr. Juuso Toivola. Other important stakeholders have been local sports clubs and sports companies, as well as local businesses. The

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<sup>2</sup> <http://santasport.fi/en> (7.2.2017)

Project Manager has been Mr. Niko Niemisalo, whose affiliation is also in the Lapland UAS.

## **P2. University of Tartu, [www.ut.ee](http://www.ut.ee)**



P.2. The University of Tartu (UT), founded in 1632, is the leading Higher Education and Research Centre in Estonia. The total number of students at the university and its colleges around Estonia is close to 18,000. The academic structure of the university includes 9 faculties, 5 colleges and 6 institutes and research centres. The University of Tartu has been a crucial partner in providing information from the Baltic States and developing enrolment, as well as the future activities of the WINNER consortium. The specialists involved from the University of Tartu to the project were Dean Priit Kaasik, Dr. Ando Pehme and Dr. Raivo Puhke. The work was supported by Ms. Piret Pärsim from the administrative personnel.

## **P3. University of Maribor, [www.um.si](http://www.um.si)**



P.3. The University of Maribor strives to provide the highest quality of undergraduate, postgraduate and professional education. It is one of the leading academic institutions in Slovenia, contributing to world quality research in the arts and sciences. The University has 17 faculties, around 30,000 students (undergraduate and post graduate), 198 study programmes and 1,800 employees. Dr. Miha Marinsek, Ms. Danica Svetec, Mr. Moiza Tanzer and Mr. Ales Strmecki have been the key experts from the University of Maribor. Their key role has been to establish WINNER enrolment practices, conduct research on “dual career” and develop project communication via project brochures and the website (see: [www.winner-project.eu](http://www.winner-project.eu))

## **P4. University of Salzburg, [www.sbg.ac.at](http://www.sbg.ac.at)**



P.4. The University of Salzburg is the largest educational institution in the Salzburg region. Currently over 14,000 students are enrolled and it employs approximately 2,700 staff members in research, teaching and administration. The Bachelor degrees in Sport Science and Kinesiology are structured with the choice of two compulsory courses ('Health and Fitness' and 'Sport and Performance'), which last 6 semesters and students graduate as 'Bachelors of Science' (BSc.). The Master's degree in Sport Science and Kinesiology lasts another 4 semesters and students graduate as "Masters of Science' (MSc.). The PhD in Sport Science lasts for 6 semesters. The University of Salzburg also runs the Salzburg Olympic Training Centre, which many top class athletes use for training. The University provides them with sport specific laboratory diagnostics and aims to help them to combine elite sport and academic studies.

The University of Salzburg's role has been to establish the pedagogical approach for the WINNER project, implement research and guarantee the quality of the

project. The key experts have been Dr. Assoc-Professor Herbert Wagner and Mr. Philip Fuchs.

**The University of Rome foro Italico,** <http://www.uniroma4.it/>



P.5. The University of Rome<sup>3</sup> foro Italico (replacing EAS as a formal partner, however due to prof. Capranica's role as a President of EAS network and our involvement in three EAS annual meetings and hosting the meeting in 2016, the involvement of EAS is very strong to the project). The University of Rome foro Italico and the EAS network, with whom they operate, has been very important to the WINNER project. Their role has been to coordinate the research activities together with P1. and to link the activities to the EAS network approach. They have also been participants at multiple EU venues such as WG on Sport and the EU Sport Forum, in order to disseminate information on the topic. The University has also developed a report to present to the European Parliament relating to our topic. The key members of the WINNER consortium were prof. Laura Capranica and Dr. Flavia Guidotti.

**Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme,** <https://www.tass.gov.uk/>



P.6. Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme, TASS. [www.tass.gov.uk](http://www.tass.gov.uk) The Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme (TASS) helps talented athletes to shine in education and sport by giving them the support they need to excel in both aspects of their lives. On the scheme, Olympic and Paralympic sportsmen and women in further or higher education are given a tailored package of services to help them balance their dual career. These services include, physiotherapy, strength and conditioning, lifestyle and education support, as well as access to the TASS medical scheme. On average, around 400 athletes are supported by TASS each year. The role of TASS has been crucial in establishing the WINNER Education Model as a pedagogical approach for top-level athletes. The main staff members involved in the project have been Ms. Alison Brown and Ms. Kirsty O'Connor, with frequent discussions with Mr. Guy Taylor, the director of TASS, also occurring.

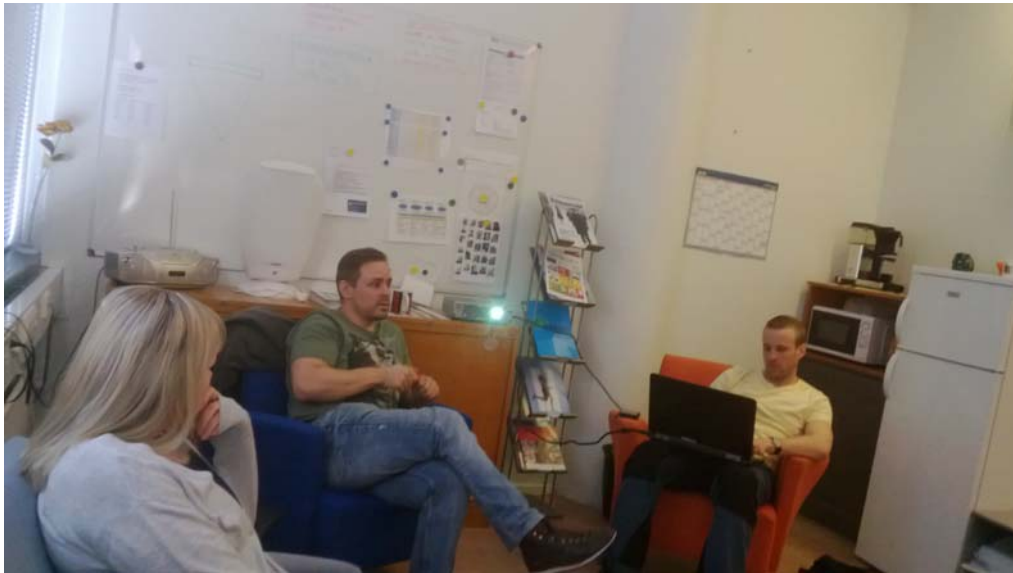
***Partnerships outside the project***

Outside the project, WINNER Education model project partners have been very actively engaging with the local sports clubs and local enterprises. The networking has also gathered the National Olympic committees into the cooperation as indicated by our future project idea entitled as "AMID" which makes it possible for us to cooperate with national Olympic committees and organizations such as KADA (Austria), CONI (Italy), EUSA (EU) and EAS (EU 28). This kind of partnerships were made possible by the active cooperation between EAS network and the project.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.uniroma4.it/>

The WINNER Education model project has been cooperating also with European EAS network which president; prof. Capranica is the member of the project consortium. The project has organized its meetings in parallel with annual EAS conferences (2014: Rome, 2015: Amsterdam, 2016: Rovaniemi<sup>4</sup> where we hosted the conference as a project, which also served as a platform for our cooperation and final seminar. The project has been cooperating a lot with local schools and highschoools in each region, as well as with sport destinations such as Levi resort in Lapland, where the annual world cup of alpine skiing is organized.



Picture 9. Project related workshop in Lapland University of Applied Sciences, 26.3.2015. Present: Heikki Hannola, Maarit Shemeikka, Petteri Pohja, Tommi Haapakangas and Niko Niemisalo.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://blogi.eoppimispalvelut.fi/eas2016/>

## Plans for the Future

The sustainability of the WINNER project is guaranteed by the fact that it was the priority (WP 7) of the project's final year for the whole partnership. The sustainability is created by committed partners and stakeholders of our inclusive pedagogical ideas and the “dual career” thinking and developing new project ideas.



Picture 10. Project presented in EU sport forum in Hague, 30.-31.3.2016. Present professor Laura Capranica (EAS president, P 5: University of Rome foro Italico), Mr. Guy Taylor and Ms. Alison Brown (P 6: Talented athletes scholarship scheme)

### ***Committing the consortium***

By having committed partners, the WINNER partnership has been very keen to sustain the project collaboration in the future. Future cooperation has been established in three major ways. **Firstly**, the project will create a network of committed staff members, whose task is to keep the project motivation high in each university, both during and after the project. The staff members will also disseminate the WINNER study guide to all relevant stakeholders in the organisation's operative environment. **Secondly**, the partnership has agreed to commit the management level in each university, to guarantee the project related activities in the future (developing inclusive learner paths, establish “dual career” models, share best practice). **Thirdly**, the project sustainability is guaranteed by common future projects (some of them described above) and common publications in the European and global fora. During the project, we have had the privilege of collaborating with top-class “dual career” experts within the EAS Network ([www.dualcareer.eu](http://www.dualcareer.eu)) as well as with the Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme (TASS) ([www.tass.gov.uk](http://www.tass.gov.uk)).

The cooperation among us and the EAS network has first and foremost been implemented by participating in the EAS Conferences and linking the conferences

to the project meetings (in Rome 2014, in Amsterdam 2015 and the coordinator being the host in 2016, see: <https://blogi.eoppimispalvelut.fi/eas2016/>). The next conference will be in Aarhus, Denmark and it will be organized in Sept. 2017) – a development that was warmly welcomed also by our EU project officer. Regarding other EU for a's the project has been participating to EU Sport Forums in Hague (3/2016) and Malta (3/2017, after the project, not linked to the project) and it has been closely following the EU development in the field (e.g. EU working group event in Malta 1.12.2016, the event in Brussels in 15.11.2016 by the committee of culture and sport of the European parliament). The communication on “dual career” development has taken place also in other suitable forums as part of the professional activities of the partner consortium.



Picture 11. EAS conference poster 15.-16. September 2016 in Rovaniemi. (visual outlook by Ms. Elisa Lahti).



### ***Developing new project ideas***

As part of mainstreaming the project (e.g. activities 3.7. and 7.3.) the consortia has been actively mapping other ways of continuing the collaboration – that has been part of the project’s strategy of sustainability. New project ideas either are at the initial planning stage or already further in the financial instruments’ assessment phase. The new ideas of ours include e.g the following topics (not comprehensive list):

- Sport Centre Rovaniemi Preparatory Project (2015). The project received ERDF funding in 2015 and it established a permanent regional network entitled “Sportisti Roi” to the Rovaniemi region<sup>5</sup>. The Sportisti Roi concept has been able to create synergies with local sports clubs and other important important sports related actors and it organizes regular sporting activities for children and other age groups in the region. The network applied for event funding as part of the European Week of Sport (EWOS 2016) and received a grant for the local event in Rovaniemi that was organized in 16.9.2016 – in parallel with the EAS 2016 conference that the WINNER project organized in the city area<sup>6</sup>. This process is ongoing since the project continues its activities in the regional and international level as a cooperative work among Lapland and other European regions (Smart specialization).
- AMID Network, a project idea to the international sources of funding related to the migrating athletes and to their studying opportunities. The proposal was related to the project’s collaboration with the European parliament’s committee of sport and culture, which has defined the athletes migration (see p. 29<sup>7</sup>) as one key aspect of the sport and education development in the EU. The theme and the abovementioned document was implemented in the collaboration of the European parliament and its committee of culture and education; and our project participated to the collaboration as a spin-off activity. The WINNER project’s existence gave even more necessary references for the specialists who were then able to take part into the collaboration mentioned.
- Uarctic Network. This idea was established in a meeting between universities of the region in Lapland (including the LP of the project), and the Finnish Olympic Committee. The need for the Uarctic Network is clear, as no common path for “dual career” students in the region of Lapland and amongst its HEI’s exists. The Uarctic Network is clearly needed in the collaboration amongst Arctic universities, as there are currently no sport based networks at all within the Arctic cooperation. The idea in the network is to facilitate sports as a topic as well as to facilitate “dual career” opportunities in the involved tertiary education institutions.

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<sup>5</sup> See: <http://www.rovaniemi.fi/fi/Palvelut/Liikunta-ja-vapaa-aika/Sportisti-Roi>

<sup>6</sup> See: <https://www.rovaniemi.fi/eventscalendar/Sapinaa-Syksyyn!-ja-Turvaa-Tenaville!/3wzixfjh/c535b025-beb2-48b7-aaaf-123c412a77a1> and <https://blogi.eoppimispalvelut.fi/eas2016/>

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/573416/IPOL\\_STU\(2016\)573416\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/573416/IPOL_STU(2016)573416_EN.pdf)



- Regional project on sports entrepreneurship to ERDF funding (2017). The idea of the project is to enhance the economic impact of the sport cooperation that has been developed in the WINNER Education Model project, focusing especially on the economic possibilities relating to sport centres as the motors of growth in the EU regions. The purpose of the project is to create and support local SME's relating to sport and tourism. The idea is to use and exploit the possibilities that sport creates in an economic and social context in particular region.
- "Dual career" idea established with the University of Southern Denmark (<http://www.sdu.dk/en/>). The purpose of the project would be to create a "dual career" network amongst professional athletes and use it to make new business-related proposals. The idea was discussed at EAS2015 in Amsterdam, together with Andreas Küttel, a former Swiss world champion in ski jumping, who currently works for the organization.
- Edusport Network, an application for national funding by the University of Lapland that is the academic University in our region. The planning meeting with professor of education Heli Ruokamo was organized. The idea is to develop research on "dual career" at the PhD level. The project has not received funding yet.
- Innojohto-Project, a national ESF application together with Lapland UAS and Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences. The idea was to combine sport, management and culture in a new and innovative ways to management in public and private sector.
- An initiative with the University of Latvia. Discussion with Ilvis Abelkans at EAS 2015 Amsterdam on whether we should develop a common "dual career" project, given the impressive winter sport possibilities of both locations and the fact that the combining of forces in the two winter sports destinations, along with other possible partners, could be of great value.
- People Olympics idea, an application to Erasmus + Sport in 2015, but no financial support. (<http://www.peopleolympics.org/>) The idea was to develop a health enhancing physical activity concept ([http://ec.europa.eu/sport/policy/cooperation/expert-groups-2014-2017\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/sport/policy/cooperation/expert-groups-2014-2017_en.htm)) for the populations in multiple European regions. The project was not accepted, but the concept exists in that new ideas are constantly developed and put together.

### ***Cooperation with the undergraduate students of the participating universities***

The project has also included a great collaboration amongst the sports students involved. The students were informed about the WINNER project through teaching activities in all partner countries and they helped to establish new ideas for the research and development, for instance:

- Ice hockey project on new training opportunities

- Communication platform for Lapland Sports Academy
- Young kids sports development in Kindergarten
- Internal VET training in swimming clubs in Lapland
- Ice hockey as a life enhancing activity (social inclusion)
- Amazing race Rovaniemi - a sports and outdoors concept
- Arctic Pride goes Sports - an event that was organized in Rovaniemi (13.9.2015). The idea is to for apply EU funding in the future from the corresponding sports call
- Junior goalkeeper development for Rovaniemi football club
- Nature to life - a life enhancing nature project (supported by ESF)
- Skills coaching platform for Lappish Sports
- Sports entrepreneurship platform
- Alumni meetings in 2015/2016; possibilities for interaction amongst our graduated sport students and the current sport students, peer learning and “dual career” development
- An idea for winter sports for people with disabilities, a SME has already been established on the topic
- Development project of Rollohalli concept, the funding has been applied for from Finnish innovation funds TEKES



Pictures 12-13. Project cooperation with students in Lapland UAS (spring 2015) and Lapland sport academy meeting where the project was presented (autumn 2016).



Picture 13. Ms. Kaisa-Mari Jama is the key specialist in WINNER project in Lapland UAS.

### Publishing articles in the project topic:

The WINNER Education model project has published a wide group of articles in scientific and popular for a. The list below is not comprehensive but gives an overview. The project argues that active publication work creates commitment within and outside the project consortium:

- Capranica, L., & Millard-Stafford, M.L. (2011). Youth sport specialization: how to manage competition and training? *International Journal of Sports Physiology and Performance*, 6(4), 572-579
- Lupo, C., Tessitore, A., Capranica, L., Rauter, S., & Doupona-Topic, M. (2012). Motivation for a dual career: Italian and Slovenian student-athletes. *Kinesiologia Slovenica*, 18(3), 47-56.
- Guidotti, F., Minganti, C., Cortis, C., Piacentini, M.F., Tessitore, A., & Capranica, L. (2013). Validation of the Italian version of the Student Athletes' Motivation toward Sport and Academics Questionnaire. *Sport Sciences for Health*, 9(2), 51-58. doi: 10.1007/s11332-013-0145
- Project facilitated workshops in EAS 2014, 11.-13. Sept 2014 / Rome and in EAS 2015 in Amsterdam, 24-26. Sept 2015 and EAS2016 in Rovaniemi, 15-16 Sept 2016
- Guidotti, Flavia, Cortis, Christina, Capranica, Laura (2015). DUAL CAREER OF EUROPEAN STUDENT ATHLETES: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW. *Kinesiologia Slovenica*, 21, 3, 5–20 (2015)
- Fuchs, Philip (2015). Presentation in EAS 2015, 21-24. Sept 2015, Amsterdam
- Guidotti, Flavia (2015). Presentation in EAS 2015 conference, 21-24. Sept 2015, Amsterdam
- Niemisalo, Niko (2015, *in Finnish*). The aim is to combine education and top-level sports. *Levi Ski News Winter 2015-2016*.
- Niemisalo, Niko (2015). Presentation about the WINNER project in EAS 2015 Amsterdam 21-23. Sept 2015.
- Project presentation to Chinese minister of Sports 15.2.2016 in Rovaniemi
- Capranica, Laura (31.3.2016). Participation to EU sports forum, Hague, Netherlands.
- Niemisalo, Niko and EAS students (2016). Article on EAS2016 on local newspaper *Uusi Rovaniemi*, 26.4.2016
- Niemisalo, Niko, Fuchs P., Wagner H., Hannola H., Niemisalo N., Pehme A., Puhke R., Marinsek M., Strmecki A., Svetec D., Brown A., Capranica L., Guidotti F. (2016). Presentation about the WINNER project in EAS 2016 Rovaniemi 15-17. Sept 2016.
- Guidotti F., Fuchs P. et al (2016). "Dual career" development in EU. Review of Questionnaire implemented within WINNER Education model project.

- Fuchs P., Wagner H., Hannola H., Niemisalo N., Pehme A., Puhke R., Marinsek M., Strmecki A., Svetec D., Brown A., Capranica L., Guidotti F. (2016). European Student-Athletes' Perceptions on Dual Career Outcomes and Services. *Kinesiologia Slovenica*, Volume 22, No. 2

## Contribution to EU policies

### *Generic findings*

The main aims of the EU's generic education development in the 21st century are related to developing the quality of the European education system. In general, the process aims at putting together an education system that is following similar processes in all European countries, creates growth, new enterprises and skilful entrepreneurs as well as skilful workers for the new demands of working life; not to forget social inclusion. Furthermore, the system should have means and tools for tackling dropouts as well as exploiting the informal learning that is more and more relevant in 21st century working life. The WINNER Education model project has developed this approach by making comparisons among the European countries and regions and via mutual learning from each participating countries good practices. In terms of specific EU strategies, the following observations can be made:



Picture 15. “Until we meet again”. Project final seminar and EAS2016 conference closing in Lapland, Santasport institute, 16. September 2016. The seminar was participated also by Ms. Agata Dziarnowska from the EU sport unit, and participants from more than 20 EU member states.

### *EU2020 aims and objectives*

The key strategy to the EU's generic development is EU2020. It prioritises smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Smart growth refers to developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation. Our project has helped that aim by establishing study paths in tertiary level that provide skills and knowledge needed in knowledge and innovation based economic system. We see that our "Winner" students are like ambassadors and representatives of this new more modern thinking on higher education that recognizes informal and non-formal learning as well. Sustainable growth links with promoting a more resource-efficient, greener and more competitive economy. The WINNER Education model project has provided these aspects by taking the sustainable development seriously, and highlighting athletic way of life, e.g where daily transportations are done with muscle power as part of way of living that recognizes health enhancing physical activity (HEPA). Inclusive growth refers to fostering high-employment economy delivering economic, social and territorial cohesion. In the project we have wanted to enhance the employability of the higher education by fostering talent that is "hidden" in the informal learning; this is based on the generic observation of the changing working life. The cohesion aspect is in the project due to the coordinator's and partners location in the areas (e.g Lapland, North-East England) where the economic growth is slower and development challenges are bigger; that are located in the target areas of the EU's cohesion policies.  
(Europe 2020: A European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth<sup>8</sup>).

### ***Bologna process***

The Bologna process guides the EU's tertiary level education to develop The European Higher Education Area (EHEA). It highlights many things but in particular the reform of the education system and creating a common European education where national curricula are comparable (see the Eurydice networks excellent report *The European Higher Education Area in 2015: Bologna Process Implementation Report* Brussels: EACEA) and mobility among EU member states smooth and active. The WINNER Education model project has supported these aims by supporting exchange of information among member states representatives, comparing the curricula of the partner universities, establishing the athlete-pilot that gives very good data on the challenges in this process and trying to raise awareness on the existing challenges in this mobility process – a thing that makes the daily life of young talented athletes very difficult.

### ***Taking the new skills for new jobs seriously and developing entrepreneurial approach***

New skills for new jobs initiative is the EU2020 strategy's spearhead for tackling the changing working life and the education systems incapability to provide workers with the necessary new skills. It is aiming to "to modernise labour markets and empower people by developing their of skills throughout the lifecycle with a view to

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<sup>8</sup> EU2020 Strategy. <http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/COMPLET%20EN%20BARROSO%20%20%20007%20-%20Europe%202020%20-%20EN%20version.pdf>

increase labour participation and better match labour supply and demand, including through labour mobility.” In particular, it links with fighting against unemployment, adapting smart regulation, promoting labour-mobility within EU, strengthen the capacity of social partners and problem solving, implementing lifelong learning principles and ensuring the applicability of the key competences as cross-cutting feature of all education (EU 2020, p. 17). WINNER Education model has supported these aims as described in the report at hand. In particular, based on the findings of the teaching staff included, we have wanted to highlight the entrepreneurial aspects in the young athletes’ plans.

### ***Social inclusion and tackling dropouts***

The main aims of the social inclusion of the EU’s education development are to avoid dropouts and developing a system that takes into account the cultural specificities of the multiple European regions. The social inclusion aim has been taken very seriously, and we look forwards that the findings we have made in our pilot case of young athletes’ supports also other spheres of life and education to tackle social exclusion.

### ***The synergies with EU’s smart specialization (S3) policies***

WINNER Education model has also linked with European smart specialization (S3, <http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/>) development. The idea in the smart specialization is to enhance economic growth based on the regions. To make growth possible, the possibilities of the regions to develop themselves must be supported. In the process of smart specialization, the regions find their particular development themes that have the most promising seeds for growth, and each region specializes to the topics that have the best potential. As part of the future development strategy the WINNER Education model project have developed the ClusSport initiative to the S3-process, related to sports, as cooperative initiative among four different regions namely Sheffield (UK), Belfast (UK), NordRhein Westfalen (Germany) and Flanders (Belgium). The cooperation includes also pan-European actor EPSI that is a membership-based networking organization within Europe that focuses on innovation in the areas of physical activity related to sport, leisure and health (see: <http://epsi.eu/about-epsi/>).

#### **About S3, see also:**

- Lapland in S3 platform <http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/-/smart-use-of-arctic-natural-resources-and-conditions?inheritRedirect=true>
- Sports in S3 platform <http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/sports>

### ***Reflecting the project findings to the EU’s sport policies, in particular to “dual career” policies***

In the last decade, dual career has become a priority for the EU Parliament and Commission, which provided specific guidelines to encourage Member States and stakeholders in implementing their support measures toward student athletes (European Commission, 2012b). Although the holistic development of talented and



elite athletes should be central when planning policy actions, recent findings reported substantial differences among countries in dual career policies, programmes and services (Amsterdam University of Applied Science et al., 2016), which calls for appropriate interventions at local levels to guarantee athletes' rights as European citizens. In fact, no single programme could be suitable across European countries, sports disciplines and academic settings. However, based on research findings (Guidotti et al., 2015) and country-specific information (Amsterdam University of Applied Science et al., 2016), the establishment and the promotion of a set of minimum services toward student athletes across Europe could be crucial to increase the effectiveness of European dual career paths. In this framework, the EU financial actions in supporting cross-national cooperation for the identification of the best practices in dual career and the promotion of inter-institutional agreements between the sports and education sectors at local, national, and EU levels should be maintained (Capranica and Guidotti, 2016).

At national level, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the National Olympic Committees and Ministries of Sports, and the Ministry of Education represent key actors in structuring effective dual career interventions at local, regional and national levels. In this framework, an inter-sectoral cooperation could not only safeguard athletes' development through appropriate and effective dual career programmes, but also facilitate the transition into the labour market (e.g., recognition of competences, employment strategies enforcement of workplace conditions for athletes, flexible arrangements, and athletic leave). Conversely, when formal support actions are not in place, single universities could be crucial actors in recognizing the student athlete role, providing services, allowing the mobility of student athletes through inter-institutional agreements, networking with other dual career services providers, and monitoring the student athletes' dual career path.

The present WINNER project has extensively contributed to identify the core elements that should be guaranteed to athletes involved in a dual career path. Regarding the European literature on dual career, the project highlighted the major trends and the gaps of the scientific approach toward European dual career and provided a set of recommendations for future research in this area. In particular, the lack of a widespread multidisciplinary research approach to the topic emerged (Guidotti et al., 2015). Furthermore, the systematic use of the term "dual career" and valid and reliable monitoring tools to assess aspects related to both specific national and cross-national contexts are still missed (Guidotti et al., 2013; Lupo et al., 2014; Guidotti et al., 2015). Thus, an integrated approach comprising different scientific domains in empirical, longitudinal, and cross-national research designs should be envisioned to further implement the knowledge on dual career to guide policy makers at different EU levels. Finally, further investigations addressing the impact of interpersonal relationships of the student athletes with relevant proximate stakeholders (e.g., coaches/managers, family, friends/peers, teachers) on dual career outcomes is strongly recommended.

Concerning the academic path of student athletes, the present project has not only provided information on the student athletes' perceptions regarding dual career services in the five EU countries participating in the project, but also has identified



(Fuchs et al., in press) and tested core aspects that should be integrated in adapted academic curricula. In particular, the WINNER Team was able to collect further relevant information to structure an effective study model, suitable for European student athletes. Despite a general agreement on a clear and uniform approach toward the provision of dual career services at academic level (e.g., reduced compulsory attendance for lectures/classes, courses spread over more than one semester, blocks of on-site intensive classes, online learning and distance learning, flexible exam schedules, additional dates for examination of student athlete, recognition of non-formal and informal learning), various combinations were organized and tested in relation to the different academic, technical and administrative requirements. Through the recruitment of a consistent sample of student athletes the effectiveness of the study model was established.

Based on scientific evidences and concrete actions, this project has put into practice a framework in line with previous research findings and the EU Guidelines on Dual Career of Athletes (European Commission, 2012b). The positive outcomes of the present project in terms of teachers' and student athletes' satisfaction regarding dual career services at academic level should be spread across Europe as an effective approach to dual career in different academic settings. Furthermore, the recognition of formal (e.g., sports qualification as coaches, physical trainers, managers), non-formal (e.g., international sports experience), and informal (e.g., participation in sports clinics) education acquired in the sports area should be defined in terms of European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) to be recognized at academic levels throughout Europe. Finally, the establishment of inter-institutional agreements is envisioned to allow migrating student athletes to have access to online examination under the supervision of academic staff at the local site. Therefore, future EU policies should be directed towards a more effective communication of projects outcomes and recommendations to exploit sports-specific evidence-based findings for the development/implementation of further actions at national levels.

The athletes contribution to entrepreneurial spirit is a thing that needs further attention. In the previous project's both qualitative and quantitative knowledge gathering processes (INTECS Network building 2010-2011, see Braillard et al 2015) this was well recognized in the questionnaire. When compared to generic entrepreneurial spirit in the universities involved, the athletes showed up very much more entrepreneurial and outward looking than "regular" students. In this sense, the informal learning from sports seems to enrich the entrepreneurial approach to working life that requires courage, stamina to stand with disappointments, marketing skills and international approach that is very much visible in athletes "dual career" questionnaires that we have implemented. The topic needs further analysis and therefore this is merely our work hypothesis. But still, the potential of entrepreneurship in "dual career" is major and is indeed something we need to support and understand better. Whether this the case with other fields of "dual career" e.g. music, arts, politics or learning in NGO's needs indeed further and wide empirical analysis.

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## **Extra Heading/Section**