

THE DUAL CAREER OF STUDENT-ATHLETES: DESK RESEARCH TO ANALYSE EXISTING PROGRAMMES

LA DOPPIA CARRIERA DEGLI STUDENTI-ATLETI: UNA DESK RESEARCH PER L'ANALISI DEI PROGRAMMI ESISTENTI

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ABSTRACT

In Italy, there is not yet a full awareness of the issues related to the dual career development of student-athletes. The Erasmus + Talent project aims to prevent drop-out and promote a dual career culture. It envisaged conducting desk research to survey and analyse existing dual career programmes in order to identify best practices. The validation process of the tools used to conduct the desk research and analysis of dual career programmes in Italy is reported below.

In Italia non vi è ancora piena consapevolezza delle problematiche legate allo sviluppo della doppia carriera degli studenti-atleti. Il progetto Erasmus + Talent intende prevenire il drop-out e promuovere la cultura sulla doppia carriera. Esso ha previsto la conduzione di una desk research per il censimento e l'analisi dei programmi di doppia carriera esistenti al fine di individuare le best practices. Si riporta il processo di validazione degli strumenti utilizzati per la conduzione della desk research e le analisi dei programmi di doppia carriera in Italia.

KEYWORDS

Dual Career; drop-out; talent; sports pedagogy.
Doppia carriera; drop-out; talento; pedagogia dello sport.

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1. The pedagogy of sport

Starting from the assumption that the primary objective of any educational action is to achieve the greatest possible learning for each learner means developing inclusive didactics, i.e. one that is open to the enhancement of each and everyone. This means, on the one hand, that the learner needs certain general and specific conditions and, on the other hand, the provision of suitable operating methodologies and targeted strategies to ensure the psycho-physical development of each person (Cusano & Ascione, 2018, 30).

Applying this reasoning to sport training and inclusive training, allows the introduction of the concept of inclusive sport didactics in which different needs and developments coexist in the same training and are enhanced by, for and through sport practice.

This assertion is, moreover, also supported by the International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport (UNESCO, 2015) which states that “Every human being has a fundamental right to physical education, physical activity and sport without discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property or any other basis” (Art. 1). In other words, every human being has the fundamental right of access to physical education and sport, which are indispensable for the development of his or her personality. In the cited document, it is also stated that “The freedom to develop physical, psychological and social well-being and capabilities through these activities must be supported by all governmental, sport and educational institutions”. This assertion takes on further value by “For society at large, physical education, physical activity and sport can yield significant health, social and economic benefits. An active lifestyle helps prevent heart disease, diabetes, cancer as well as obesity and ultimately reduces premature death. In addition, it reduces health related costs, increases productivity, and strengthens civic engagement and social cohesion” (art. 2).

This horizon of meaning today has gained more and more authority and many scholars agree that «lo sport ha un potenziale formativo, educativo e soprattutto inclusivo [...] a prescindere dall'età, dal genere e dalla presenza o meno di una condizione fisica o psichica disabilitante e potrebbe rappresentare lo strumento ideale per perseguire il necessario progresso socioeducativo» (Di Palma & Ascione, 2017, 19). Although this has not always been taken for granted, in fact, Di Palma, Ascione and Peluso Cassese (2017) recall that the social and educational perspective of sport has only gradually taken on importance since the late 1990s,

becoming one of the European priorities in 2007 when the EU's Functioning Treaty stipulated that the Union should contribute to the promotion of the European profile of sport, taking into account its specificities, its structures based on voluntary work and its social and educational function (European Commission, 2007).

Sarsini (2008, 2010) has highlighted some possible reasons why pedagogy has become involved in sport, such as: the growing interest in the historical and socio-anthropological analysis of sport, the different interpretation given to the concept of the body by both philosophy and pedagogy in the 20th century, the space given in the primary schools syllabuses of '85 to motor-sport didactics, the ethical, democratic and civic value attributed to sport by De Coubertin's Olympism (2003), reaffirmed today by pedagogy as one of the most authentic tasks of sport. To this one could add the entire strand of neuroscientific studies that affirm that the motor system does not only perform tasks of an executive nature, but also, and above all, tasks of a cognitive nature (Regni & Fogassi, 2019, 24).

In summary, "Lo sport inteso come elemento socialmente armonizzante, che promuove stili di vita attivi, una consapevole strategia di crescita, che risponde alla domanda di controllo della spesa sanitaria e di inclusione sociale, che sostiene uno sviluppo etico della personalità e una responsabile fruizione dell'ambiente naturale è un concetto strettamente connesso alla sua didattica, e dunque rimesso nelle mani dell'educatore e dell'insegnante sportivo" (Tintori & Cerbara, 2017, 44).

The idea is being consolidated that the sporting context reflects a value system that is highly compatible with that of education (Di Palma *et al*, 2016) and is expressed through the pursuit of the same educational aims that tend towards the development of the citizen in its individual and social components, so that personal wealth can be put at the service of society (Light & Dixon, 2007; Raiola & Tafuri, 2015).

In addition to the community purpose, many studies have shown that sport contributes to the construction of a consideration of oneself and one's existence regardless of physical or psychic differences with others (Gianfagna, 2007; Isidori, 2012); it stimulates learning, school performance and the overall development of cortical areas and functions (Best, 2010; Farinelli, 2005; Hillman, Erickson & Kramer, 2008).

In view of all this, however, it is necessary to operationalise the pedagogy of sport by focusing on the development of a talent, sporting talent in this case, which is not detached from the development of intelligence considered in its plurality and

expertise (Gardner, 2002) and from training in the broadest sense. This means that “l’ipotesi di un modello pedagogico di interpretazione e sviluppo del talento sportivo può essere schematizzato in un “sistema aperto” nel quale, “tempo” (di apprendimento e perfezionamento), “esperienza”, esercizio costante e dedizione al compito, “formazione” e “volontà” di eccellere nella prestazione, rappresentano gli elementi del sistema in continua interazione” (Migliorati, Maulini & Isidori, 2018, 391).

2. The Dual Career Construct of Student-Athletes

Umberto Margiotta (1997; 2003; 2018) when speaking of talent training has always emphasised that educational practice must be oriented towards the enhancement of individuality, which translates into the differentiation of educational pathways declined in relation to everyone’s potential and needs. In this perspective, the focus on the dual career of athletes can be an example of integrated training of sports talents (Tafari & Bellantonio, 2018, 231).

Indeed, the status of “student-athlete”, the first fundamental legal step towards the recognition of a category of students who need special psycho-educational attention, is recognised by many Italian universities that seek to pursue the principles on the development of the person set out not only in Article 2 of the Constitution, but also what is stated in the European Sports Charter (Council of Europe CDDS - Committee for the Development of Sport, 1992) and the European Guidelines on the Dual Career of Athletes (EU, 2013).

Despite the joint effort between institutions at the European level and directives at the national level, what is observed is that the gap between professional and/or academic and study environments and sporting activity is still considerable (Bellantonio *et al.*, 2019, 31); in fact, everyday teaching practice still tends to struggle to recognise the equal dignity of sporting discipline compared to other disciplines (Bellantonio, 2016). This can be attributed both to the mind/body dichotomy still too present in teaching-learning processes, but also to the few hours the school dedicates to sporting activity (Bellantonio *et al.*, 2019, 31).

The great criticality that affects, therefore, the two contexts involved concerns: “L’integrazione di questi due ambiti, come parte fondativa del percorso di crescita dell’atleta [...]; se in quello sportivo la formazione formale non passa come un valore, ma come un’attività che distoglie i giovani dalla concentrazione sulle

attività, in quello formativo le attività sportive sono spesso considerate minoritarie e non consentirebbero agli studenti-atleti di frequentare la scuola o l'università come dovrebbero" (Bellantonio *et al.*, 2019, 32; Bellantonio & Tafuri, 2019).

Because of this, the drop-out rate from either environment is very high (Conzelmann & Nagel, 2003; Amara, Aquilina & Henry, 2004; Aquilina, 2013). However, Shulman & Bowen's (2001) studies are hopeful, as the two scholars ascertained that in those countries where there is integration between the sports and education systems, school or university drop-out drops significantly.

Italy is moving in this direction at school level, in fact, the law of 13 July 2015 no. 107 has identified, among the priority educational objectives, the protection of the right to study of students practising competitive sport (Article 1, paragraph 7).

Moreover, this commitment was further consolidated by the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the MIUR and CONI (Comitato Olimpico Nazionale Italiano) on 28 November 2016, thanks to which the parties undertook to undertake joint actions in order to recognise the value of sports practice through the experimentation of innovative methodologies and educational paths (Migliorati, Isidori & Maulini, 2020, 109).

Although, experimentation and studies on the dual careers of student athletes are developing in all directions, an example of which is the study conducted by Migliorati, Maulini & Isidori (2018) aimed at surveying the perceptions of participants attending a dual career project in secondary school and the changes that have taken place in the realities in which the project has been implemented, the most fertile ground in Italy to date is that of universities and higher education. There are, in fact, numerous support programmes for students involved in high-level sport that are being developed and tested with good results (Sánchez Pato *et al.*, 2017; Lupo *et al.* 2015; Guidotti, Cortis, Capranica, 2015; Migliorati, Maulini, Isidori, 2018a).

The difficulties encountered by student-athletes are diverse and require targeted, multilevel interventions. Migliorati, Isidori and Maulini (2020, 108-109) reflect, for example, on some critical issues that the sportman or sportswoman may face, including the risk that the person focuses predominantly on his or her role as an athlete (in relation to the deep dedication to sport that influences identity development itself) (Maulini, 2018); the lack of stable relationships with student-peers due to the mental and physical commitment that the athlete faces (Isidori, 2016); the failure to develop skills other than those acquired in the sporting

environment, which are necessary to enter the labour market after a competitive career¹.

To address them and other possible critical issues related to the development of the student-athlete “La premessa pedagogica di ogni intervento che voglia dirsi educativo nello sport è la necessità che questo venga ripensato come pratica integrata nei vari ambiti di vita dell’atleta” (Migliorati, Isidori & Maulini, 2020, 112).

For this reason, the proposals for the implementation of dual careers are diverse: if, on the one hand, as we have seen, in educational contexts a slow ferment is producing gradual changes aimed at greater awareness of the topic and consequently targeted actions towards the development of dual career programmes; on the other, some scholars also suggest further developments on the purely sporting side. Thus, from this perspective, it is possible to speak of the possibility of including experts in the pedagogical field of orientation and training within the staff to support the athlete (Migliorati, Isidori & Maulini, 2020, 112); or, on the other hand, the perspective already known in other European countries, such as Germany (Olympic Training Centres - Olympiastützpunkt), Finland (Athletes Study and Career Services), Sweden (Malmö Sport Academy - University of Malmö), Spain (Centro de Alto Rendimiento in Sant Cugat) and Austria (the KADA association), of the possibility of taking advantage of the professional counselling of guidance experts, or even better defined, dual career expert counsellors (Maulini, 2018, 64; EU, 2016).

In general, therefore, the idea that the holistic training of the person leads to a state of well-being for the elite athlete is becoming increasingly popular as the critical-reflective process generated by it can put the person in a position to interpret the past, guide the present and direct the future (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009).

In Europe, more so than overseas, much still needs to be done (Guidotti & Capranica, 2013) and that the road travelled so far is far from linear, given that in some countries centralised control of dual career paths has been preferred, while in others emphasis has been placed on individual autonomy. In this scenario, as

¹ Some scholars have pointed out precisely how athletes often do not have the opportunity to acquire “modelli educativi di natura preventiva utili a favorire lo sviluppo di abilità e risorse di coping per le sfide che quotidianamente si trovano ad affrontare e per le transizioni specifiche della carriera sportiva” (Maulini, 2018, 65; Wylleman, Lavalée & Alfermann, 1999).

Guidotti and Capranica (2013) state, one risk among many is that the individual is affected by a kind of organisational burn-out.

3. The project Erasmus + Cloud Based Education for Creative Sport Talent²

Supporting, selecting and correctly guiding children towards the appropriate sport is one of the most important and certainly the most challenging questions facing professionals.

Correct guidance, in this sense, improves the efficiency of athletes who can thus make targeted use of their potential in kinesiological activities compatible with their anthropological specificities.

The aim of the Cloud Based Education for Creative Sport Talent (TALENT)³ project is to promote equal education, prevent exclusion, support dual careers, create new role models for the benefit of young talents, and prepare for lifelong learning and professional sport from an early age.

The TALENT project specifically aims to identify standards for the recognition of sporting talent and the dissemination of the dual-career concept from the first school classes to talented young sportsmen and sportswomen between the ages of 12 and 16.

A kaleidoscope of seven partners is working on the project. The partner organisations are diverse and cover all necessary areas of the TALENT project's activities, results, and yields. In fact, there are: two Higher Education Institutes, the University of Palermo (Italy) and the University of Nis (Serbia); one Research Centre, the 'Centre for Social Innovation' (Cyprus); one Educational Institute, the 'Centar izvrsnosti Splitsko-dalmatinske županije' - CI SDZ (Croatia) two NGOs, the "Kentro Mermnas Oikogeneias Kai Paidiou" - KMOP (Greece) and the "Sarajevo Meeting of Culture" - SMOC (Bosnia and Herzegovina); as well as the network "The European

² Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

³ I would like to thank the project coordinator, Prof. A. Bianco and the members of the Palermo research group, Prof. G. Cappuccio and G. Compagno, Dr. A. Gentile and Dr. Vicari for their collaboration and supervision of the project and scientific content.

Athlete as Student" - EAS (Malta)⁴ established with the main objective of supporting European athletes in combining high performance sport and education at European level.

The Project is being developed over 30 months and involves the direct involvement of teachers, sports coaches, and experts in the field.

UNIPA is coordinating Work Package 2 of the project: the first action of the project (WP2).

WP2 consists of two distinct tasks:

- WP2 – Desk Analysis and Best Practices across the Partners' countries - TASK 1.
- WP2 – Identification of the standards for talented children - TASK 2.

The aim of this paper is to report the results of Task 1 focusing on desk research.

Desk Analysis and Best Practices across the Partners' countries aimed at identifying the dual-career programs existing in the territory, in relationship with the school environment. Collection of policies about the school and the sport dropout. The outputs of this activity will be used to obtain information about the political and social context of talented children. The methodology used is desk research; through a desk analysis activity, all the Partners will detect policies about the beginning of a dual-career program and its integration with the school environment. Moreover, the Partners will collect information about policies preventing school and sport dropout. Partner countries will focus on the best practices that sport organizations and schools employ when facing a talented kid and focusing on whether synergies are created. Desk analysis is a cost-effective research method that allows to easily collect practical information that can be used for having a clear overview of the situation.

Così, gli obiettivi specifici che compongono il WP2.1 sono:

- 1- Data search on the Internet about National Policies on the beginning of a dual-career program and talent recognition.

⁴ I would like to thank all the members of the Talent consortium, represented below by the project managers: Ana Kezić (CI SDZ), Olia Tsivitanidou (CSI), Jana Carkadzic (SMOC), Epameinondas Koutavelis (KMOP), Laura Capranica (EAS), Nenad Stojiljkovic (FSFV).

- 2- Contact the sport institutions for collecting the best practices for talent recognition and facilitating the beginning of dual career program and preventing early dropouts.
- 3- Contact the national bodies that influenced sport and education (Ministry of Education; Ministry of Sport and Youth; National Olympic Committee) to collect all rules and recommendations related to the dual career of athletes.
- 4- National Report for each country.
- 5- Transnational report for all the countries.

3.1. Methodology and actions developed

The document and best practice analysis phase summarizes existing policies in European countries on dual career programmes and best practices adopted by sports institutions.

Through a desk analysis, all Partners surveyed policies related to the initiation of a dual career programme and its integration with the school environment. In addition, Partners gathered information on school and sports drop-out prevention policies. Partners focused on best practices that sports organizations and schools adopt when dealing with a gifted child and focus on creating synergies. Desk analysis is a cost-effective research method that enables the easy collection of practical information that can be used to obtain a clear overview of the situation.

Desk Research started in February 2023 with the construction of two tools that were used to conduct the DR: the dual career programme evaluation template and the template for compiling the national final report.

These tools were built first by sharing the meanings of the analyzed criteria among the 7 partners and then by all the European consortium partners reviewing the models themselves.

During March, desk research was conducted using the DC programme evaluation template and each country evaluated all the programmes found. During April, the national final report was developed. During the meeting held in Palermo on 11 and 12 May 2023, this final report, which includes all country reports, was shared, and reviewed by all partners.

3.2. Constructed and validated tools

As previously stated, the tools for conducting desk research were constructed by the research team of the University of Palermo and subjected to a review process by all partners of the European consortium. In doing so, they started from the sharing and clarification of the idea of Talent; specifically, through an initial focus group, during the first face-to-face meeting held in Split in February 2023, the consortium partners clarified that the definition of talent encompasses several concepts including: biological and genetic predispositions, constancy, commitment, natural inclination, experience. Afterwards, we moved on to co-construct the meaning of the identified criteria. Some of the criteria were identified from the document developed by the European Union on dual careers in 2013 (European Guidelines on Dual Careers for Athletes), however, others were added because of the planar discussion initiated in Split. The meeting in Split took place on 2 and 3 February 2023, the partners started to review the proposed documents, indeed, for a more thorough review, the entire month of February was used to arrive at the final formulation of the tools.

As can be seen from table 1, each partner was asked to comment on each criterion and on the possibility of deleting, modifying, adding, or keeping a criterion. The parts highlighted in red in the table show the changes made because of the review.

COMMON DEFINITION OF CRITERIA						
	CRITERIA	DEFINITION	Delet e	Chang e	Ke p	NOT E
PART 1: GENERAL PROGRAM INFORMATION						
1	<i>Program name and website URL</i>	Specify the name of the Dual Career (DC) programme found on the internet thanks to Desk research and the URL of the internet page. Example: "dual career – student-athlete status" https://www.unibo.it/it/didattica/iscrizioni-trasferimenti-e-laurea/riconoscimento-status-studente-atleta .				
2	<i>Talent definition</i>	Aspects involved in the concept of sport and school talent.				
3	<i>Programme development duration</i>	Programme development times in terms of months or years (How long it takes to develop a program). How long did the program last? When did it start/finish?				

4	<i>Recipients/development phase of the dual career programme</i>	Recipients of the DC programme and therefore at which stage of development of the athlete it is addressed.				
5	<i>Promoter institution</i>	The entity that promotes and develops the DC programme. Example: Bologna University.				
6	<i>Financing</i>	Financial aspects of DC's programme, if any (is the programme funded by an institution or body?).				
7	<i>Partnership</i>	Who and how many are DC's programme partners, if any.				
PART 2: CONTENT AND GOALS						
8	<i>Sport/talent</i>	DC's programme could target people who have a specific talent and therefore play a specific sport, or not.				
9	<i>Program entry requirements</i>	Access requirements to the DC programme for the athlete without which one cannot benefit from the measures or resources provided by the DC program. Example: average school grades, sports qualifications, age...				
10	<i>Inclusion</i>	Degree of inclusion of all specificities in terms of physical and identity characteristics of the person who can access the programme. Is the programme inclusive/not-inclusive? Does it allow all beneficiaries to participate? (Examples of exclusion criteria: nationality ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, physical characteristics, disability)				
11	<i>Regulation of the position of athletes and staff</i>	Regulation of the position of the sports and academic dual career staff included in the DC programme.				
12	<i>Anti-doping and match fixing awareness</i>	Anti-doping and match-fixing philosophy based on the prohibition for staff and athletes to use an illicit practice (e.g., betting) and substance, a drug or a medical practice for non-therapeutic purposes but aimed at improving psycho-physical efficiency during a sporting performance, competitive or not.				
13	<i>Preventive measures of school and sports drop-out</i>	Drop-out measures aimed at preventing the athlete's withdrawal or expulsion from an environment (sports or school) because she/he fails to meet the compulsory requirements to maintain the athlete of student status.				

1 4	<i>Continuing education (after compulsory education)</i>	Possibility of continuous updating in terms of training for the athlete, staff, parents, or school personnel.				
1 5	<i>Injury policy</i>	Medical and economic measures in the event of an athlete's injury and mental health. What kind of support will the participant receive? Financial, medical, possibility of insurance				
1 6	<i>Promotion of sports talent life skills</i>	Life skills or soft skills of sporting talent that allow she/he to deal with transversal or consequential aspects of sporting activity such as communication, stress and time management, success or failure management.				
1 7	<i>Transversal assistance to sports talent</i>	Assistance measures with respect to transversal aspects such as: psychological support, professional and / training guidance.				
1 8	<i>Basic assistance to sports talent</i>	Assistance measures with respect to primary aspects such as: medical and/or nutritional basic and general support.				
1 9	<i>Balance between physical-technical and psycho-motivational components</i>	Balance between physical-technical and psycho-motivational components to be developed for the overall well-being of the athlete.				
2 0	<i>Dissemination activities of the project</i>	How the programme is promoted and how it achieves its targets and impact				

Table 1 Form for joint co-construction of criteria meanings.

This led to the definition of 20 evaluation criteria divided into two sections: one dedicated to general information on the dual career programme and one dedicated to the programme's content and objectives.

PART 1: GENERAL PROGRAM INFORMATION	
	CRITERIA
1	Program name and website URL
2	Talent definition
3	Program development duration
4	Recipients/development phase of the dual career programme
5	Promoter institution
6	Financing

PART 2: CONTENT AND GOALS	
8	Sport/talent
9	Program entry requirements
10	Inclusion
11	Regulation of the position of athletes and staff
12	Anti-doping and match fixing awareness
13	Preventive measures of school and sports drop-out
14	Continuing education (after compulsory education)
15	Injury policy
16	Promotion of sports talent life skills
17	Transversal assistance to sports talent
18	Basic assistance to sports talent
19	Balance between physical-technical and psycho-motivational components
20	Dissemination activities of the program

Table 2: The 20 criteria analysed.

Subsequently, the criteria were made explicit by indicators, which were also shared and revised by the partners. Table 3 shows the entire module, where again the changes made following revision by the partners are highlighted in red.

BEST PRACTICE EVALUATION FORM										
PART 1: GENERAL PROGRAM INFORMATION										
	Criteria	Indicator								
1	<i>Program name and website URL</i>	[- Enter the program name - enter the URL of the internet page]								
2	<i>Talent definition</i>	Personality	Motivation	Life experiences	Technical/athletic skills	Mental skills	Environment	Morpho functional features	School skills	Other

		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	[specify]
3	<i>Program development duration</i>	Less than 6 months <input type="checkbox"/>	From 6 months to 1 year <input type="checkbox"/>	2/3 years <input type="checkbox"/>	4/5 years <input type="checkbox"/>	5 years or more <input type="checkbox"/>	Information not available <input type="checkbox"/>			
4	<i>Recipients/development phase of the dual career programme</i>	Present <input type="checkbox"/>	Initial preparation (about 1-8/10) <input type="checkbox"/>	Basic preparation (about 8/10 – 13/15) <input type="checkbox"/>	Specific preparation (about 15-18) <input type="checkbox"/>	Preparation for top performance (about 18-22) <input type="checkbox"/>	Final stage/new profession (adult age – over 25) <input type="checkbox"/>	Information not available <input type="checkbox"/>		
		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
5	<i>Promoter institution</i>	Public <input type="checkbox"/>	Private <input type="checkbox"/>	Institution <input type="checkbox"/>	Information not available <input type="checkbox"/>					
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	[Enter the name of the institution]	<input type="checkbox"/>					
6	<i>Financing</i>	Public <input type="checkbox"/>	Private <input type="checkbox"/>	European projects <input type="checkbox"/>	National projects <input type="checkbox"/>	Company funds <input type="checkbox"/>	Information not available <input type="checkbox"/>	Other <input type="checkbox"/>		
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	[specify]		
7	<i>Partnership</i>	None <input type="checkbox"/>	National <input type="checkbox"/>	International <input type="checkbox"/>	From 1 to 3 partner <input type="checkbox"/>	From 3 to 4 partner <input type="checkbox"/>	Information not available <input type="checkbox"/>	+ 5 <input type="checkbox"/>		
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
NOTE										

PART 2: CONTENT AND GOALS											
	Criteria	Indicator									
8	<i>Sport/talent</i>		[Insert the name of the sport/talent the program is aimed at; if not specified insert the term "General"]								
9	<i>Program entry requirements</i>	Present	Average school grades	Sports titles	Age	Physical characteristics	Psychosocial features	Other			

		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	[specify]	
10	<i>Inclusion</i>	Socio-economic level	Disabled athletes	Ethnicities	Gender	Age	Average school grades	Physical characteristics	Other
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	[specify]
11	<i>Regulation of the position of athletes and staff</i>	Athlete	Sports manager	Coach	Head teacher/director	School teacher/teacher	Parent	Other	
		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	[specify]	
12	<i>Anti-doping and match fixing awareness</i>	Present	Information not available						
		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>						
13	<i>Preventive measures of school and sports drop-out</i>	Present	Leave for sporting events	Make up for missed lessons	Periods without training or shortened training	Study permits	Information not available	Other	
		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	[specify]	
14	<i>Continuing education (after compulsory education)</i>	Athlete	Sports manager	Coach	Head teacher/director	School teacher / teacher	Parent	Information not available	
		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
15	<i>Injury policy</i>	Present	Information not available	financial support	medical support	psychological support			
		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>							
16	<i>Promotion of sports talent life skills</i>	Communication	Success management	Failure management	Time management	Stress management	Problem solving management	Information not available	Other
		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	[specify]

17	<i>Transversal assistance to sports talent</i>	Psychological support	Training orientation	Employment/job orientation	Information not available	Other			
		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	[specify]			
18	<i>Basic assistance to sports talent</i>	Medical assistance	Nutritional assistance	Information not available	Other				
		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	[specify]				
19	<i>Balance between physical-technical and psycho-motivational components</i>	Present	Information not available						
		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>						
20	<i>Dissemination activities of the program</i>	Present	Information not available	Printed (flyers, brochures)	Online (website /blog)	Social media	Other		
		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	[specify]		
NOTE									

Table 3: 'Dual career programme evaluation form'.

The same work on reviewing indicators was developed on the module concerning the construction of the final report in which the results of all analysed dual career programmes were condensed.

Final Report - summary sheet		
PART 1: GENERAL INFORMATION		
	Criteria	Indicator
1	<i>Partner</i>	[Enter the name of the Talent project partner]
2	<i>Total no. of dual career</i>	2.1

	<i>programs found</i>							
3	<i>Total no. of dual career programs identified as best practice</i>	3.1						
4	<i>Total no. of programs found for each of the following stages of sports talent development</i>	4.1 Sport access (early childhood)	4.2 Talent development (childhood)	4.3 Talent confirmation (Teenagers: preadolescence and adolescence)	4.4 Talent mastery (juvenile age)	4.5 Final stage/new profession (adult age)	4.6 Information not available	
5	<i>Total no. of programs found in relation to the promoters indicated below</i>	5.1 Public	5.2 Private	5.3 Mixed	5.4 Information not available			
6	<i>Total no. of programs found in relation to the type of financing</i>	6.1 Public	6.2 Private	6.3 European projects	6.4 National projects	6.5 Company funds	6.6 Information not available	6.7 Other
7	<i>Total no. of programs found in connection with the Partnership</i>	7.1 None	7.2 National	7.3 International	7.4 From 1 to 3 partner	7.5 From 3 to 4 partner	7.6 Information not available	
NOTE [optional]								

PART 2: CONTENT AND GOALS INFORMATION

PART 2: CONTENT AND GOALS INFORMATION							
	Criteria	Indicator					
8	<i>No. of programs found in relation to the sport/type of talent</i>	8.1 sport/talent	8.2 non-specific sport/talent	8.3 Information not available	8.4 Other type of talent		
9	<i>No. of programs found with program entry requirements</i>	9.1 Present	9.2 Not present	9.3 Information not available			
10	<i>No. of programs found in relation to the degree of inclusion</i>	10.1 with socio-economic status	10.2 with different abilities	10.3 based on nationality	10.4 with gender differences	10.5 Other	10.6 Information not available
						[specify]	
11	<i>No. of programs found related to clarity of development stages in relation to sport</i>	11.1 Present	11.2 Not present	11.3 Information not available			
12	<i>No. of programs found in relation to the regulation of the positions of the parties involved (athlete, coach, teachers...)</i>	12.1 present	12.2 Not present	12.3 Information not available			
13	<i>No. of programs found related to having a clear anti-doping philosophy</i>	13.1 Present	13.2 Not present	13.3 Information not available			

1 4	No. of programs found related to drop-out prevention measures	14.1 Present	14.2 Not present	14.3 Information not available			
1 5	No. of programs found in relation to the presence of a lifelong learning approach (after compulsory education)	15.1 Present	15.2 Not present	15.3 Information not available			
1 6	No. of programs found with an injury policy	16.1 Present	16.2 Not present	16.3 Information not available			
1 7	No. of programs found related to promoting life skills of sports talent	17.1 Present	17.2 Not present	17.3 Partly present	17.4 Information not available		
1 8	No. of programs found related to transversal assistance to sports talent	18.1 Present	18.2 Not present	18.3 Partly present	18.4 Information not available		
1 9	No. of programs found related to basic support for sports talent	19.1 Present	19.2 Not present	19.3 Partly present	19.4 Information not available		
2 0	No. of programs found in relation to the Balance between	20.1 Present	20.2 Not present	20.3 Information not available			

<i>physical-technical and psycho-motivational components</i>						
NOTE [optional]						

Table 4: Final Report Form.

Once the review process was completed, therefore, two tools were worked on:

- Best practice evaluation form (for the analysis of each DC programme found).
- Final report/summary sheet (for the overall analysis of the programmes found).

The consortium partners devoted the entire month of March 2023 to data collection.

3.3. Discussion of results

Overall, the total number of Best Practices found is 23, while the total number of analyzed programmes is 55.

A short summary table follows.

Organization/Institution	Nation	Total number of found programmes	Total number of best practices
CI SDZ	Croatia	2	2
Nis University	Serbia	11	0
CSI	Cyprus	2	1
KMOP	Greece	17	14
SMOC	Bosnia-Herzegovina	3	3
Palermo University	Italy	20	3
EAS	Malta	Multiplicator	Multiplicator
Total	7	55	23

Table 5: 'Total programmes and best practices found'.

- DC programmes found in Italy

Most of the dual career programmes found in Italy are in universities. In 20 analyzed programmes 18 are DC programmes promoted by universities. Italian sports associations or government bodies have no DC programmes in place.

In primary and secondary schools, the promotion of motor and sporting activities takes place through projects run directly by the national sports federations within the government's sport and health spa, but they are not specifically aimed at dual careers but rather at promoting sport and a healthy lifestyle. Only one DC programme developed in a school was found where the school in question collaborates with a university institution.

Out of 20 Dual Career programmes analyzed only 3 were identified as best practices as they had at least 10 out of 20 criteria.

Almost all programmes have clear regulations for the athlete to be part of the dual career programme. Some refer to the role of teachers, but few refer to coaches or management staff of the educational or sporting institution.

Only one programme provides psychological support; showing that little attention is paid to psychological and transversal aspects.

2 programmes provide rules in case of injury. This is unexpected considering that it is part of sporting activity and therefore part of an athlete's life to incur an injury.

All programmes provide for drop-out measures. They were in some cases very articulate and specific. Among other things, these preventive measures ranged from the possibility of enjoying examination sessions at the customized educational institution, to the possibility of having a tutor, to the possibility of enjoying the educational institution's own sports facilities, to the possibility of benefiting from accommodation.

In all programmes there is no specific definition of talent, and they are aimed at all sports.

- 1 DC projects found by the European consortium

The results of the desk research revealed some aspects of divergence and convergence between all European member countries of the consortium.

First, the numbers of dual career programmes found are modest, suggesting that much still needs to be done to foster a culture of including young talent in school and vocational training. Only Italy and Greece found an above-average number of programmes.

Although in the Italian case, it is possible to say that the dual-career culture only affects and concerns universities, thus an advanced stage of development. Little or nothing is done with respect to more immature stages of personal development.

The case of Croatia, however, shows a good fervor in favor of the dual career discussion. Indeed, as explained, the Career Centre of the Croatian Olympic Committee implements the project 'Support system for the employment of athletes during their sports career' through which they organize round tables in several cities. In addition, a center for the development of athletes has been established in Zagreb. A web application was created for athletes to ask the Centre for help and to follow and communicate. The Centre also created a manual for athletes, coaches and parents on injury prevention and organized seminars on dual careers. The plan is to apply for new EU funds in the near future to ensure the further functioning of the center.

Countries also show different sensitivity and attention to the following aspects:

- age and care of talent. The situation is clear with respect to the fact that no dual career programme was found in relation to the age group up to 8 years. Only 11 programmes out of 55 (1 in Italy, 1 in Cyprus, 9 in Serbia) are aimed at the 8 to 17 age group, an age group defined as the Talent Confirmation group (Teenagers: preadolescence and adolescence). Whereas 22 programmes out of 55 (of which 19 in Italy, 1 in Cyprus, 1 in Serbia and 1 in Croatia) refer to the age range between 18 and 25, an age range defined as: Talent mastery (juvenile age). Finally, 6 programmes out of 55 (3 in Bosnia Herzegovina, 1 in Serbia and 2 in Croatia) refer to the adult age (over 25).

- Anti-doping philosophy. Indeed, while in Croatia 2 out of 2 programmes have an anti-doping philosophy and in Serbia 2 out of 9, in the other European countries, the anti-doping philosophy in the programmes found is not present. Only 4 programmes (7.2%) out of a total of 55 programmes analyzed, therefore, include a clear anti-doping philosophy.

- Injury policies. In this respect, too, the conditions of the programmes vary. The countries whose programmes have accident policies are Croatia (2 out of 2 programmes), Cyprus (1 out of 2 programmes), Italy (2 out of 20 programmes). Only 4 programmes (7.2%) out of a total of 55 programmes analyzed, therefore, provide for accident policies.

- Attention to transversal aspects. Several countries have programmes with a focus on transversal skills, promoting life skills and thus transversal care. For example, in Croatia 2 out of 2 programmes tend to promote life skills. In Cyprus, one programme shows a focus on transversal skills. In Greece 14 out of 17 programmes have a Lifelong Learning perspective, promotion of Life skills and transversal assistance. This is also the case in Bosnia and Herzegovina where 3 out of 3 programmes include the promotion of lifelong learning and transversal assistance to the individual. Finally, in Italy, 11 out of 20 programmes have a focus on providing transversal assistance.

- Type of financing. It is interesting to note that 18 out of 55 programmes (13 in Greece, 3 in Bosnia-Herzegovina and 2 in Croatia) provide funding from European funds.

Possible criticalities of the desk research conducted:

- absence of existing programs whose information is not available on the web. It is possible that there are programs that do not provide for social reporting that provides for the sharing of information on the web and therefore due to the characteristics of the desk research it was not possible to find them.

- Different ways to interpret and identify a best practice. A clear and shared criterion has not been established among the partners with respect to what is meant by best practice. It was simply made clear that a program that contains a good number of criteria can be defined as a best practice.

- Difficulty in using evaluation models. A difficulty was noted with respect to the use of the evaluation models created, although before the start of the desk research, the meanings of the criteria were shared and reviewed as well as the two models used.

Conclusion

People who play sport at a competitive level, or who have a predisposition for a particular sport, such that they are defined as talented, face difficulties in making the connection between their sporting career and training or employment agencies (EU, 2012). The expert performance, which a person achieves when playing a sport, requires, in the first instance, training in terms of intensive training, and competitions, in which the person is involved in competitions that are held both nationally and internationally. These continuous training sessions are very often abruptly interrupted when the person is unable to reconcile the demands coming from the world of education, and work, with sports activities. In these circumstances, the sportsman or woman with talent, or in training of his or her talent, finds himself or herself in the position of having to choose between continuing the training activity in sport or continuing the training activity in the world of education or work (EU, 2012). The European Union, in the face of these issues, which arise between the gifted person and the context, develops some measures that are referred to as dual career paths through the publication of guidelines: 'European Guidelines on Dual Careers for Talents' (EU, 2012). What this type of pathway should implement is to be able to go and facilitate the person's career by allowing them a possible integration into both the worlds of education and work (EU, 2012).

L'analisi effettuata, però, pone in evidenza quanto poco tutto ciò si traduce in programmi operativi di doppia carriera che potrebbero notevolmente migliorare il

percorso di studio e/o sportivo nell'ottica della prevenzione del drop-out sia scolastico che sportivo.

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