

Thematic Article

Dual Career through the Analysis of Policy Documents: A Case Study Focusing on Athletics

David Olah¹, Petra Nyisztor², Szilvia Borbely³, Jozsef Bogнар⁴

Recommended citation:

Olah, D., Nyisztor, P., Borbely, Sz., & Bogнар, J. (2022). Dual career through the analysis of policy documents: a case study focusing on athletics. *Central European Journal of Educational Research*, 4(1), 86–96. <https://doi.org/10.37441/cej/2022/4/1/10726>

Abstract

Careers can be influenced by several factor groups: opportunities provided by (1) the environment, (2) ambition, and (3) personal aptitude (Juhász & Matiscsákné Lizák, 2014). In the case of a dual career in sports, an athlete's career is not limited to sports only, but also can include education. It is worthwhile for sportsmen to learn alongside their athletic career. For, a sporting career can come to an end at any time due to any unexpected event (Baráth et al., 2014). This dual career's success depends heavily on the people in the athlete's immediate environment. In our research, we used a qualitative method to conduct a content analysis of policy documents and semi-structured interviews with Olympians of three countries, one from Slovenia, one from Germany, and one from Hungary. We divided up our investigation into questions related to funding, professional background and studies. Their opinions showed that all three athletes are satisfied with the support they receive for their current dual careers, with only the Slovenian athlete feeling a slight deficiency. They have successfully combined their studies and sport, and all three have attended or are currently attending higher education. It can be concluded that all sport policy efforts show the potential for dual career assistance with a focus on self-efficacy. No differences can be found in the expectations of these elite athletes, and all feel the need to continue their studies in addition to sporting, regardless of whether or not it coincides with their previous studies. As regards the need to continue studying, the Slovenian athlete felt the least need. This degree of "need" does not affect the performance of the athletes in their respective sports, as all of them love sports. All receive adequate funding as well. In all three countries studied, we found such a level of support for the athlete that ought to be held up as 'good practice'. The German competitor in particular possesses such professional staff that we would highlight and recommend it as good practice to follow.

Keywords: dual career, sporting careers in sport, sport and learning, athletics

Introduction

A career is a life path, defined by three basic sets of factors known as personal attributes (skills, abilities and financial situation of the family), environmental opportunities, and ambition and determination (Juhász & Matiscsákné Lizák, 2014). For young athletes, however, a sporting career may not be enough. Thus, the goal is to successfully combine their sporting careers with studies in higher education (Forster, 2010). Referred to as a dual career, this pairs the athlete's sports endeavours with academic duties parallelly, in a way the two areas support each other and lead to both high levels of sporting achievement and to a qualification or profession in the chosen field (Uebel, 2006).

¹ Hungarian Football Federation, Budapest, Hungary; olahd88@gmail.com

² University of Nyíregyháza, Nyíregyháza, Hungary; zajaczpetra96@gmail.com

³ University of Nyíregyháza, Nyíregyháza, Hungary; borbely.szilvia@nye.hu

⁴ Eszterházy Károly Catholic University, Eger, Hungary; bogнар.jozsef@uni-eszterhazy.hu

The value of this combination is reflected in the following sports performance studies from the Olympic games. Between 1996 and 2012, 61% of Olympic medals won by British athletes were won by athletes who had previously studied or at the time of the competition had been studying at the tertiary level. For Australians, the proportion of medals won by student-athletes in Athens in 2004 was 39%, which rose to 61% during the 2016 Rio Olympics. A study of the Institute of Sport of the Australian National University in Canberra found that more medals were won by Australian Olympic team athletes studying in tertiary education than were won by their non-student counterparts. Similar trends are also found in France, Finland and Japan (Aquilina, 2013; Shimizu et al., 2016).

Nevertheless, it is not entirely clear what causes this ever increasing impact of dual careers on the Olympic Games (Knapp, 2012). It could be the positive effect of the continuation of studies. However, it is also possible that the high number of athletes in the Olympic Games is due to the increasing proportion of dual-career athletes. It might also be that this increase in the number of dual-career athletes is the only reason for the increase in their performance.

Balancing a sporting career with education is not always easy. Several factors can influence the length of a sporting career. An adult-age athlete needs to make decisions that support their sporting career and, at the same time, lay the foundations for a life after retirement from professional sports (Velenczei et al., 2009; Gósi & Faragó, 2020). A study in Russia also found that post-career life is a significant problem among athletes playing sports at the national level. They tend to be uncertain about their future, and consider it important to get help with their integration back into society. This primarily means that they expect financial and educational assistance (Shutova et al., 2019). However, De Brandt et al. (2017) set up a dual career competence model in their study. The research highlighted that women prioritise their studies and degrees over sports more often than men. Also, drop-out from education is more common for team athletes, while drop-out from the sporting career is more typical of individual athletes.

A study investigating dual careers in Hungary involving athletes from 38 sports showed that a national strategy is needed to address this problem (Farkas et al., 2017). Similar conclusions were reached by Oláh et al. (2018), who investigated the relationship of elite footballers to learning. However, aligning the two areas is not impossible. In a survey of teachers and students at the University of Debrecen, it was found that at the beginning they can align the two areas, but education becomes more and more important when they approach the end of their studies. Both lecturers and athletes are aware of the career supporting opportunities available at the institution, but they also point out their dangers (Lenténé Puskás, 2014; 2016a; 2016b; 2017).

International policy documents

Sport has a vital role to play, both in organisational, social and economic terms. The importance of dual careers is highlighted as a powerful tool to help competitive athletes successfully enter the labour market at the end of their sporting careers. Some of the international guidelines, including the objectives, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The aims of international policy documents

International documents	Aims
White Paper on Sports (Commission of the European Communities, 2007)	Helping people to be employed in the labour market. Helping people to find a job within an organisation (sports club)
EU Guidelines on Dual Careers of Athletes (European Union, 2012)	Strengthening links between member states, assistance in the field of education
ATLETYC program	Encouraging the acquisition of entrepreneurial qualifications
DC4AC project (European Union, 2012)	Highlighting dual career awareness, developing support criteria
ESTPORT	Establishing cooperation, supporting higher education (developing a teaching model)

The objectives of the policy documents also include supporting sport development, the athletes themselves and their sponsors. Awareness and support for the role of dual careers can only be achieved in partnership with stakeholders.

The definition of our objective was preceded by several research questions, which were systematically analysed based on the literature reviewed. Those questions are as follows:

- Do career models exist, and can they be detected in the sport policy aspirations of the different nationalities?
- What types of support are reflected in different national policy documents, and how are these reflected in athletes?
- Does the professional background influence the satisfaction with the needs?

Based on these findings, our research aims to analyse, as a case study, the funding opportunities, sports programmes and scholarship opportunities of three nations and to understand the expectations and needs of Olympic athletes from these three different countries concerning sport and dual careers.

Research design and Methods

To interpret the results of our research, as a first step, we examined the documents on sports subsidies in three countries (Germany, Slovenia, and Hungary). The strategy of document analysis means that we applied a system which categorized and examined a wide range of documentary sources that fall within a broad range of written documents on pedagogical processes and the possibilities for supporting dual careers.

We then carried out a comparative study, using a qualitative method, among Olympic athletes from the three nations previously studied. By visiting the athletes in person, we explored the differences between the nations by focusing on the interviewees' own experiences, feelings and subjective opinions. For this purpose, semi-structured interviews were used, as this type of interview is mainly used to collect non-objective and quantifiable facts. In our interview, 42 questions were asked, which were divided into three broad categories. The first block of questions was related to subsidies, the second to explore the athletes' professional background and the third block of questions to their studies. The interviews were carried out in the summer of 2020. The Hungarian and Slovenian athletes were interviewed during the summer training camps, and the German athlete was interviewed in an online (skype) conversation. The nations were selected by quota sampling. Athletes training in the same location at the same time were included in the sample.

One of the athletes interviewed is a Slovenian high jumper who competed at the Rio 2016 Olympics, the 2017 and 2019 European Indoor Championships and the World Indoor Championships (Table 2). The next interviewee is a Hungarian male race walker who participated in the 2016 Rio Olympics, the 2017 World Championships, where he set a new national record coming in 6th place, the 2018 European Championships and the 2019 World Championships Doha. Finally, a German high jumper was interviewed who competed at the Rio 2016 Olympics, the 2017 European Indoor Championships, the 2018 World Championships and the European Championships, and who also achieved a podium finish at the 2018 European Championships.

Table 2. The introduction of the interviewees

	Slovenian (SLO)	German (GER)	Hungarian (HUN)
Nationality			
Sport	athletics	athletics	athletics
Event	high jump	high jump	race walking
Gender	female	female	male
Age	28	30	31
Dual career	obtained a higher educational degree	learning in higher education	learning in higher education
Best results	participants in the Olympic Games in 2016		
	participants of the European Athletics Indoor Championship and World Athletics Indoor Championship in 2017		
	participants of the European Championship in 2018		
	participant in the World Championship in 2019		participant in the World Championship in 2019

Results

National documents to support dual career – a comparison of policy documents from three nations (Table 3).

Hungary's sports programme, scholarship opportunities

Among the support schemes for junior and adult athletes in Hungary, the Hérakléusz Championship programme was launched in 2001 with 13 sports. Today, the programme covers twenty Olympic sports. The professional mission of the programme is to develop athletes who reach international standards by adulthood. The project helps the most talented 14-18-year-old athletes to start a successful long-term career by providing regular training camps and training, employing full-time coaches to coordinate the programmes, and conducting scientific measurements and studies. Through a related form, the support scheme covers athletes in the specified age groups of the Hérakléusz Championship programme or those not registered in it. This programme makes it possible to identify, select, train and improve the care of talented athletes and will focus on supporting and promoting the organisations, tasks and professional programmes that form the basis for quality training, taking the specificities and profiles of the sports into account. The tasks set out here are in line with the ideas set out in international documents, i.e., raising awareness early of the role of dual careers and garnering support for the parties involved (European Commission, n.d.).

The Aladar Gerevich National Sports Scholarship Programme is a form of support for youth and adult athletes and their coaches. However, only athletes who are members of the national team are eligible. For them, the grant may also provide funding to pay for their studies.

Participants in the Életút (Life Pathways) programme for adult competitors are Olympians who can apply for the scholarship by filling out and sending in a form requesting the benefits indicated. The forms received will be sent to a committee, which will divide the applicants into three categories, with different amounts for tuition and dormitory support. The programme also supports individual study schedules, tutors and coaches, in addition to unrestricted use of the university's sports facilities (Hungarian Olympic Committee, n.d.). This will help to integrate athletes into the university environment while supporting their sporting careers.

In parallel, the Hungarian Sports Stars Scholarship aims to support students in Olympic sports who are students at higher educational institutions and who have the potential to win a European, World or Olympic medal during their studies. In this case, the support means financial assistance (Ministry of Human Capacities, n.d.).

Sports programme and scholarship opportunities of the Republic of Slovenia

The issue of dual careers is important in Slovenia as well. Thus, several studies have addressed the issue (Kerštajn & Topič, 2017; Gorenc & Braz, 2022; Robnik et al., 2022). In the National Sports Programme of the Republic of Slovenia, the general aim of the measures is to provide quality sport opportunities for the population and increase access to sports. The measures of the 2014-2023 National Sports Programme in the Republic of Slovenia can be divided into seven sections in line with the programme's main objectives, and the measures are based on these objectives. Some of these sections are examined more thoroughly later on. The objectives and programmes of each sport are different for diverse groups of people, according to their abilities (knowledge, skills, attributes and motivation) and age. Sports programmes represent professionally organised and managed sport in practice. Participants in the educational programme are provided with at least 180 minutes of high-quality physical education per week from kindergarten to the end of their secondary schooling, according to the European Parliament resolution. Strategic objectives include maintaining the number of top-level athletes, and the number of medals won at the Olympic Games. The book includes a special chapter on dual careers. An important benchmark for the state is the employment of the best athletes and the best coaches in governmental entities, as both a top athlete and a coach can only be successful if they are provided with social and economic security in addition to the right conditions for training and competition. Programmes like Erasmus allow international students to study in Slovenia. The majority of Slovenian universities offer courses in Slovenian, but many best universities also offer programmes in English. International students, whose mother tongue is not English or Slovenian, must prove their language proficiency in one of the languages. Incoming international students usually study at the University of Ljubljana, University of Maribor, University of Nova Gorica, University of Primorska and Alma Mater Europaea. Almost all of these universities offer English language programmes. State universities are free of charge for local students and EU students. The following scholarships are available for international students studying or considering studying in Slovenia (non-exhaustive list): the EMUNI University Scholarship, the Primorska University Scholarship, the IEDC Bled Management School Scholarship (Saeed, 2021). The best athletes spend most of their time and energy on training and competitions and are often absent from the educational process, which affects their success in obtaining a degree. Athletes often face difficulties to develop another career when their sporting careers end, as many lack the necessary qualifications and experience. For this reason, so-called 'certificates of athletic-friendly education' are awarded to educational institutions that guarantee the conditions for athletes to pursue dual careers. The main aim is to facilitate the completion of secondary school and the transition to higher education through partner institutions (The Olympic Committee of Slovenia, n.d.).

German strategy papers, action plans

The German literature also deals with this issue, both concerning university students and secondary school students. Enabling elite athletes to pursue a career at school is also seen as a priority area (Borggreffe & Cachay, 2012; Sallen et al., 2018; Sallen et al., 2019; Niehues et al., 2021). The government considers that the financing of elite sport deserves special attention. Sports funding for schools and the population is the responsibility of the federal states and/or local communities. The National Action Plan 'IN FORM' (Nationaler Aktionsplan IN FORM) aims to improve attitudes towards nutrition and physical activity in Germany. Germany has become a popular destination for international students seeking international education. German universities offer internationally recognised programmes, and there are a significant number of scholarships available, allowing international students to study in Germany for free. Some scholarship opportunities include the Deutschland Stipendium National Scholarship Programme, DAAD Scholarship Programmes and Erasmus scholarship programmes (Scholars4dev, 2022).

Table 3. Financing forms by countries

Hungary	Germany	Republic of Slovenia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Héraklész Championship programme • Sport XXI. Programme • Life Path Programme • Hungarian Sports Stars Scholarship • ESTPORT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nationaler Aktionsplan IN FORM • „Sport: Bündnisse! Bewegungsbildung-Teilhabe” • DAAD Scholarship Program • Erasmus scholarship programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Sports Programme • National programme of sport in Republic of Slovenia 2014–2023 • EMUNI University Scholarship • Primorska University Scholarship • ‘Certificate of athletic-friendly education’
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial support • Erasmus scholarship programmes (European Commission, n.d.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment of coaches and athletes in governmental entities • Existence of a national action plan • Erasmus scholarship programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of a multiannual national sports programme • Erasmus scholarship programmes (Jurak & Samardžija, 2014)

Participating athletes’ aims and experiences, interview analysis

In the following section, we present the professional background of the athletes in the results of their interviews (Table 4). All three athletes had been pursuing sport since primary school and had started playing sport because of someone in the school. Their PE teacher discovered their talent and helped them find a suitable coach, making sport a prominent part of their daily lives, which they have maintained for a long time thanks to the encouragement of family and friends and a good community. They each encountered athletics in different ways: the Slovenian athlete through his primary school principal, the German athlete through his grandfather and PE teacher, and the Hungarian athlete through his parents. They all have competed in many world competitions, but the Hungarian athlete is most proud of her first national title, while the other two women are most proud of their participation in the Olympics.

Their short-term goals were to maintain a healthy lifestyle, exercise and stay healthy, and their long-term goal was to participate in international competitions. They also tried other sports besides athletics. The Slovenian competitor was and still is a dancer, the German lady, as a student of physical education, has tried all sports at a basic level, and our Hungarian walker also tried football and karate. The Slovenian and Hungarian competitors have no other family members who are competitors in sports, while the German athlete has two younger siblings competing in some sport.

The duration of the training varies, depending on the time of the training period, but averages around 15–20 hours weekly. No serious injuries have been reported, and if they have had injuries, they have recovered within a few weeks. The Slovenian competitor’s recovery from injuries was not significantly helped by the association, while the German’s and Hungarian’s recoveries were greatly assisted. This was most likely because they had the right professional background to successfully shorten the rehabilitation and recovery period without affecting the quality of the recovery, and they kept the athletes under constant observation during that period. However, the Slovenian and Hungarian athletes received little support during their recovery, while the German competitor received full support. The professional staff members included a physiotherapist, physical therapist, and masseur for the Slovenian and Hungarian athletes, but the German lady had a much larger team behind her. Her team includes, for instance, biomechanics specialists, doctors, nutritionists, psychologists and, most importantly for training, a mentor teacher to help combine education with sport.

All three competitors are supported in their dual careers through training camps. The Slovenian athlete does not attend training camps very often, while the German and Hungarian athletes attend several training camps a year, the duration of which varies, as the location of the camp has a significant influence. The Hungarian race walker prefers to train alone, while the two foreign competitors prefer to train in a team, as they feel that it is easier to maintain motivation and help each other. During the technical training, however, they too prefer to train alone.

When asked why they stayed in athletics, they unanimously said that it was because they love it, it is their passion, they are the most talented in this sport, and they can compete not only with others but also with themselves. Both the Slovenian and the German were allowed to choose their coach and their club, but none of them changed, while the Hungarian athlete was not allowed to choose. The female athletes plan to continue competing for 1–2 more years and then, depending on their results, will decide whether to continue or end their athletic careers, while the Hungarian athlete plans to continue competing for at least another four years.

After their sporting careers, all three would like to find a job in their profession, while the Slovenian competitor also plans to get married and start a family. We also asked them their opinion concerning the downside of competitive sport. They all had the same opinion: little free time, much sacrifice, much pressure and when they do not do well, the negative press also appears. The latter, however, is often outweighed by the results.

Table 4. Results of the first block of interview questions

Mapping the professional background (aims, appearance of other sports, injury, support)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They aim to participate in international competitions • No significant injuries, differences in the amount of rehabilitation assistance received from the association • In sport, athletes are directly supported by the following professionals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'physiotherapist' (SLO) • 'coach, masseur, physical therapist' (HUN) • 'we have quite a big team behind us: coaches, biomechanics experts, doctors, physiotherapists, physical therapists, nutritionists, psychologists, mentor teachers, head coaches of the federation and so on'(GER)

The results of the study-related survey show that all three athletes liked to attend physical education classes, which meant at least two classes per week (Table 5). They had an excellent relationship with their PE teachers, and all teachers supported them in their sporting careers. They had average or better academic results at primary school, and all three were studying or had studied at college or university (the Slovenian lady had already obtained a master's degree).

Table 5. Results of the second block of interview questions

Study-related survey (relationship with PE teacher and PE curriculum, support from teachers, current studies)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers fully supported them • Hungarian and German competitors are currently university students, Slovenian competitor has recently obtained a Master's degree

The third block of questions asked about the expectations and needs for support. Within support, the spirit or morale of athletes came to the forefront. The psychological preparation of competitors is different for everyone. The Slovenian high jumper is supported by his coach, the Hungarian high jumper by his family, including his wife and parents, while the German high jumper has a professional psychologist who accompanies him to competitions and training camps and can be contacted by phone or online if needed. In terms of financial support, the Slovenian competitor can rely on the state and himself while the Hungarian competitor is supported by his association, his sponsor or the Hungarian Athletics Association. In contrast, besides the support from associations and sponsors, there is a prize at competitions on the German side, which may include a bonus. The military and police are in contact with the Olympic Committee, for, they pay in to the competitor's salary. All three were considered to be adequately supported by the association. Regarding the support provided by the federations, the Slovenian competitor is dissatisfied, while the Hungarian and German competitors are satisfied. The German competitor pointed out that the association funds training camps, out-of-competition events, frame training and also supports her biological surveys. Moreover, their training camps cost a considerable amount of money, as they go several times a year and organise training camps outside Europe. As far as sponsors are concerned, the only athlete from among the three without one is the Slovenian. The German receives so many offers from sponsors that she can choose the one that suits her best. Though only two of the athletes have sponsors, the association supports all competitors with competition equipment. Regarding income apart from the sports salary, only the Slovenian competitor has extra money from a part-time job. In educational institutions, Slovenian and Hungarian competitors have received considerable support, such as exemption from the participation in seminars and sports scholarships at the university. For the German athlete, educational institutions (so-called partners) provide support for those in professional sports at lower and higher educational levels as well. Ultimately, it is up to any German athletes to decide whether to study at one of these institutions with the support or to combine their studies with their sporting activity without it. There is no obstacle for Slovenians and Hungarians to reconcile competitive sport and civilian life, but for German athletes, it is a little

difficult because it is disorganised. Despite this disarray, German athletes are aware of the opportunities supporting dual careers, and there is a career adviser on the Olympic Committee who can help if the athlete runs into problems. The coaches have been and are explicitly supporting their students in their studies, as they think it essential for their athletes to have a qualification in addition to their sporting careers. The Slovenian competitor must take on a part-time job because she lacks a sponsor and a stable source of income from the state. The other two competitors are satisfied and do not lack any support.

Table 6. Results of the third block of interview questions

Survey on subsidies (psychological preparation, nature and quality of support)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The following people support the competitors in their psychological preparation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>'my coach'</i> (SLO) • <i>'my wife and my family'</i> (HUN) • <i>'we have a professional psychologist who is with us at training camps and other events, or we can contact him by phone or online'</i> (GER) • Their supporters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>'me and the state provide support'</i> (SLO) • <i>'the association, the sponsor and the Hungarian Athletics Association provides financial support'</i> (HUN) • <i>'financial support is provided by the association and sponsors'</i> (GER) • They all receive support in education: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>'I have received a significant support from the university'</i> (SLO) • <i>'I receive a sports scholarship from the university'</i> (HUN) • <i>'in higher education, a mentor teacher helps me to combine sport with school tasks'</i> (GER)

Conclusions

In our theoretical part, we mentioned the international policy orientations, presented the forms of support and programmes of the countries concerned, and reviewed the latest national and international literature. This has shown that there are already initiatives and programmes in the field of dual careers, but they are still in their early stages, and there is no central programme that could be adopted as a model to follow. So far, there have only been guidelines. It is not easy for elite athletes to find their place in society alongside their sporting successes, so it is vital to support them in their civilian careers (Madarász, 2017). In our preliminary research among Hungarian athletes (finalists in the national championships), we found that athletes need more opportunities to support dual careers to harmonise their sporting careers and participation in education (Nyisztor et al., 2020). Therefore, in our study, we set a specific objective to conduct a documentary analysis and interview study to answer the previous questions to analyse them in an international context. In the analysis of international sports strategies, we examined the forms of support and sports programmes of three nations, which could serve as good practices for other countries.

In conclusion, the provision of 'dual career' training for young athletes and the provision of high-quality local training centres should be in place to protect their moral, educational and professional interests. Ensuring that young elite athletes receive a quality education parallel to their training as athletes requires the development of European guidelines for combined sports training and general education, which should be linked to national policy documents. In this way, the proposal for European guidelines on 'dual careers' could aim to ensure that young sportspeople receive a quality education alongside their sports training. In summarising the policy documents of the three nations, it can be concluded that all three cases fit international objectives. The employment of coaches and sportspeople in public administrations can be found in the Slovenian and German sports strategies. Social and economic recognition for the successful relationship and achievements of coach and athlete are not prominent in all nations. Funding for professional sports is the strongest for German athletes. The Hungarian programmes help the networking of universities and associations to support elite athletes. Career models cannot be shown based on the documents consulted, but the importance of financial support and the role of tutoring in studies can be demonstrated in all cases. After their careers, athletes want to move on to other

fields, and they expect help not only from the state but also from parents, friends and coaches. Conscious preparation for retirement is already taking place in higher education, so university lecturers have a significant role in shaping the future of athletes. They would need to participate in counselling or programmes to help them in the transition to civilian life (Farkas, 2017; Baráth et al., 2014).

In the interviews, we included Olympians from these three nations to examine whether the forms of support and programmes found in each country were present in the subjects of the study. In the first part, we investigated the types of support and strategies and searched for their implementation in the interviewees' responses. Of the three nations, we encountered a sports programme in Slovenia and forms of support in Hungary and Germany. Slovenian athletes still feel a lack of support. However, German and Hungarian athletes are satisfied. It is particularly striking that the German competitor has a significant professional team behind her, which could serve as an example for other nations to follow. It can be concluded that all sport policy efforts show the potential for dual career assistance, focusing on self-efficiency. According to Gósi and Salló (2017), sport-specific training (referee, coach) would be needed already during the careers of athletes so that they could continue to work in their own sport. There is no difference in the expectations of elite athletes in the three countries, with all three athletes feeling the need to receive support for their studies in addition to their sporting activities, regardless of studies whether or not it coincides with their previous studies. The Slovenian athlete has the lowest level of needs. This does not affect the performance of the athletes, as all three of them love sport, which they do as professional athletes with adequate funding. As shown, the German athlete has the highest professional background, but the other two athletes were also satisfied with this funding opportunity. It can be argued that the policy documents are consistent with the interview and the supporting options from which the German dual career support system stands out. The support options vary across sectors, but it can be concluded that the more well-planned and conscious a career end is, the easier and less complicated the career change is (Wylleman et al., 2004).

For all three countries, we can highlight 'good practices' that could be implemented in other countries: for Slovenia, the availability of a comprehensive national sports strategy; for Hungary, the provision of many and varied forms of support for elite athletes; and for Germany, the existence of a multifaceted professional team for athletes can be emphasised. We also aim to extend dual career research to other sports, as a multi-criteria observation can foreshadow a complex strategic direction. We aim to pay particular attention to football academies in Hungary, involving the whole population in the research.

In the interests of holistic development, talented, professional athletes have the right to combine their sporting and academic careers (e.g. dual careers). Both are important to enable them to play their future role in society at the end of their competitive careers. Although athletes enrolled at university level have the opportunity to compete in multi-sport international and continental university sporting events (e.g. Universiade, World University Championships), there are relevant differences in the requirements and eligibility criteria for dual career programmes and services worldwide, which determine the unequal treatment of elite student-athletes.

In our study, we have shown that student-athletes not only compete at the highest international levels (e.g. World Games, World Cups and Olympic Games) but also at a wide range of academic disciplines and academic levels. It is clear that elite student-athletes with similar experience and time spent playing sport have the most extensive experience of the complexities of dual career paths at the university level. In fact, each student-athlete's needs and lifelong development plans are very unique. However, regardless of the country-related aspects, both participation in elite sport and university education are equally demanding. Therefore, the valuable insights of student-athletes must be taken into account to avoid that sporting success is at the expense of educational achievement. In particular, several important needs have been identified which are also necessary from an international perspective:

1. the establishment of an international agreement on minimum standards for dual career services.
2. the provision of specific educational programmes on academic and sporting requirements
3. informing student-athletes about their dual career rights, programmes, services, financial resources, and the tools and opportunities available in their home country as a transnational student-athlete.

In this respect, close cooperation between dual career stakeholders and the media, the development of support materials, and communication campaigns could be strongly envisaged. Furthermore, to enhance the potential of future athletes, it is strongly recommended that stakeholders join a dual career network that promotes transnational cooperation and the sharing of knowledge and good practices through wide communication.

Acknowledgments: We thank Johnathan Dabney for the English language editing.

References

- Aquilina, D. (2013). A Study of the Relationship Between Elite Athletes' Educational Development and Sporting Performance. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 30(4), 374–392.
- Baráth, K., Bardocz-Bencsik, M., Farkas, J., Gösi, Zs., Kassay, L., Kozsla, T., & Nagy, J. (2014). *Oktatás, képzés, képesítés és kettős karrier a sportban. A fizikai aktivitás és a sport magyarországi dimenzióinak feltárása*. [Education, training, qualifications and dual careers in sport. Exploring the dimensions of physical activity and sport in Hungary]. TÁMOP-6.1.2/11/2-2012-0002 kódszámú projekt. Magyar Sportmenedzsment Társaság – Magyar Sporttudományi Társaság.
- Borggreffe, C., & Cachay, K. (2012). „Dual Careers”: The structural coupling of Elite Sport and School Exemplified by the German Verbundsysteme. *European Journal of Sport and Society*, 9(1+2), 57–80.
- Commission of the European Communities (2007). *White Paper on Sport (2007)*. Retrieved from: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/HU/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM%3A135010>
- De Brandt, K., Wylleman, P., Torregrossa, M., Defruyt, S., & Van Rossem, N. (2017). Student-athletes' perceptions of four dual career competencies. *Revista de Psicología del Deporte*, 26(4), 28–33.
- European Commission (n.d.). *EACEA National Policies Platform – Germany*. Retrieved from: <https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki/chapters/germany/73-sport-youth-fitness-and-physical-activity>
- European Commission (n.d.). *EACEA National Policies Platform – Hungary*. Retrieved from: <https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki/chapters/hungary/73-sport-youth-fitness-and-physical-activity>
- European Union (2012). *A sportolók kettős karrierjéről szóló Európai Unió irányelvek, 2012* [EU Guidelines on Dual Careers of Athletes, 2012]. Retrieved from: <https://docplayer.hu/106612104-A-sportolok-kettos-karrierjerol-szolo-europai-unios-iranyelvek.html>
- Farkas, J., Jókai, M., & Kozsla, T. (2017). Chances of Dual Career Development in Sport in Hungary. *Physical education, sport, science*, 2(1–2), 83–90.
- Forster, J. (2010). *Students as Top-Athletes “Promotion of the „Dual Career “In Sports and Academics”*. Report presented at the EAS conference in Berlin, German.
- Gorenc, M., & Braz, M. (2022): The Influence of Top Athletes' Personal Factors on the Successful Coordination of Their Dual Careers. *International Journal of Management, Knowledge and Learning*, 11, 47–56.
- Gösi, Zs., & Faragó, B. (2020). Kompetencia, sport, tanulás a sporttudományi képzésben résztvevő hallgatók nézőpontjából [Competence, sport education from the perspective of students in sports science education]. *Training and practice*, 18(1–2), 23–32.
- Gösi, Zs., & Sallói, I. (2017). Kettős karrier- sport és/tanulás. Fialat sportolók lehetőségei a labdarúgás példáján keresztül [Chances of Dual Career Development in Sport in Hungary]. *Magyar Sporttudományi Szemle*, 18(70), 40–41.
- Hungarian Olympic Committee (n.d.). *Life Pathway Programme*. Retrieved from: <http://olimpia.hu/eletut-program>
- Juhász, I., & Matiscsákné Lizák, M. (2014). *Emberi erőforrás-gazdálkodás [Human resource management]*. Eszterházy Károly Egyetem.
- Jurak, G., & Samardžija, P. P. (2014). *National Programme Of Sport In The Republic Of Slovenia*. Ministry of Education Science and Planica Institute of Sports of the Republic of Slovenia.
- Kerštajn, R., & Topič, M. D. (2017). Motivation of Slovenian and Norwegian Nordic Athletes towards Sports, Education and Dual Career. *European Journal of Social Sciences Education and Research*, 4(1).
- Knapp, D. (2012). *Performance of student- athletes at Olympic Games*. Australian University Sport.
- Lenténé Puskás, A. (2014). A párhuzamos karrierépítés lehetőségei élsportoló egyetemisták körében [The benefits of dual career for elite athlete-students at the university]. *Taylor: Gazdálkodás és szervezéstudományi folyóirat: A virtuális intézet Közép-Európa kutatására közleményei*, 6(1–2), 403–412.
- Lenténé Puskás, A. (2016a). Lecturers' opinion on institutional regulations supporting athletes' dual career. *Taylor: Gazdálkodás és szervezéstudományi folyóirat: A virtuális intézet Közép-Európa kutatására közleményei*, 8(4), 54–64.
- Lenténé Puskás, A. (2016b). The dimensions of career planing and the change of athletic commitment among elite university student athlete. *Taylor: Gazdálkodás és szervezéstudományi folyóirat: A virtuális intézet Közép-Európa kutatására közleményei*, 8(3), 143–150.
- Lenténé Puskás, A. (2017). *A sportolói karrier és a tanulmányok összehangolásának lehetőségei és kihívásai a Debreceni Egyetemen. Doktori értekezés. [Characteristics and opportunities of balancing the athletic career and academic studies at the University of Debrecen. Doctoral thesis]*. Debreceni Egyetem.
- Madarász, T. (2017). Motiváció és jövőkép az egyéni sportágak vezetőinek szemszögéből [Motivation and vision of the driver individual sports perspective]. *Taylor: Gazdálkodás és szervezéstudományi folyóirat: A virtuális intézet Közép-Európa kutatására közleményei*, 9(3–4), 182–188.

- Ministry of Human Capacities (n.d.). *Magyar Sportsillagok Ösztöndíj [Hungarian Sports Stars Scholarship]* Retrieved from: <https://emmiugyfelszolgalat.gov.hu/felsooktatas/magyar-sportsillagok-osztondij/magyar-sportsillagok>
- Niehues, M., Gerlach, E., & Sallen, J. (2021). Measuring dual career motivation among German student-athletes using the Student Athletes' Motivation Toward Sports and Academics Questionnaire. *Ger J Exerc Sport Res*, 51, 378–383.
- Nyisztor, P., Molnár, A., Borbély, Sz., & Oláh, D. (2020). A sportolók kettős karrierjéhez kapcsolódó szükségletek és elvárások vizsgálata atléták körében [Examining the needs and expectations related to the dual careers of athletes among athletes]. *Magyar Sporttudományi Szemle*, 21(85), 74
- Oláh, D., Hegedüs, F., & Bognár, J. (2018). Associations between athletes' career and learning in elite football players. *Acta Universitatis de Carlo Esterházy Nominatae: Sectio Sport*, 45, 5–15.
- Robnik P., Kolar E., Štrumbelj, B., & Ferjan, M. (2022). *Dual Career Development Perspective: Factors Affecting Quality of Post-sport Career Transition of Employed Olympic Athletes*. *Front. Psychol.*
- Saeed, Y. (2021, October 26). *Slovenia Scholarships 2021–2022*. Retrieved from: <https://ascholarship.com/scholarships-in-slovenia-for-college-and-university-students/>
- Sallen, J., Hemming, K., & Richartz, A. (2018). Facilitating dual careers by improving resistance to chronic stress: effects of an intervention programme for elite student athletes. *European Journal of Sport Science*, 18(1), 112–122.
- Sallen, J., Zetzsche, R., Wendeborn, T., & Gerlach, E. (2019). Evaluation von Angeboten zur Förderung DualerKarrieren an Schule-Leistungssport-Verbundsystemen unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Modellversuchs Additives Abitur: Halbzeitzeitstand. *BISp-Jahrbuch Forschungsförderung*.
- Shimizu, S., Shimamoto, K., Kukidome, T., & Tsuchiya, H. (2016). Changes in Life Skills of Top College Athletes over Four Years and Its Relation to Career Outcomes. *Journal of Sport and Health Science*, 14, 72–78.
- Shutova T., Stolyar K., & Vysotskaya, T. (2019). Socio-psychological problems of highly trained athletes upon completion of sports career. *Journal of Physical Education and Sport (JPES)*, 19(1), 652–657.
- Scholars4dev (2022). *Germany Tuition Free Universities and Scholarships for International Students*. Retrieved from: <https://www.scholars4dev.com/6643/scholarships-in-germany-for-international-students/>
- The Olympic Committee of Slovenia (n.d.). *Long-distance studying*. Retrieved from: <https://www.olympic.si/athetes/dual-career/the-development-of-an-athlete-s-career/ong-distance-studying>
- Uebel, M. (2006). *Nya perspektiv på riksidrottsgymnasierna – vad flickor och pojkar värdesätter i RIG – verksamheten* [New perspectives on the national sports high schools – what girls and boys value in the RIG activity]. FoU-rapporter.
- Velencei A., Kovács Á., Szabó A., & Szabó T. (2009). Induló esélyek – beteljesített álmok? – társadalmi esélyegyenlőség a tehetséges fiatal sportolók körében [Starting chances – dreams come true? – social equality among talented young athletes]. *Szociológiai Szemle*, 19(4), 109–129.
- Wylleman, P., Alfermann, D., & Lavallee, D. (2004). Career transitions in sport: European perspectives. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 5(1), 7–20.

