

CAREER SUPPORT FOR (FORMER) ELITE ATHLETES: CURRENT STATUS AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Vrije Universiteit Brussel | B-WISER consortium | Work Package 1

RESULTS

(A) roles and responsibilities

Career support provider activities are mainly focused on **coaching athletes** (e.g., career planning and competency coaching) and **job placement support**. Around 50% of the *employers* provide some flexibilities in the working schedule for former and active elite athletes. However, 19% of the employers believe that active or former elite athletes do not need any flexibilities.

(B) Measurement of efficiency and effectiveness

Only **29%** of all stakeholders measure any type of efficiency or effectiveness of their support systematically. Amongst those that do measure their support provision, most commonly used measures are the **number of athletes supported**, the number of events organised, and satisfaction surveys with active and/or former elite athletes.

(C) Good and poor practices

Among good practices shared by participants, most of them were related to examples of strong cooperation between multiple stakeholders with different backgrounds. Poor practices were often related to suboptimal or even the **lack of support**, but also showed a **lack of awareness** of elite athletes about the importance of proactively planning for career transitions with the support of career experts. Moreover, stakeholders still report problems regarding a shortage of employment/internship opportunities, inflexible employers or difficult schedules causing the combination between elite sport and employment/internship to be incompatible for a lot of athletes.



B-WISER kick off meeting in Verona, 27 January 2017

Introduction

One of the main challenges that active and former elite athletes face is to obtain a satisfying vocational career during and after their retirement from sport. In order to enhance elite athletes' employability and employment opportunities, the 'Be a Winner In elite Sport and Employment before and after athletic Retirement (B-WISER)' project was initiated in 2017 with the support of the Erasmus+ Sport programme of the European Union. This newsletter presents a short summary of the first results of this research project.

Work Package 1 results

Introduction

Before implementing practices that enhance the employability and employment of active and former elite athletes, it's important to assess the current situation of the different support structures and practices already in place. Therefore, work package 1 of the B-WISER project aimed at providing a first overview of the following aspects of career support of different stakeholders in Europe: (A) Roles and responsibilities; (B) Measurement of efficiency and effectivity; (C) Good and poor practices; (D) Cooperation of stakeholders; (E) Perceptions of challenges, barriers & resources.



(D) Cooperation of stakeholders

Cooperation between the stakeholders is apparent in all countries and is generally rated as **adding value** to the employability of (former) elite athletes. Some organisations cooperate more intensively with others, more specifically showing that employment agencies are often cooperating less frequently than other stakeholders.

(E) Perceptions of challenges, barriers and resources

Career support providers underscored the importance of already exploring personal interests, competencies and vocational possibilities for active elite athletes. Time constraints were seen as relevant barriers specifically for elite athletes, whereas identity and self-confidence issues and lack of social support are the most relevant barriers for former athletes preparing for a first time employment. Consequently, self-regulation and time efficiency are seen as most relevant for active elite athletes, whereas personal flexibility is perceived as most relevant for former athletes preparing for a first time employment. Across all phases, **time constraints and lack of long term perspective** were seen as the most relevant barriers regarding employability and employment, whereas **social competencies and self-regulation** were perceived as the most relevant competencies.

Know more?

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<http://www.bwiser.eu/downloads/>

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Method

Online survey with 169 stakeholders in career support. Respondents from six European countries were involved: Belgium, Germany, Italy, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden. The stakeholders were responsible for the career support for (former) elite athletes within their elite sport organisation or representative body of athletes (60%), educational institution (14%), employment agencies (10%) or were none of the above, but were employers of elite athletes (13%).

Main results

See left bar for the most important results.

Conclusion

Results reflect that career support organisations in Europe have a lot of good practices already in place, including some decent cooperation networks, quality coaching & development services and employment flexibilities to some extent. However, stakeholders' and (former) athlete awareness of the options and importance of proactive career planning with support of qualified career support providers is rather low. Moreover, measurement of effectiveness and efficiency of career support practices is not common practice. Finally, career support providers clearly perceive that different stages in the professional career of elite athletes brings along different challenges and barriers, requiring specific but also transferable competencies from the (former) athletes. Consequently, the importance of proactive support in preparing for career transitions is clearly a key recognised need within this study.



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