

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

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

(a) roles & responsibilities

Career support providers' 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, still 19% of the employers think that active or former elite athletes don't 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

Good practices were shared by the participants, with most good practices reflecting strong cooperation between different stakeholders. 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.



Introduction

One of the main challenges that active and former elite athletes face is to pursue a satisfying vocational career during and after their termination in 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 news letter presents a short summary of the first results of this research project.

Work Package I 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 already in place. Therefore, work package I 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 & responsibilities; (b) Efficiency and effectivity measures; (c) examples of good & poor practices; (d) Cooperation of stakeholders; (e) Perceptions of challenges, barriers & resources.



(d) Cooperation of stakeholders

Cooperation between different 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?

Download the full PDF of the results on:

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

Questions? Please contact us at:

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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 just employers of elite athletes (13%).

Main results

See left bar for the most important results.

Conclusion

Results showed 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) athletes' awareness of the options for 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 yet. 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 specific career transitions is clearly recognised within this study.

