

**Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States,
meeting within the Council, on dual careers for athletes**

(2013/C 168/04)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES,

RECALLING:

that the Council on 20 May 2011 established a European Union Work Plan for Sport for 2011-2014 which highlighted the role of education, training and qualifications in sport and created the Expert Group 'Education and Training in Sport' to prepare a proposal for European guidelines on dual careers,

WELCOMING:

The EU Guidelines on Dual Careers of Athletes, which were prepared by the Member States and the Commission Expert Group on Education and Training in Sport upon a proposal from the ad-hoc group of experts on dual careers and which encourage a number of policy actions in support of dual careers in sport ⁽¹⁾,

CONSIDERING THAT:

1. For the purposes of these Council conclusions the term 'athlete' should be understood to mean a 'talented athlete' or an 'elite athlete', both male and female, including disabled athletes respecting the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

— The term 'talented athlete' should be understood to mean an athlete recognised by a sport organisation, governing body or the State as an athlete who has the potential to develop an elite sporting career.

— The term 'elite athlete' should be understood to mean an athlete who has a professional contract with a sport employer or sport organisation or has a recognised status by a sport organisation, governing body or the State as an elite athlete based on proven success and achievements.

2. The term 'dual career' should be understood to mean that an athlete can combine, without unreasonable personal effort, their sporting career with education and/or work in a flexible way through high-quality training in order to protect their moral, health, educational and professional interests, without compromising either objective, with a particular focus on the continued formal education of young athletes.

3. Top level sporting achievement must be capable of being combined with education and a career where athletes can leverage their strengths to further contribute to society. Athletes obtain knowledge, skills and competences

through their involvement in sport; the Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning ⁽²⁾ provides a basis for Member States to recognise and validate these.

4. Promotion of dual careers contributes to several of the aims of the 'Europe 2020' strategy ⁽³⁾ (prevention of early school leaving, more graduates in higher education, higher employability) and makes sport policies more efficient by keeping more athletes in the sport system.

5. Increasingly, athletes regularly train and/or compete abroad which makes combining a sporting career with school, study or a career outside of sport more complex. These athletes represent one of the most internationally mobile parts of the European population.

6. Athletes make an important contribution to the image of sport and physical activity, convey to society positive values such as fairness and dedication to achievement and serve as role models for recruiting young athletes. Further, they are important representatives of their home countries. In this context, all sporting organisations and governments have a responsibility to enable athletes to succeed in a dual career to ensure that they are not disadvantaged after their sporting career has ended ^(*).

7. Sport for children must always be carried out in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Particular care should be taken to ensure that children's involvement in preparation for high-level sport is not counterproductive or detrimental to their physical, social or emotional well-being ^(*).

8. The main challenges in relation to the quality of education and supporting services for athletes involved in high-level sport in Europe are:

— the safeguarding of the development of athletes, especially including in early specialisation sports (carried out in compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child) and of young people in education and training,

— the balance between sports training and education and, at a later stage of life, the balance between sports training and employment,

— the end-of-sporting-career phase of athletes, including those who leave the sport system earlier than planned ^(*).

9. In order to compete at a high level, a substantial number of athletes are forced to supplement their sport funding, often through family support, student loans or through

⁽¹⁾ Doc. 17208/12.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 398, 22.12.2012, p. 1.

⁽³⁾ COM(2010) 2020 final.

^(*) Scrutiny reservation by IT.

part-time or full-time employment. Some athletes are lost to sport because their sporting careers are difficult to combine with education and/or work.

10. There are substantial benefits for athletes in being able to combine sporting career with education and/or work, including health-related benefits (e.g. balanced lifestyle and reduced stress), developmental benefits (e.g. development of skills applicable in sport, education and other spheres of life), social benefits (expanded social networks and social support systems), and enhanced future employment prospects,

IN THIS CONTEXT, INVITE THE EU MEMBER STATES, SPORT ORGANISATIONS AND STAKEHOLDERS, ACTING WITHIN THEIR COMPETENCES AND AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY HAVING REGARD TO THE AUTONOMY OF SPORTS ORGANISATIONS, TO:

1. on the basis of the principles contained in the EU Guidelines on Dual Careers of Athletes, develop a policy framework and/or national guidelines for dual careers involving key stakeholders, e.g. ministries for sport, health, education, employment, defence, youth, home affairs and finance and others, sport organisations, governing bodies, educational institutions, businesses, chambers of commerce and labour and athletes' representative bodies;
2. promote cooperation and agreements in the development and implementation of dual careers between all relevant stakeholders;
3. encourage cross-sectoral cooperation and support innovative measures and research aimed at identifying and solving the problems facing athletes in both education and in the workplace;
4. promote the exchange of good practice and experience on dual careers among Member States at local, regional and national level;
5. ensure that measures in support of dual careers, where they exist, are applied equally for male and female athletes and taking into account the special needs of athletes with a disability;
6. encourage sports organisations and educational institutions to ensure that only suitably qualified or trained staff work or volunteer in support of athletes undertaking a dual career;
7. promote the use of quality standards in sport academies and high performance training centres for example with regard to dual careers staff, safety and security arrangements and transparency about the rights of athletes;
8. regarding education for athletes:

— allow adapted pathways for athletes within related policy and/or legal frameworks to combine their

sporting activities with education, possibly within the context of networks of educational institutions. Adapted academic cycles, individual learning pathways, distance learning and e-learning, supplementary tutoring and flexibility on exam timetables may be helpful in this regard,

- consider the benefits of putting in place a quality accreditation system at national level for dual careers services within training centres, sport schools, sport academies, sport clubs, sport federations and/or universities,
- consider supporting educational institutions at national level and between Member States to cooperate in relation to adapted education programmes and work as a matter of priority on establishing equivalence between qualification levels, as described in the European Qualifications Framework,
- consider measures which facilitate and promote the geographical mobility of athletes to allow the combination of their sporting careers with education programmes abroad,
- promote the development of training programmes and/or qualifications in the sports sector for athletes, through encouraging relationships between education providers and sporting organisation,
- continue work through the National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) to align sports courses, qualifications and certification for professions in dual career supporting services onto the European Qualifications Framework (EQF);

9. regarding work for athletes:

- support specific events (seminars, conferences, workshops, networking events, job markets) for athletes highlighting the importance of dual career and informing them of relevant available services and supports for work,
- consider the establishment of specific dual career programmes for athletes working in public services, which would serve also as a best practice example for other employers,
- consider the potential for measures to redress the disadvantages athletes may face as regards their irregular participation in the labour market,
- promote guidance and support for retiring elite athletes so that they can prepare for, initiate and develop a career in the wider labour market when their sporting career ends,
- include dual careers on the agenda of social dialogue at national and EU level;

10. regarding health of athletes:

- consider supporting, where appropriate, cooperation between sports, health and educational authorities to provide health and psychological assistance to athletes through education programmes in the areas of life skills, healthy living, nutrition, injury-prevention and recovery techniques, giving special consideration to the moral integrity of minors and the transition at the end of a sporting career,
- public health authorities and private insurance providers are invited to consider, as appropriate, insurance provisions which would provide employers, athlete-workers and retired athletes with added employee protection regarding sport-related injuries, giving special consideration to the transition at the end of a sporting career;

11. regarding finances of athletes:

- explore, where appropriate, the establishment, or further development, of systems of financial support for student-athletes which reflect the different stages of the dual career,
- consider, where appropriate, the development of specific dual career scholarships in education and training institutions allowing athletes to combine education and sport. These scholarships could consist of financial assistance for certain sport-related expenses, payment of tuition fees for specific education programmes or supporting services giving special consideration to the transition at the end of a sporting career,

HAVING REGARD TO THE AUTONOMY OF SPORTS ORGANISATIONS CALL ON SPORTING ORGANISATIONS TO:

1. ensure support for the success of dual careers of athletes at all internal levels (e.g. by appointing qualified advisers to assist athletes from the start to the end of their sporting careers; by responsible trainers and support personnel taking into account the demands of education and/or work; by scheduling national and international sport events in a way that takes the demands of athletes' education and/or work into account and also protects athletes from excessive strain) (*);
2. develop, lead or participate fully in the networks and mechanisms established in Member States and/or public sports authorities to develop and implement dual career services for athletes;

3. consider the nomination of specific 'dual career athlete ambassadors' to demonstrate that it is possible to be successful at the highest level in sport, while also succeeding in education and/or work;
4. cooperate with chambers of commerce and labour and businesses to raise awareness of what positive attributes and advantages athletes can bring to employers while also encouraging flexible working arrangements for athletes;
5. encourage the negotiation of sponsorship deals with companies that allow athletes access to work experience, privileged recruitment and flexible working arrangements in the sponsoring company or its partner companies;
6. involve, where appropriate, athletes' representative bodies in the policy development and actions in the field of dual careers,

INVITE THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO:

1. on the basis of the EU Guidelines on Dual Careers of Athletes, consider appropriate follow up in the framework of the second work plan on sport of the Council, including looking at ways to measure the implementation of policy actions in the field of dual careers across the EU, which can be used by Member States on a voluntary basis;
2. provide support to dual careers networks, which bring together athlete associations, businesses and chambers of commerce and labour, sport organisations, educational institutions, national and local authorities and coaches to allow for the exchange of information and best practice at EU level;
3. promote and support the sharing of best practices in the EU regarding dual careers of athletes, inter alia through support for projects and the dissemination of their results under relevant funding schemes and programmes;
4. support a monitoring system and/or research based on the international dimension of dual career programmes, in particular regarding the effects of transitions in athletes' lives, the safeguarding of the development of athletes in early specialisation sports, the effectiveness of measures and supporting services in the Member States and the re-entry process of elite athletes into the labour market;
5. support the development of a set of minimum quality requirements at European level in cooperation with stakeholders in this field, which could function as a reference point for national dual career services and facilities, providing transparency and guarantees on quality, safety and security for athletes, including athletes abroad.

(*) Scrutiny reservation by IT.