



ENDURANCE GREEN PAPER



The banner features a vertical layout. At the top left is a stylized lightbulb icon with a soccer ball pattern. Below it, the word "endurance" is written vertically in a colorful, outlined font. To the right of the text is a photograph of a man in a dark suit performing a parkour move on a blue mat in a gymnasium. At the bottom of the banner, the text "ENDURANCEPROJECT.EU" is displayed in a bold, orange, sans-serif font. In the bottom right corner of the banner area, there is a small European Union flag logo and the text "Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union".



CONTENT

About the ENDURANCE project	3
Introduction – sports and entrepreneurship as isolated domains	4
What are the commonalities and connections between sports and entrepreneurship?	6
What are the missing elements in connecting sports and entrepreneurship?	7
How can tailored education and training fill this gap?	7
ENDURANCE approach and lessons learnt	9
Generalised recommendations based on ENDURANCE experience towards ecosystems of sport and entrepreneurship.....	11
Researchers	13
Disclaimer	13



ABOUT THE ENDURANCE PROJECT

Sport is the most popular recreational activity, for centuries being an important element of society. Entrepreneurship has also been embedded in societies for ages, helping people to grow socially and economically. Europe is investing heavily in Entrepreneurship Education (EE) to sustain economic growth and social inclusion. The EU also recognizes the need to reinvent how entrepreneurship is identified, taught and nurtured. Links between sports & entrepreneurship are manifold, yet seldom recognized and rarely capitalized upon. The two are rarely found together in Vocational Education and Training (VET) as effectively connected domains with synergic links. The low occurrence of EE in sport-oriented disciplines to develop the much-needed entrepreneurial skills and the lack of tailored entrepreneurship training imply the need for focused interventions.

ENDURANCE, supported by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union, “rethinks” the teaching and learning of entrepreneurship based on the complementarities and commonalities between sport and entrepreneurship, such as determination, perseverance, self-confidence, stamina, respect of rules, team play, self-reliance, competition, success/failure, etc.

ENDURANCE’s objective is to reignite entrepreneurial spirit and modernise the way entrepreneurship is tackled in VET and to:

- 1) Map dynamics of sports and entrepreneurship, common traits and links for sustainable careers for learners in VET and sports systems;
- 2) Develop ENDURANCE entrepreneurship custom-made training and tools;
- 3) Establish online interactive Open Educational Resources (OER) platform for ENDURANCE training (virtual and blended learning);
- 4) Sustain results and promote their uptake in VET and sports ecosystems;
- 5) Advance the entrepreneurship discourse at the policy level with the ENDURANCE Green Paper.

More information regarding ENDURANCE can be found on the project webpage: <https://enduranceproject.eu//>



INTRODUCTION – SPORTS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS ISOLATED DOMAINS

Based on the Endurance research (IO2), a significant link between the field of sports and the field of entrepreneurship is visible. Therefore, the proposed ENDURANCE conceptual framework on commonalities between sports and entrepreneurship comprises of five groups of factors:

1. Individual personality traits common to sports and entrepreneurship
2. Other individual-level fostering factors
3. External supporting & triggering factors
4. Pedagogical approaches and education
5. Connecting sports and entrepreneurship to create social impact

Regardless of the numerous links identified in the literature, these areas are still considered in practice as two particularly isolated areas. However, the European Commission recognised the importance of sport as an entrepreneurial domain and produced a White Paper on sport in which it identifies the social and economic role of sport, stating that sport can serve as a tool for local and regional development, urban regeneration or rural development.

While there is an abundance of literature dealing with entrepreneurship, its connection and application in sports have rarely been investigated (Ball, 2005; Ratten, 2011 b)¹.

Why is that so?

Although there is interest in entrepreneurship in sports according to research by Nakic et al. (2015), which shows that the majority of respondents believe that they would decide to start an entrepreneurial venture in the field of sports if given the opportunity, during the implementation of the ENDURANCE project it was determined that a very small number of athletes open their own business or trade after their sports career.²

Most of them believe that they do not have the experience, enough knowledge and competence to run their own business. Regardless of the similar characteristics of athletes and entrepreneurs (tenacity, proactiveness, motivation, teamwork...), an unfamiliar environment - entrepreneurship - brings athletes to new challenges. Now athletes do not want to take risks and are subject to a safe environment; they are afraid of failure, they do not have sufficient sources of financing, and they think that they are not good enough in entrepreneurship as in sports.

Possible elements for discussion focus on the following topics:

- athletes think victoriously but not entrepreneurially;
- a winning mind for entrepreneurial success;
- risk on the field – sports and business.

¹ Nakić, A. Stilin, Lj. Tomljenović: Istraživanje interesa za razvoj poduzetništva u sportu Zbornik Veleučilišta u Rijeci, Vol. 3 (2015), No. 1, pp. 1-14

² During the implementation of interviews with existing entrepreneurs in sports, the implementation of 2 pilot activities and 1 multiplier event that included around 100 existing athletes and potential entrepreneurs in sports, in an open discussion and conversations with them it was concluded that a very small number of athletes in the local and regional environment after his career, decide for entrepreneurship.



Suggestions for overcoming the above challenges:

- research of the local environment - analysis of the number of athletes, the number of athletes in a dual career, the number of entrepreneurs in sports;
- gathering of actors from the three mentioned groups, decision makers, sports clubs and communities, VET providers and other stakeholders important for both areas;
- organizing gatherings, round tables and/or debates in local communities on the above-mentioned topics;
- organizing educations, seminars and workshops (Endurance materials available online) through teamwork, solving concrete examples from practice as part of training (extended training);
- making athletes aware that they possess most of the characteristics essential for entrepreneurship, for example, through the connection of training and the ENDURANCE modules;

WHAT ARE THE COMMONALITIES AND CONNECTIONS BETWEEN SPORTS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP?

During the ENDURANCE project partners examined a number of academic sources and practical documents related to sports entrepreneurship, describing the links between these two fields. In addition, athletes were interviewed and several doctoral theses were read. On this basis, partners developed a framework that highlighted five themes of commonalities and connections between sport and entrepreneurship.

1. Individual personality traits common for sport and entrepreneurship:

Certain personality traits and cognitive characteristics make athletes more likely to be inclined to consider entrepreneurship and improve their chances of success in business. There are many similarities between sports and entrepreneurship in terms of the personality traits that both fields both promote and require. Athletes face many challenges during their careers that unknowingly prepare them for the world of entrepreneurship.

2. Other individual-level fostering factors:

The factors that are mainly related to the individual's personal and family background, networks, skills acquired during a sporting career, sport and discipline expertise, educational background and access to resources. In addition to personal characteristics, there are a number of individual-level variables that are strengthened through or as a result of sport and can be exploited in entrepreneurship.

3. External supporting and triggering factors:

Factors such as sports infrastructure and sports communities, policies and programmes, entrepreneurial climate and favourable business environment, cultural and social norms, barriers to entrepreneurship and/or the transition from sport to entrepreneurship, or systems and initiatives that support entrepreneurship. The external environment and the factors that support and promote it are, of course, different in each country and may also vary at a regional or local level.

4. Pedagogical approaches and education:

The educational offerings in terms of content and pedagogy. Examples of good practices in entrepreneurship education and training; availability of generic and tailored training provisions, types of training, appropriate teaching methods and pedagogical approaches. From a pedagogical and educational point of view, the link between sport and entrepreneurship is the best, but not yet very close, especially in higher education.

5. Connecting sport and entrepreneurship for social impact:

How sports entrepreneurship contributes to social inclusion, maintaining social stability and peace, healthy leisure and social interaction, job creation and local economy; how to transform social business models into commercial models; how traditional beneficiaries can be turned into customers.

More detailed thematic descriptions of the commonalities between sport and entrepreneurship can be found on the project website under the **mapping** tab (<https://www.enduranceproject.eu/mapping.php>).

WHAT ARE THE MISSING ELEMENTS IN CONNECTING SPORTS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP?

While there are many similarities and interrelations between sports and entrepreneurship, there are some missing elements which prevent the smooth connections and transitions between these areas, too. During our investigation and interaction with the stakeholders within the scope of ENDURANCE project, has been identified the following missing elements and gaps to be addressed:

- **Attention:** Few sports entities include the domains of sport entrepreneurship and dual career in their scope of activities. Thus, entrepreneurship training provision and promotion shall be included in the activities of sports organisations, associations, player organisations, etc. Or, at least, they should become aware of the available support schemes and initiatives to inform their members further and participate where relevant.
- **Awareness:** The topic of sports entrepreneurship and dual career for athletes is not mainstreamed. As a potential fix, public awareness of the interlink between sports and entrepreneurship should be systematically increased, and success stories shall be highlighted.
- **Business literacy:** Low quality of individual business ideas and failing to follow the “fail fast strategy”. Participation in entrepreneurship training and acquiring entrepreneurial skills can help improve the athletes’ and sports professionals’ business literacy and increase their chances of business success. Mentoring from experienced businesspeople can be helpful, too.
- **Digital skills:** Not enough attention is paid to digital skills in the existing entrepreneurship training programs. Digitalisation is also relevant in sports-related industries. Besides the “traditional” sports entrepreneurship pathways (e.g., from an athlete to a coach or a club owner), the sports community’s entrepreneurial potential should also be directed towards more innovative and higher value-added activities.
- **Ease of doing business:** High bureaucratic and administrative burden related to starting and especially running a business. Available advisory and support services shall also help with administrative duties. All information and instructions required to set up an enterprise within the sports domain should be made available through a single, easy-to-access “one-stop-shop” resource.
- **Individual barriers:** Athletes and sports professionals exhibit attributes that decrease their entrepreneurial potentials, such as fear of failure or low alertness to business opportunities. These aspects can be addressed through specialised training, mentoring, or coaching. Parallels between sports and entrepreneurship shall be emphasised to foster entrepreneurial self-confidence. Potential sources of business opportunities that can be recognised and created within sports and through sports should be highlighted.
- **Interest among athletes:** Athletes and sports professionals don’t take advantage of educational opportunities. While it is difficult to focus on both fronts, education is much needed in the post-sports career. Athletes must be sensitised to this issue and guided towards the available offerings. Role models can help, too.
- **Specialized entities and support:** few entities focus on connecting sports and entrepreneurship, and dedicated support schemes and instruments are often missing. All information, instructions, practical examples, and training materials within the existing generic initiatives should be targeted toward specific sports-related target groups. These shall not include only athletes (i.e., the dual career perspective) but also cover other sports-related targets, such as various professionals in the sports-related fields, amateur athletes, etc. (i.e., the overall sports entrepreneurship perspective).
- **Tailored training and education:** Available training and education materials for the sports community on entrepreneurship (if any) are too generic and technical, lacking focus on the sports context. It is therefore recommended that the entrepreneurship training for the sports community is tailored to the appropriate context, remains practical, reflects the level of recipients’ business literacy, and is content/inclusive across all relevant business dimensions. For further details, please read the following section.

HOW CAN TAILORED EDUCATION AND TRAINING FILL THIS GAP?

The topic of education and training can be tackled from different perspectives, depending on the specific outcomes expected from the discussion: if our objective is to consolidate a wealth of knowledge that is of use for public sector's representatives operating in the field of education and employment policies (i.e., policy agendas tackling social needs and opportunities), the most relevant piece of reference might come from the 2014 DG EAC's guidelines for dual-career development opportunities.

Tailored education in the same scale and scope as per this Green Paper permeates all guidelines highlighted by the aforementioned policy document. Indeed, what we observed from the cross-national analysis carried out by partners and informal consultations with the stakeholders and other groups of interest (i.e., sports organisations, academics, etc.) extends to a "call for action" for a decentralised approach to education and training in the field entrepreneurial capacity building, business and management literacy that seem much more proxy to a coaching paradigm rather than traditional pedagogical models. This is one of the aspects of how entrepreneurship education can be better tailored to the sports context.

The fine-tuning and tailoring of capacity-building programmes to learners' expectations and desired learning outcomes makes of the learning path a much more evocative, engaging and involving experience while supporting professionals in retaining learners' attention, interest, and, most importantly, their trust. The top-down delivery of training curricula conflicts with the opportunity to leverage co-development mechanisms that help students and teachers in defining themselves the coordinates and milestones of the learning's roadmap.

In order to trigger these outcomes, trainers and professionals should be granted certain degrees of flexibility in operationalising the training and education programme as they better see fitting based on the essential contextual factor that they are in the position to assess, evaluate and process even further, namely: learners' motivation in joining the course, lessons learnt and takeaways they expect for themselves, drivers and aspirations, but also their personal and professional context in relation to their sports careers.

The "Individual Learning Account" represents, in fact, one of the key proposals moved by the European Commission to ensure that everyone has access to relevant training opportunities that are tailored to their needs throughout life and independently of whether they are currently employed or not.

Of course, compliance, coherence and consistency with the tailored approach as described does not come as fluid as one can imagine: the tailoring process implies a priori quite a "sophisticated" process of analysis and assessment aimed at intercepting what might be the most effective pathway given that current circumstance – i.e., sports-oriented HE students might express different needs compared to professional athletes or sports professionals; non-formal / informal settings might require a completely different approach compared to formal ones, etc.

The assessment analysis should take into consideration both targets in the opposite spectrum of the initiative: learners, of course, as beneficiaries of the training and education offer, but the training professionals as well, as catalysers of the education content. This way, it is possible to validate the suitability and usability of the content by embedding the specific needs detained by both parties: the acquisition of new competences (skills, attitudes and knowledge) from the learners' side, the valorisation of a new methodological approach to the delivery of the content from trainers.

THE PROPOSED ENDURANCE APPROACH AND LESSONS LEARNT

The **key aspects** of the “**ENDURANCE approach**”:

- Tailored to the sports context
- Modality between online and face-to-face
- OER platform as a key pillar
- Flexible, ready to customize and individualize
- Transferable and adaptable - from different target groups to individual users in various contexts

Tailored

The ENDURANCE training has been developed considering the specific context of sports and sports entrepreneurship. The topics covered have been chosen to reflect the issues relevant to starting entrepreneurship from, through and with sports. The training content is enriched with practical examples and supporting documents (e.g., the role model profiles or the case studies).

Modality

The ENDURANCE Toolkit is available for both online and face-to-face training. All materials for the classroom setting are available, from presentation slides to student handouts and supporting materials. The online training can be delivered either in self-paced, self-administered mode or in a guided online interactive setting. Both options are fully supported by the ENDURANCE OER Platform.

OER platform

Endurance approach to training through ENDURANCE OER Platform has proved to be extremely effective and useful, especially in a situation of pandemic chaos. It has provided a way to merge the business and sports worlds, solving the specific needs of sport-type enterprises and boosting their strengths through online means.

ENDURANCE OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE PLATFORM is a self-standing repository of knowledge and Training specifically dedicated to Entrepreneurial Capacity-building for Sport and the enhancement of self-employability paths. It represents an easily accessible doorway into a new world of opportunity in sport entrepreneurship. User experience, needs and expectations have been to the fore in the design and development of the Platform to produce a unique, practically grounded learning resource. To achieve the highest degree of openness, users require NO LOGIN to gain access to and use the Platforms resources, tools or functionalities. ENDURANCE OER Platform is available in seven languages (English, Finnish, Croatian, Slovak, Bulgarian, Italian and Spanish)

Flexible, ready to customise and individualise

While being tailored to the sports context, the ENDURANCE Toolkit is not conceived as a “one-solution-fits-all” resource. The partners, target groups representatives or final users are more than welcome to rely on the training materials developed by ENDURANCE as an initial trigger to inspire their own development path. While for sure the topic of “dual career” is an EU-wide concern, there is nothing like a universal “EU approach” to the related training and education opportunities



Transferable and adaptable

The ENDURANCE training materials are freely available in various filetypes, including the editable formats. Thus, further adjustment, enrichment, contextualization or translation is possible easily. Future users (in particular, the education and training providers) can work with the materials according to their needs. In fact, when expanding to new contexts, it is suggested to enrich the content with contextualized additional elements, such as practical examples, role models, local guest speakers, etc.

The ENDURANCE OER platform has built-in deliberate high transferability potential intended to be a sustainable and durable platform delivering quality, practical and relevant digital Training to boost Entrepreneurial Capacity-building for Sport. New training areas can be created at any time and according to the results obtained and lessons learnt, it is particularly suitable to be adapted to other countries, adding new languages, widening themes dealt with and probably age frames thanks to its easiness of delivery and gamification opportunities included.

The following **LESSONS LEARNT** have been collected during the testing and validation actions:

The organisation of the training

Due to the Covid-19 situation training online has been delivered both via the dedicated OER platform and via other online means such as Zoom. The material proved to be flexible and suitable for different means. The OER platform contents are perfectly adapted to online training through platforms such as Zoom or MS Teams.

Communication with target groups and potential attendees

Communication with target groups and potential attendees was through e-mail and social networks, using internal networks and associated partners.

Recruitment and Enrolment

In order to recruit the target groups, all partners acted according to their internal strengths, either using their direct beneficiaries or contacting several national associations by e-mail, informing them of the date, characteristics and objectives of the training. A link to online training has been provided.

Classroom Management

Official ppts and training materials have been used in the classroom environment and proved to be effective. Trainers explained the contents using ppt and online examples to show the applicability of the presented concepts.

After the training session, it is recommendable that users go over ENDURANCE OER Platform's online content, test their knowledge through the online self-assessment test, use the gamification functionalities and complete the online feedback form.

Learners' Motivation

Learners were quite motivated by the usefulness of the contents presented. In general, all contents were considered useful and interesting, highlighting valuable inputs for business start-ups and development. The interest of learners was ratified by their questions and comments during the course. In general, all the comments were quite positive. Also, learners were happy to know that they could access the platform to follow other courses in addition to the ones presented to increase their knowledge.

Learners' Feedback

The OER platform gives the possibility to collect users' feedback to further improve training quality. Moreover, brainstorming sessions have been held collecting suggestions and ideas, reading out loud the questions from the feedback form template.

The students felt that the contents of the training were mainly practical. They considered that it met their current needs. One of the most positive aspects is that the training contents were adapted to a basic level of knowledge; This is considered advantageous to keep the attention on the training, not disconnecting. The length and arrangement of the units were considered adequate. It encourages active learning. The number of courses, variety of content, availability of all the material in all project languages and the possibility to download the courses has been highly appreciated.

Recommendations on how best to deliver training in diverse operational settings

- It is interesting to use social networks to reach as many interested parties as possible.
- It is useful to combine the training material with additional real-life examples/case studies to show the usefulness of the concepts learned in the real world.

GENERALIZED RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON ENDURANCE EXPERIENCE TOWARDS ECOSYSTEMS OF SPORT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The experience of ENDURANCE partners in designing, implementing and piloting our activities towards connecting is translated into the following recommendations towards sports and entrepreneurship ecosystems:

Broad coverage, tailored focus: Entrepreneurship education and support initiatives towards the sports community shall not be focused on athletes exclusively, but they should also cover other sports-related targets, such as various professionals in the sports-related fields, amateur athletes, etc. Further, all training contents, information, instructions or practical examples should be contextualised and targeted towards the specific sports-related target groups. At the same time, they should be adjusted to learners' educational backgrounds and current business literacy.

Awareness building and sensitising the stakeholders: Formal and informal stakeholder platforms, initiatives and events shall be developed to sensitise all relevant actors on the importance and white spots in connecting sports and entrepreneurship. Public awareness of the interlink between sports and entrepreneurship should be systematically increased, and success stories shall be highlighted. Sports entrepreneurship shall be emphasised as an opportunity to gain economic self-sufficiency by doing something a person enjoys. There are plenty of examples of sportspeople setting up enterprises, both within and beyond their sports domains.

Easy access: All information about the available training and support options, as well as the instructions required to set up an enterprise within the sports domain, should be made available through a single, easy-to-access "one-stop-shop" resource (e.g. website). Also, entrepreneurship training provision and/or promotion shall be as close to its recipients as possible. For example, it can be included in the activities of sports organisations, associations, player organisations, etc. With this respect, online resources represent a good starting point. However, ideally, they should be followed by following training and support schemes.

Disruptive approach: Entrepreneurship education and support should challenge the “traditional” sports entrepreneurship pathways, e.g. from an athlete to a coach or a training academy owner”. The entrepreneurial potential of the sports community should be also directed towards activities outside the sports industry, including the innovative and higher added value endeavours. Also, the support initiatives shall navigate athletes and other sports individuals towards domains and sectors that offer favourable business prospects. In addition to that, sports entrepreneurship also connects with creating a social impact. There are examples of numerous projects generating a social impact in the fields, such as social inclusion, awareness building, or community engagement and activation.

Modern and practical education and training: Practical entrepreneurship education is needed at all educational institutions providing education and training related to sports. The design and development of training materials should benefit from the availability of existing state-of-the-art EU frameworks, such as EntreComp or DigiComp. Entrepreneurship training materials shall be comprehensive in terms of covering a broad array of various dimensions of entrepreneurship. However, at the same time, they should stick to the “smart and simple” principle, both in terms of outlining the training structure and the actual outcomes. Where needed, links to additional resources shall be provided in case targets wish to deepen their knowledge about some specific content.



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