

ENDURANCE: Entrepreneurial Capacity-building for Sport

Commonalities between Sport and Entrepreneurship

(ENDURANCE IO2T1 Output)

European Union-level Notes

Introduction

This Country Note on Commonalities between Sport and Entrepreneurship in the European Union has been prepared by “IHF asbl” as an initial output within the ENDURANCE Intellectual Output 2, Task 1 “Identify common traits and links between sports and entrepreneurship”. Its aim is to provide an informed insight within the area under investigation for the next stages of the project. In addition, its purpose is to inform project stakeholders and broader audience in sports and entrepreneurship communities about first advances of the ENDURANCE project.

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Commonalities between Sports and Entrepreneurship: ENDURANCE conceptual framework



Topic 1: Individual personality traits common for sports and entrepreneurship

The review of resources on overlaps and links between sports and entrepreneurship in the European Union yielded the following list of commonalities among the individual personality traits:

- Vision
- Tenacity
- Self-confidence
- Flexibility and diversified skillset
- Tolerance for fear
- Rule-breaking
- Passion

Based on our EU-oriented research, we can observe that each national sporting system recognizes a set of common skills that are similar between sports and entrepreneurship. A successful athlete has a clear vision of themselves as a winner: the entrepreneur, at the same time, has the same willingness to succeed and apply similar strategies to reach his goal. Tenacity helps the athlete in being resilient enough to return to the game even after an injury, while the successful entrepreneur continues to work even when things get difficult. Athletes who use their self-confidence as a tool will enjoy a higher level of success and an entrepreneur is more willing to take risks because of self-confidence. Weather conditions, playing arenas, teammates, coaching are all variables that require flexibility. Being able to make changes or move the business in a different direction is a key characteristic of a successful entrepreneur. Competing in large scale arenas may allow fear to cripple an athlete; the athlete successfully moves beyond this fear. It can be frightening to assume the risk of starting a business; the entrepreneur must be able to move beyond the fear of failure. While the rules of the game can't be broken, the athlete must be one who refuses to follow the set path towards mediocrity. By defying conventional wisdom, the entrepreneur can create new products that revolutionize the business world. Athletes who succeed in their sport exhibit a passion for their sport, just like most entrepreneurs are driven by a passion for their business (Leunendonck, 2018).

Topic 2: Other individual-level fostering factors

The review of resources in the European Union yielded the following list of fostering factors strengthening the link between sports and entrepreneurship from among the other individual-level aspects:

- Structured supporting system
- Familiar Background
- Education and Training
- Typology of sport

Besides the family or educational context which are pivotal in the early development of entrepreneurial skills in young athletes, it is of paramount importance that athletes are surrounded by an adequate and structured supporting system. In particular, the presence of a supporting system (both at public and private levels), can be crucial in the process of physical and intellectual growth since it allows to collect experiences in a diverse environment, so as to increase the ability to relate to different people and thus develop communication skills, which are essential in business life. (Quinn, Goldman, 2020).

Furthermore, the sport typology contributes in stimulating and developing specific skills more than other: for instance, extreme sports allow to understand how to manage risks with rational mind-set, how to overcome fear, how to define sharper decision making; former athletes from team sports learn how to develop group strategies and set a common goal, how to deal with setbacks etc. (Coleman, 2020)

Topic 3: External supporting & triggering factors

The review of resources in the European Union yielded the following list of external supporting and triggering factors that enhance the commonalities and foster pathways between sports and entrepreneurship:

- Lack of common supporting framework
- Sporadic local initiatives
- Educational needs

On the basis of a detailed research at European level, there is no evidence of specific and targeted policies to support sport combined with entrepreneurship, nor common initiatives to improve infrastructures. We identified separate initiatives at country and local level, but we also found that there is no common EU framework. What we observed is the lack of action from national governments, which should encourage ventures aimed at supporting athletes during and after their sporting careers moving from the commonalities between sport and entrepreneurship. As evidenced by several studies, the business environment approach could strengthen sportspeople and make them ready for entrepreneurial initiatives, that's why public governments and sports federations should encourage the inclusion of related educational frameworks and infrastructures (Ratten, 2011, 2014).

Topic 4: Pedagogical approaches and education

The review of resources in the European Union yielded the following main findings on pedagogical approaches and education that develop and capitalize upon the commonalities between sports and entrepreneurship:

- The importance of education
- No training courses available
- Propensity for entrepreneurship
- Need of educational programmes
- Cooperation between institutions and policy-makers

Education has been deemed fundamental to increase individuals' orientation to become an entrepreneur and their intention toward starting an entrepreneurial venture. At European level there are no training courses available at school or academic level concerning the commonalities between sports and entrepreneurship. This trend is dramatic, taking into account that, according Serrano (2016) students enrolled in sport courses are positively influenced in innovation, creativity and willingness to start a business. That's why EU researchers (Pellegrini et al., 2020) stress the importance of developing education programs for sport entrepreneurs. Sport-related entrepreneurial ventures contribute significantly to the economic system of any country. Thus, there is a need to educate sport entrepreneurs, which are usually characterized by an elevated level of propensity toward starting a

venture. Yet, they may anyhow lack technical skills required to manage a company. Heavy assistance from institutions and policy-makers is thereby necessary. Indeed, sport entrepreneurs may need assistance related to getting grants and developing ad hoc financial structures (Pellegrini et al., 2020).

Topic 5: Connecting sports and entrepreneurship to create social impact

The review of resources in “the European Union” yielded the following list of findings on how commonalities between sports and entrepreneurship have potential to create social impact:

- The social value of sport entrepreneurship
- Gheorghe Hagi’s academy

Sport entrepreneurship may have an extremely relevant social impact. Sport entrepreneurs may indeed generate social value by the creation of social activities that may be instrumental for participants to practice sport activities for their health, overcoming isolation, and giving them hope to improve their life conditions. After carrying out our European level research, we focused our attention mainly on the Romanian scenario, where the fall of Communism opened up new opportunities in the entrepreneurial domain. In particular, entrepreneurship began to intersect with sports and results were often productive. One example is represented by former footballer Gheorghe Hagi, who opened his own football academy investing his own fortune into building a top academy in the Constanta Region. Gheorghe Hagi’s club became an organization that covers two essential elements that characterize a social enterprise: the need for society to have a sports academy for elite players, and Gheorghe Hagi’s intention to make the project profitable. The success was quite remarkable, and the academy flourished.

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