

ENDURANCE: Entrepreneurial Capacity-building for Sport

Commonalities between Sport and Entrepreneurship

(ENDURANCE IO2T1 Output)

Country Notes SLOVAKIA

Introduction

This Country Note on Commonalities between Sport and Entrepreneurship in Slovakia has been prepared by Comenius University in Bratislava in cooperation with Private Secondary Sports School M. C. Sklodowskej 1, Bratislava, 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 Slovakia yielded the following list of commonalities among the individual personality traits:

- Adapting to changes, flexibility, improvisation
- Resilience
- Self-discipline, motivation, goal orientation, high need for achievement
- Opportunity identification ability
- Internal locus of control, high need for autonomy
- Dealing with competition
- Teamwork and spirit of team play

Both athletes and entrepreneurs must be able to make decisions under time pressure. If it takes them too long, the opportunity may disappear forever. Also, if things don't go exactly according to plan, they are able to adapt to new situations. In addition, they are better able to handle stressful situations and multiple simultaneous tasks. They are prepared to plan and adhere to a time schedule. Next, due to frequent exposure to direct feedback and consequences of failures, athletes develop a tendency to respect them and take them more professionally, they harden over time and learn not to take them personally. Interestingly, athletes prefer harsh feedback from no feedback, as the latter indicates a lack of interest. Then, active involvement in sport requires a great deal of self-discipline, which is also very useful in entrepreneurship. Behaving in a disciplined manner even under pressure (also common for both domains) goes hand in hand with motivation, perseverance, and determination. It also positively affects the reliability needed to meet deadlines, close deals and accomplish various tasks. Next, competition is present in both sports and business. In sports, it actually starts from an early age, and it never ends, it just matures. Just like in business. Thus, sport makes individuals vigilant and prepared for competitors' attacks. Finally, sports involvement fosters the spirit of team play, and not just within athletes involved in team sports. Every athlete knows that each member of the team has an important role. They are used to put the needs of other team members at the level of their own needs, or even higher.

Topic 2: Other individual-level fostering factors

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

- Family background and family business
- Education
- Network
- Peers and strong-ties networks

An individual's family affects his/her life in many directions, often including education and career choice. The key role is played by close relatives, especially parents and siblings. If they are entrepreneurial themselves or run a business, it can be reflected as a possible secondary career of an athlete. Besides the role model effect, family members experienced in business can also provide valuable advice. Next, educational background in general, and entrepreneurship education in particular, is essential for athletes, too. It helps them to prepare for the life after top-athlete-career and will allow them to start working on their secondary career as entrepreneurs. Then, in terms of networks, sports events and competitions, training programmes and sessions, medical examinations, etc. bring together many sports-related people and provide huge space for developing relationships

and building-up networks. During their career, athletes (and not only the professional ones) will personally meet hundreds of people from teammates, coaches to officials, often in several countries around the world, and create a huge network of contacts. Subsequently, they might use these contacts for their own benefit and for the benefit of their business. Finally, a special role is played by those individuals from an athlete's inner circle. Our subconscious constantly listens and writes down everything from the environment in which we are most often located. Therefore, if an athlete or entrepreneur surrounds himself/herself with purposeful people and people hungry for success, then he himself will become so.

Topic 3: External supporting & triggering factors

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

- Existence of the Law on sports, which defines the activities of sports professionals and conditions for their business
- The Slovak Sports Portal as a register of persons engaged in gainful activity in sports
- Activities of the National Sports Centre
- The Entrepreneurship in Sports (podnikanievsporte.sk) web portal
- The Slovak Sports Innovation Centre

The external factors relevant for sports entrepreneurship include the legislative framework for gainful activities (including business) in sports and the related official register. Quite recently, several significant changes have taken place in the Act on Sports. They affect conducting the business of coaches, instructors, etc. - the so-called sports professionals. To start a business, they do not need a trade license, but they must register on the list of sports professionals, obtain a business license, and demonstrate professional competence. This has significantly tightened the criteria for the business of sports professionals, and at the same time, it has distinguished specific criteria of professional competence. In relation to these provisions, an official Slovak Sports Portal has been created to serve as a register of persons engaged in gainful activity in sports. Sports professionals must apply to register at the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic. Besides the register itself, this portal provides, among other things, various educational programs and video lectures for people interested in sports and informs about financing opportunities for sports organizations. Then, there are several entities that are relevant for top athletes as well as for the broader sports community. Regarding the first, The National Sports Centre (an organization established by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport) has a mission to provide general care for athletes, their health, research activities aimed at increasing the performance of athletes, and also education, where its priority is to increase the knowledge level of the target group (athletes, coaches, referees, sports officials, doctors and support team members). While there is no explicit attention to entrepreneurship, the centre has a considerable outreach to the top sports community. Regarding the latter, the Entrepreneurship in sports web portal is aimed at supporting the conditions for starting a business, increasing awareness about entrepreneurship, informing the public about sports as well as support mechanisms for entrepreneurs in sport. The website serves as a tool for finding practical information for sports professionals and individuals interested in doing business in sports, to support their decision to become sports professionals. Also, the Slovak Sports Innovation Centre brings together companies, organizations, schools, scientific institutions, and entities that have the potential and interest in the implementation of innovative solutions in Slovak sport and health promotion

through sport, using modern and digital technologies. The aim is to support the innovative sports ecosystem, which will be a catalyst for innovative solutions in sport.

Topic 4: Pedagogical approaches and education

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

- EE and training towards the sports community were found in the school system only. We found no EE initiatives aimed at the broader sports community. Slovak Business Agency provides no tailored training and does not specifically approach the sports community.
- In Slovakia, there were 13 secondary sports schools with around 2500 students altogether, and 12 of them offered sports management VET field of study. However, the participation of these schools in one of the major schemes on practical EE is very low.
- The target group at the secondary VET level is thus well organized and reachable by future ENDURANCE outputs.
- The secondary level students in sports-related fields especially appreciate practical examples and application of the curricular contents on real examples of sports entrepreneurs, project work both individually as well as in teams, and business simulations and games. Also, while they are often enthusiastic about entrepreneurship, they particularly lack holistic business thinking as well as business financial literacy.
- Study programs on Sports management are provided at both undergraduate and graduate levels at FTVS UK, and their offering includes courses on "Introduction to Entrepreneurship" (UG) and "Entrepreneurship in sports" (G). However, their character is rather theoretical.
- The HE students in sports-related fields especially appreciate practical case examples and role models from the domain of sports entrepreneurship, as well as project assignments related to their professional/sports orientation.
- The existing EE offerings provide rather introductory orientation in the field of entrepreneurship, together with elementary practical issues related to setting-up a business in sports-related fields.
- Entrepreneurship educators at both secondary and HE levels emphasize the lack of available resources specifically focused on sports entrepreneurship and management.

We found examples of entrepreneurial education (EE) and training towards the sports community in the school system only. Contrary, we found no initiatives aimed at the broader sports community, and also Slovak Business Agency has not yet provided specialized business training on sports entrepreneurship / to the sports community. Cases of individual informal mentoring might appear, yet they are poorly visible. As for the school system, there is a specialized type of school at the secondary level – the "secondary sports school", which prepares students with sports talent for further studies or for occupations in sport. Twelve out of 13 such schools in the country (as of the academic year 2020/21) offer (besides other fields) also vocational sports-related education in the "Sports management" field of study. Its educational standards include economic and financial literacy, including the education towards enterprise (basic legal and administrative aspects of business, especially sole proprietorship, and basic business planning skills). Yet, the participation of secondary sports schools in one of the major schemes of practical EE is very low (we were able to find only one example). The secondary level students in sports-related fields especially appreciate practical examples and application of the curricular contents on real examples of sports entrepreneurs, project work both individually as well as in teams, and engaging and interactive methods, avoiding too much theory. Also, they appreciate if lecturers themselves have practical business experience that enhances their credibility. Also, while they are often enthusiastic about entrepreneurship, they particularly lack

holistic business thinking and the ability to connect various concepts, as well as business financial literacy. At the tertiary level, study programs on “Sports management” are offered at both undergraduate and graduate levels at FTVS UK, comprising courses on “Introduction to Entrepreneurship” (UG) and “Entrepreneurship in sports” (G). These provide a good yet brief insight into entrepreneurship and business administration, and deal with legal and administrative aspects of starting and running a business. However, their character is merely theoretical. To sum up, the educational offering aims mostly at setting up and managing a business rather than building an enterprising mind-set. The HE students in sports-related fields especially appreciate practical case examples and role models from the domain of sports entrepreneurship, as well as project assignments related to their professional/sports orientation. Our studies indicated that almost half of HE sports students are somehow attempting to start their own business activity, while 17.6% of them already run one. Moreover, they positively perceive the atmosphere encouraging towards entrepreneurship, and feel rather confident about their entrepreneurial skills (Holiienka et al., 2018a). Also, they exhibit the highest levels of enterprising tendency and all its components among the study disciplines compared (Holiienka et al., 2018b; Holiienka et al., 2019).

Topic 5: Connecting sports and entrepreneurship to create social impact

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

- Act on Social Economy and Social Enterprises as a main legislative framework for social entrepreneurship in the country
- Sport as a tool for social inclusion of seniors
- Mile for Mom - a nationwide campaign organized by the Union of Mather Centers
- Dajori - Civic organization uniting the Roma community

The domain of social impact creation through sports in Slovakia offers several examples of initiatives aimed at achieving impact using (also) sports. For example, sport is an important tool for the social inclusion of seniors. As the studies show (e.g. Bendíková et al., 2013), the motive for performing sports activities for seniors in Slovakia is primarily to maintain social contacts, increase wellbeing and mental relaxation, as well as favourable health aspects of such activities. Sports activities can be performed in gyms, but also offered in retirement clubs, or under the guidance of sports professionals, often with the participation and support of regional municipalities and governments. These initiatives foster cross-generational cooperation and broader public involvement, while also representing a number of unexploited entrepreneurial opportunities. Next, another example is The Mile for Mom, a nationwide campaign organized by the Union of Mather Centers (a civic association active in the field of preschool education, social inclusion, and community work), comprising various sports activities for children and their parents, with the main objective being a symbolic mile walk. Children with their parents and grandparents can walk a mile on foot, by bicycle, on a scooter, on skates, on a wheelchair or on the shoulders of their parents. Finally, the next example is Dajori, a civic organization uniting the Roma community, organizing (besides other projects such as social housing) various activities in the field of sports and culture as well as social integration. Besides these specific examples, it is important to underline the general legislative framework for social entrepreneurship that has been established quite recently, and the character of social enterprises in the country. These are typically focused on work integration and often refer to non-profit organizations (public benefit organizations, foundations, non-investment funds and civic associations). Yet, social enterprises can also have a legal form of a business, providing they reinvest their full income originating from business activities to

support their social goals. In general, the goals of social enterprises are often focused on education, training, and the development of physical culture. Furthermore, a significant proportion of civic organizations are sports clubs that organize different educational programs, events, and leisure activities.

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