

## ENDURANCE: Entrepreneurial Capacity-building for Sport

# Commonalities between Sport and Entrepreneurship

(ENDURANCE IO2T1 Output)

## Findings from eight ENDURANCE project partners

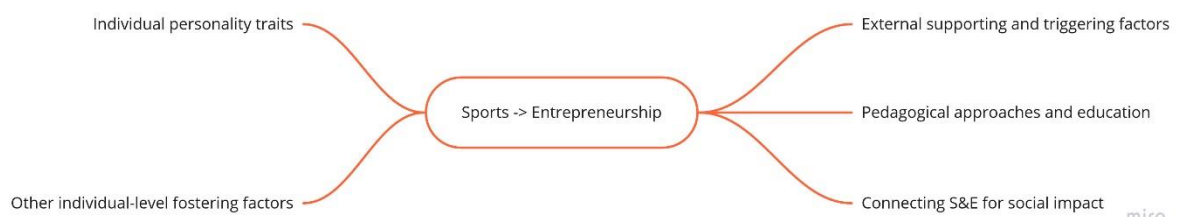
### Introduction

This aggregated report collects and summarizes the findings from eight ENDURANCE project partners' Country Notes on Commonalities between Sport and Entrepreneurship in their respective countries or territories. It has been prepared as a part of the initial outputs within the ENDURANCE Intellectual Output 2, Task 1 "Identify common traits and links between sports and entrepreneurship". The main aim of the report 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 a broader audience in sports and entrepreneurship communities about the first advances of the ENDURANCE project.

### Disclaimer

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### Commonalities between Sports and Entrepreneurship: ENDURANCE conceptual framework



Source: own elaboration based on adaptation from Pellegrini et al., 2020

As a result of their pre-project and initial project activities, the ENDURANCE project partners came across several academic works and practitioner documents related to sports entrepreneurship that described various interconnections between the two domains. In order to set a structure for their mapping aimed at identification of common traits and links between sports and entrepreneurship, ENDURANCE partners have decided to develop an ENDURANCE conceptual framework. It has been based on a research paper by Pellegrini et al. (2020) who identified main clusters of sports entrepreneurship literature, and it has been validated during the brainstorming and focus group sessions by ENDURANCE project partners, based on their insights gained in the pre-project and initial exploration. The proposed ENDURANCE conceptual framework on commonalities between sports and entrepreneurship (displayed above) comprises of five groups of factors:

1. **Individual personality traits common for sports and entrepreneurship** – the personality traits and cognitive characteristics that make sportspeople prone to become entrepreneurs and improve their prospects to become successful in business.
2. **Other individual-level fostering factors** – the factors related mainly to personal and family background; networks; skills obtained in sports career; sports and industry expertise; educational background; or resources availability.
3. **External supporting & triggering factors** – the factors such as sports infrastructure and communities of sports practitioners; government policies and programmes; entrepreneurship climate and conducive business environment; cultural and social norms; barriers to entrepreneurship and/or to switch from sports to entrepreneurship; or entrepreneurship support systems and initiatives.
4. **Pedagogical approaches and education** – the educational offerings in terms of content and pedagogy; good practice examples in entrepreneurship education and training; availability of generic vs. tailored offerings; types of education; appropriate teaching methods and pedagogical approaches.
5. **Connecting sports and entrepreneurship to create social impact** – how sports entrepreneurship generates impact in the areas of social inclusion, keeping social stability and peace, providing healthy entertainment and socialization, job creation and contributing to the local economy; how social business models are converted into commercial models; how traditional beneficiaries can be turned into customers.

### **Topic 1: Individual personality traits common for sports and entrepreneurship**

The review of resources on overlaps and links between sports and entrepreneurship in ENDURANCE partner countries yielded the following list of **commonalities among the individual personality traits**:

- Ability to adapt to changes, flexibility, improvisation
- Resilience, pressure tolerance and frustration tolerance
- Receiving criticism, ability to learn from setbacks
- Motivation and vision, goal orientation, need for achievement, ambition, desire for success
- Passion, sense of belonging
- Tenacity, persistence and perseverance, even stubbornness
- Proactiveness, sense of initiative, opportunity identification ability
- Self-confidence, Internal locus of control, individual responsibility for own results
- Recognizing the importance of practicing, self-discipline, accuracy, diligence
- Risk-taking and fear tolerance
- Breaking the limits and restrictions

- High need for autonomy
- Dealing with competition, competitiveness
- Teamwork and spirit of team play, leadership

Sports and entrepreneurship show many overlaps in terms of personality characteristics they both nurture and require. The athletes and sportspeople deal with multiple challenges during their career, that unknowingly prepare them for the world of entrepreneurship. We further tackle the selected findings with this respect.

First, we can mention the **sense of challenge**. The competitive variable in sporting disciplines is comparable to the confrontation that an entrepreneur faces vis-à-vis his/her competitors. Doing business also means having clear objectives and a solid strategy to adopt. **Goals and strategies** are a constant in sport: it is not only the matter of talent but also of self-discipline.

Next, both athletes and entrepreneurs must be able to **make decisions under time pressure**, otherwise, the opportunity may disappear. Also, if things don't go exactly according to plan, they are able to **adapt to new situations**. At present, in the training of sportsmen and women, aspects related to personality and emotional intelligence (withstanding pressure, stress, or frustration) are often worked on. Thus, they are better able to **handle stressful situations** and multiple **simultaneous tasks**. They are prepared to **plan and adhere to a time schedule**.

Then, due to frequent **exposure to direct feedback** and consequences of **failures** (when performing a sport, failure is an integral part), athletes develop a tendency to respect them and take them more professionally. Interestingly, athletes prefer harsh feedback from no feedback, as the latter indicates a lack of interest. When things go wrong, or there are moments of uncertainty, both athletes and entrepreneurs **refuse to accept defeat** and use fear as an impulse to face new situations. Qualities such as **perseverance and persistence** project the sportsman into a dimension typical of the entrepreneur, who often has to endure and face numerous difficulties in order to achieve his/her objectives. Also, on their way towards achievement, both are typically **ready to take calculated risk**.

Next, sports involvement typically fosters the spirit of **innovation and proactiveness** in search and acting upon opportunities. At the same time, 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. However, while the rules of the game can't be broken, the athlete must be one who refuses to follow the set path towards mediocrity. Alike, by defying conventional wisdom, the entrepreneur can create new products that revolutionize the business world.

Next, **competition** is present in both sports and business. Sport makes individuals vigilant and prepared for competitors' attacks. Further, from a young age, sportsmen and women are used to being leaders, facing challenges, and rising in the face of defeat. This character, forged in the competition through willpower and training, is transferred to the business world. At the same time, **passion, ambition, and tenacity** are the strength that drives both entrepreneurs and athletes to work hard to achieve success. Athletes who succeed in their sports exhibit a passion for their sport, just like most entrepreneurs are driven by a passion for their business.

Finally, sports involvement fosters the **spirit of team play**. Every athlete, also those involved in individual sports, 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 ENDURANCE partner countries 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, Social/communication skills
- Peers and strong-ties networks
- Diversity exposure
- Popularity, personal brand
- Resource accumulation, including financial capital

Next to the personality characteristics, there are numerous individual-level variables that are enhanced through or thanks to sports involvement and can be capitalised upon in entrepreneurial connotation.

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 one's parents were entrepreneurs, it would seem much certain that the person will continue his/her professional career as an entrepreneur. This is also true for the sports-related individuals, who might operationalize their entrepreneurship inclination in their primary, dual (in parallel with sports) or secondary (after active sports) career. Besides the role model effect, family members experienced in business can also provide valuable advice. Also, a proper family environment is the basis for both a sportsperson's and an entrepreneur's career, an environment that keeps the person focused on their goals, without neglecting other important aspects of psychological, physical, and social well-being.

Next, **educational background** in general, and entrepreneurship education, in particular, is essential for athletes, too. It helps them to prepare for life after top-athlete career and will allow them to start working on their secondary career as entrepreneurs. The educational background shall strengthen their certain professional skills important for the line of business they are doing.

Then, in terms of **networks**, sports events and competitions, training programmes and sessions, 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. Even, in case their business idea falls within the domain of their sports orientation, they could be having an initial pool of potential customers even before starting the business. Furthermore, intense networking activity improves an individual's social and communication skills, essential tools in the business world.

Next, a special role is played by **role models**. There is a difference between a strong-ties and a weak-ties role model. The first include 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. The latter refer to persons whom an individual does not know personally but could be famous generally or within his/her specific area. Either way, existence of such a successful role model and/or an inspiring idea encourages entrepreneurship efforts.

Next, to be successful in sports, it is vital to embrace the myriad personalities and working styles on a **team** and find ways to let each athlete succeed. If a company fosters that same spirit, it will be much better positioned for success. Entrepreneurs find out where they excel and enhance those skills through practice and training. Also, they can use the same quality when acquiring, developing, and managing their employees.

Finally, especially in the case of successful professional athletes, another factor that strengthens the link between sports involvement and consequent/parallel entrepreneurship is the **accumulation of resources**. These might concern, for example, the **financial capital** to face investments, but also the **personal popularity** or recognition which can help top leverage outreach of the future business project towards a maximum number of people.

### **Topic 3: External supporting & triggering factors**

The review of resources in ENDURANCE partner countries yielded the following examples of **external supporting and triggering factors** that enhance the commonalities and foster pathways between sports and entrepreneurship:

- Existence of specific legislation and regulations on sports entrepreneurship
- General administrative, bureaucratic and tax burden of entrepreneurship in general
- Cultural and social norms
- Sports organizations and institutions
- Specialized media, internet media
- Professional organizations and networks, Third sector organizations
- Support programmes for future entrepreneurs, start-up grants & other
- Specific training in sports entrepreneurship

The external environment with its supporting and triggering factors is, as a matter of course, specific and different in each individual country, and it might further vary at the level of regions or municipalities. Thus, the list and further discussion on the factors that support pathways between sports and entrepreneurship are by no means exhaustive and/or universal. Yet, they represent a summary of key findings that will guide our considerations about this topic further in the ENDURANCE project.

The **legal environment** and existing **administrative, bureaucratic and tax burden** affect and guide entrepreneurial activity in general, including also the pathways from sports to entrepreneurship. While favourable conditions foster entrepreneurial activity, complicated and unstable legislation and high burden tend to impede potential entrepreneurs. In addition, some countries (e.g. Slovakia) introduced special legislative and administrative measures for the sports profession and sports entrepreneurship. These can help to clarify the context and set grounds for potential support policies, but they also can imply extra administrative or registration requirements and related costs.

Next, the informal dimension of the external environment is represented by **cultural and social norms**. Culture is important in any discussion of entrepreneurship because it determines the attitude of individuals towards the initiation of entrepreneurship. Certain cultural institutions may facilitate, or hinder, entry into entrepreneurship. When society thinks positively about entrepreneurship, it is much easier to proceed.

Then, **sports organizations and institutions** of various types and levels are naturally present in the sports ecosystem. They usually have a large member base within their area, and good outreach to

their target groups, and often provide educational offerings. This offering could also include (yet, it typically does not include) training in the field of entrepreneurship. Similar supportive and triggering effects can be provided by professional organizations and networks or third sector organizations that connect individuals and organizations in different sports or sports areas, where some of them might be specially focused on sports entrepreneurship. Also, such initiatives can work as a cooperation of various stakeholders, both inside and outside the sports community. The examples include “The Slovak Sports Innovation Centre” (Slovakia), or “Sport e Imprese: play together, win together” by ICE (Italian Trade Agency), Confindustria and CONI (Italy).

Next, support to foster pathways between sports and entrepreneurship can be found in **entrepreneurship support programmes and initiatives** (including financing options), either **generic or targeted** to the sports community or sports-relevant businesses. When one knows that there is start-up help available (both money and advice), it eases the decision to become an entrepreneur. Such help can include, besides others, also specific training in entrepreneurship, marketing or finance. Contrary, if support initiatives or financing alternatives are missing, it can be seen as an obstacle to starting an entrepreneurial venture in sports.

Finally, pathways from sports to entrepreneurship are also fostered by the presence of **policies and programmes** that promote the practice of sport, sports and recreation offers and sports tourism, accompanied by sufficient funding (e.g. investments in sports infrastructure, sports and recreational facilities, supporting sports organizations and entities, etc.). By doing so, they support the existing sports community and encourage sports involvement in the wider population, thus strengthening the relevant individual characteristics through sport, and also broadening the potential markets created by the sports audience.

#### **Topic 4: Pedagogical approaches and education**

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

- Entrepreneurship education to the sports community is provided mainly in formal education systems, especially at the tertiary level
- Sports management programmes are common, but their orientation on entrepreneurship is basic, and employment positions dominate in graduates’ profiles
- Some entrepreneurship training provided by sports organizations, federations and councils
- Entrepreneurship educators at all levels lack specialized resources on sports entrepreneurship
- Sports audience appreciate practical examples (e.g. case studies and role models), application of the concepts learned in practice, and project work

From a pedagogical and educational perspective, the best, yet still not very intense connection between sport and entrepreneurship occurs within the schooling systems, especially at a higher education level.

Across all ENDURANCE countries, there are many **generic study programmes on entrepreneurship and business**. While they are open to students with any background, including sports, they would mostly not account for specifics of the sports domain. On the other hand, the university studies in

sports-related disciplines (except for sports management) hardly include any content related to entrepreneurship. While there is a large number of masters and postgraduate courses, and several entire study programmes specialised in **sports management**, most of the sports management graduates will expect employment careers as professionals or managers in various types of sports organizations and entities. Also, specializations exclusively on sports entrepreneurship were not found, and the topics related to entrepreneurship and business start-up are usually embedded, to a limited extent, into sports management programmes.

**Sports management education** is also provided **at the secondary level** (e.g. Slovakia) and it represents a good alternative for sports talents that combines favourable conditions for sports practice with some education in sports management. However, the attention to entrepreneurship is also very limited in both extent and depth, and graduates would expect to become rather employees involved in managing various types of sports organizations, clubs, associations, and other types of entities.

Thus, the existing entrepreneurship **education offerings** in sports-related disciplines provide rather an **introductory orientation** in the field of entrepreneurship, together with **elementary practical issues** related to setting up a business in sports-related fields. This applies to both secondary and higher education levels. Also, entrepreneurship educators at both these levels emphasize the lack of available resources specifically focused on sports entrepreneurship and management.

When it comes to entrepreneurship **pedagogy**, the secondary and tertiary level students in sports-related fields especially appreciate practical examples (including case studies and role models) and application of the curricular contents on real examples of sports entrepreneurs, and project assignments related to their professional/sports orientation.

In some ENDURANCE countries, some entrepreneurship training towards the sports community is provided by **sports federations** or by **regional sports councils** (e.g. Spain). Also, entrepreneurship is included among the secondary/dual career options in several **support and training programmes for professional athletes** (e.g. Italy).

The practitioner-oriented entrepreneurship **training tools** should be very practical, and both universal while also specific enough to respond to their concrete needs. A good way to help them would also be to arrange support groups where they could discuss about problems and ask for help. Some ENDURANCE partners indicated that there was a lack of practical entrepreneurship knowledge in successful sports clubs, federations and companies engaged in sports activities. However, any broad generalization should be avoided, as the learning needs and styles of the target audience are different, for example, because the athletes have different levels of education.

## **Topic 5: Connecting sports and entrepreneurship to create social impact**

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

- Sport initiatives as tools for inclusion, social inclusion, and civic participation
- Sports events, initiatives, and movements as tools to attract attention and increase people's engagement in social issues and problems
- General contribution of sports entrepreneurship to society and economy – job creation, responding to customers' needs, tax payment, consumption, health promotion, physical and mental well-being, life quality and satisfaction, a social utility

Across ENDURANCE countries we found many arguments and examples that sports initiatives, developed with an enterprising spirit or even being entrepreneurial, serve as effective tools for **participation and social inclusion**. They represent opportunities to bring communities together, overcome the isolation of excluded groups and individuals, and give them hope to improve their living conditions. On a community level, they reduce social and ethnic tensions, evoke more collective actions and community involvement, particularly through volunteering. Examples of such initiatives include the “Mondiali antirazzisti” (Anti-Racist World Championship) in Italy, or Dajori (Civic organization uniting the Roma community) in Slovakia. The social impact is achieved in many ways, such as creating sports scholarships for disadvantaged groups, social awareness, and sensitisation campaigns, against school bullying, the fight against cancer, in favour of the integration of disabled people through sport, etc.

Next, as previously said, sports events, initiatives, and movements serve as tools to attract attention and increase people’s **engagement in social issues and problems**. They have the power to work as educational means and extraordinary catalysts for positive universal values. Sport is a universal language as it transcends geographic, time, and cultural conditions. It links people together who share a common interest by behaving in an entrepreneurial manner. This has led to sport being used as an entrepreneurial mechanism to promote peace, stop wars, and build a better global society (Ratten, 2015). The examples include movements such as Black lives matter, Pride or initiatives against the gender pay gap. Here, the personality of a popular athlete can even leverage the effect. Moreover, it is possible even after sports career, as **athletes’ high respectable reputation** remains. Thus, involvement in such initiatives is one of the dual/secondary career paths of athletes, while it also ensures a social impact.

Furthermore, sports (in general as well as embedded in sports entrepreneurship) generates a considerable and rich contribution to society and economy. The **economic effects** include job creation, responding to customers’ needs and resulting consumption, tax payments, construction of sports facilities, tourism and consequent development of respective destinations, increased productivity, reduced sick leave, organization of major sporting events. In addition, the **social effects** include improved public **health** and increased awareness of **healthy living**, physical and mental **well-being**, life quality and satisfaction, social utility and socialization through increased social connectedness and a sense of belonging, improved pro-social behaviour, reduced crime, and anti-social behaviour.



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