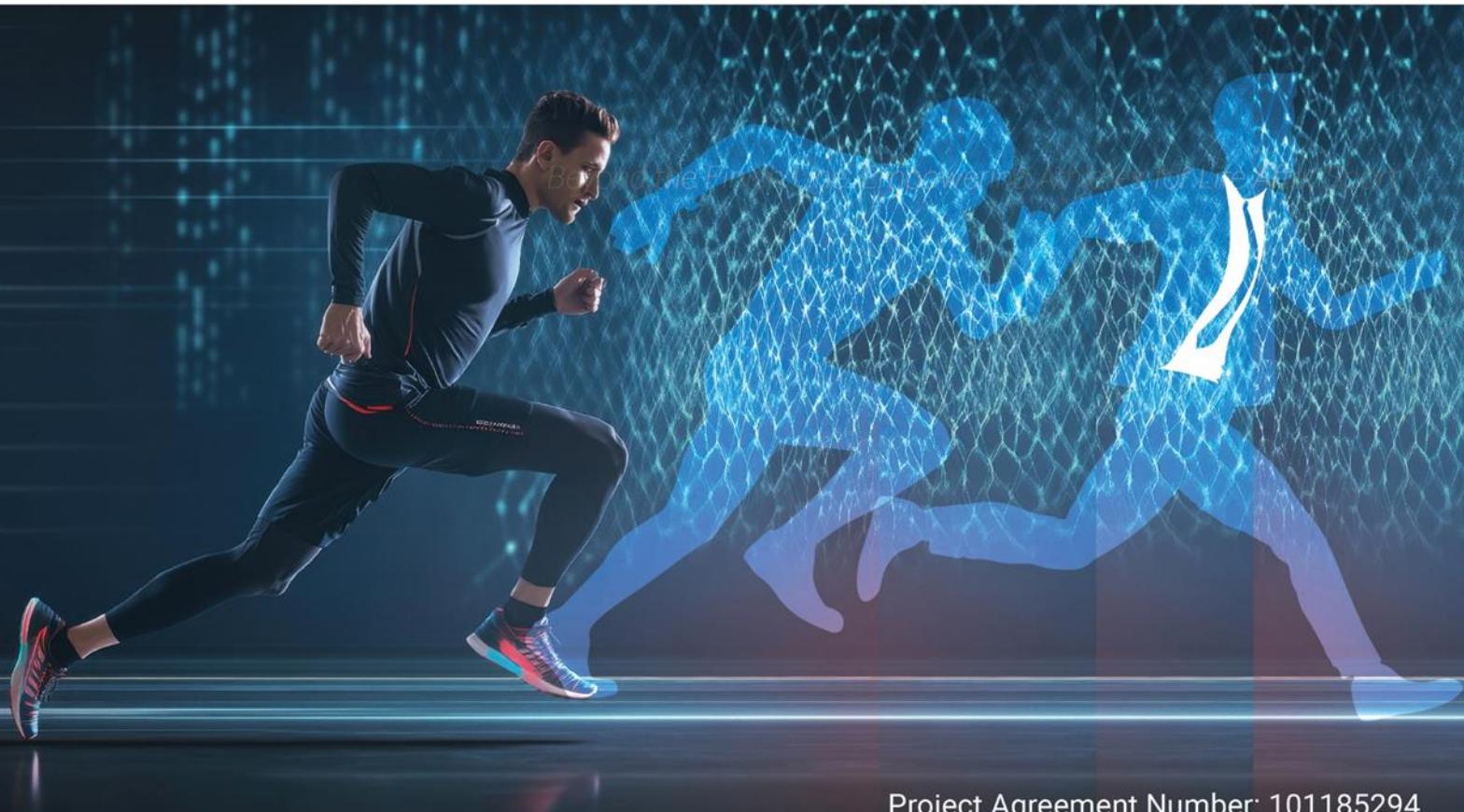


Report: Athletes' Challenges and Transversal Skills as a Solution to the Challenges



Project Agreement Number: 101185294



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WP2: Profiling Possible Career Paths and Identifying Athletes' Missing Skills

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1. Introduction

The professional journey of athletes, particularly in high-performance sports like football, is often intense, demanding, and short-lived. While they invest years developing physical abilities and discipline, many athletes face significant uncertainty when transitioning out of sport — whether due to age, injuries, or limited financial prospects. This transition period is often marked by a lack of direction, employability gaps, and limited access to structured career support. Recognising these challenges, the **European Union** issued the **EU Guidelines on Dual Careers of Athletes (2012)**, emphasising the importance of parallel personal and professional development for athletes during and after their sporting careers.

In this context, the **Progress DC** project (**PROfessional GRowth through Education in the Sport Sector by pursuing a Dual Career**) aims to support professional football players in building sustainable dual careers. The project operates on three levels:

1. **Empowering sports organisations** by training and certifying Dual Career Advisers (DC Advisers);
2. **Equipping athletes** with transversal skills and personalised career guidance; and
3. **Raising awareness** among stakeholders and policymakers on the necessity of dual career pathways for athletes.

This report focuses on **Work Package 2 (WP2): ‘Profiling Possible Career Paths and Identifying Athletes’ Missing Skills’**, which serves as the research foundation for the project’s educational and advisory interventions. WP2 seeks to better understand the current landscape of dual career support, the skills athletes already possess, the gaps that need to be filled, and the viable career pathways available after sport. The findings from this work package will directly inform the training content, advisory strategies, and platform resources developed in later stages of the project.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Aim

The aim of this research is to explore and define effective strategies for supporting athletes' transition from professional sport to the labour market. More specifically, the objectives are to:

- Identify **best practices** in dual career promotion across Europe;
- Map **potential career paths** based on athletes' existing competencies;
- Investigate the **challenges athletes face** in balancing sport with other professional pursuits; and
- Detect **missing transversal skills** that are critical for employment and long-term career success.

Through this research, the project seeks to contribute practical knowledge for use in career counselling, training programme design, and policymaking, ultimately supporting the integration of athletes into the broader workforce.

2.2. Research Phases

The research activities carried out in the Progress DC project were implemented in a carefully designed sequence, ensuring that each phase would build upon the findings of the previous one to produce a well-rounded and evidence-based understanding of athletes' dual career prospects.

The process began with a **review of existing best practices** across Europe, aiming to map out successful models of dual career support, both institutional and individual. Building on this foundation, the next step involved the **development and deployment of the Athlete Skills Inventory Tool (ASIT)**, which provided quantitative data on the transversal skills athletes possess and those they lack. This was followed by **qualitative research**, through interviews with former professional athletes, offering rich personal insights into career transitions, challenges, and success factors. The final stage consisted of **integrating and analysing data** from all previous tasks to extract key themes and actionable conclusions.

These distinct phases are also shown in the following diagram:

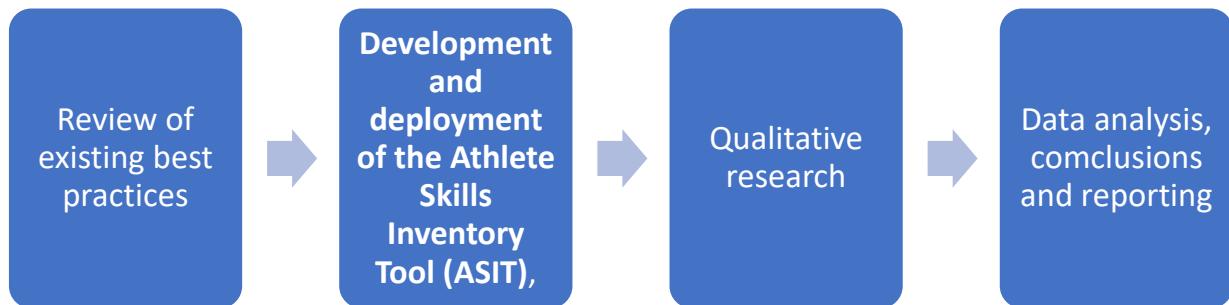


Figure 1: Research design

This comprehensive approach enabled the identification of patterns across countries, sectors, and personal experiences, setting the groundwork for targeted training content and advisory tools that will be used in the later stages of the Progress DC project.

2.3. Research tools

The tools used for the research are presented in the following table and attached as appendix to this report.

Research Phase	Research tool
Review of existing best practices	Best practices identification template
Deployment of ASIT tool	The ASIT tool
Qualitative research	Interview Guide

Table 1: Research phases and tools

2.4. Sections of the Report

This report brings together the results of all research activities carried out in the PROGRESS DC project and is structured to reflect the logical progression of the investigation.

- It begins with a presentation of the **policy and practice landscape**, highlighting key findings from the desk research on dual career strategies across Europe (Section 3.1)

- The following sections delve into the **quantitative and qualitative findings**, beginning with the analysis of the ASIT results, which reveal common strengths and skill gaps among athletes (Section 3.2.).
- This is complemented by the insights gathered from the in-depth interviews, shedding light on real-life transition experiences and employment strategies post-sport (Section 3.3).

The report then proceeds to a **synthesis and interpretation** of the combined data, drawing conclusions about the types of support athletes need, the sectors they can realistically enter, and the missing elements that must be addressed through training or advisory services.

The document concludes with a **set of recommendations and reflections** on how the results can inform future actions within the PROGRESS DC project and beyond.

3. Research in the Partner Countries

3.1. Best Practices on the Promotion of a Dual Career for Athletes [Research Phase 1]

3.1.1. Best Practices in the Partner Countries

Existing Policies and Strategies

Across the 4 countries analyzed—Cyprus, Greece, Poland and Romania—a common theme emerges: the lack of a comprehensive, unified national strategy for supporting athletes in dual careers that combine sporting and academic/professional development. While each country recognizes the importance of the concept, actual policy implementation remains fragmented and inconsistent.

Cyprus does not have a formal national policy explicitly dedicated to dual careers in sports. Although some financial assistance and academic flexibility measures exist—such as scholarships and partnerships with universities—these initiatives are ad hoc and vary between institutions. Importantly, Cyprus has not transposed the EU Guidelines on Dual Careers of Athletes (European Commission, 2012) into national legislation, resulting in a lack of coordination and awareness, limited psychological and career support, and few trained professionals in this area.

Greece, similarly, lacks a dedicated national DC strategy, though some legal frameworks offer benefits to elite athletes, such as university admission quotas and public sector employment rights. Law 2725/1999 provides a legislative basis, but it is reward-oriented rather than process-supportive. The EU Guidelines are not formally incorporated into Greek law, and institutional practices rely on informal arrangements. There is no centralised oversight, and psychological/career counselling remains underdeveloped.

Romania recognizes dual careers conceptually within its strategic documents, notably the National Strategy for Sport 2022–2032. However, no law explicitly regulates dual careers, and the implementation is project-based, fragmented, and lacks budgeting or timeline enforcement. The EU Guidelines are acknowledged but not formally adopted. The Law on Physical Education and Sport (No. 69/2000) does not address dual careers. Challenges include weak institutional collaboration, insufficient counselling services, and inconsistent regional support.

In **Poland**, over the past decade, Dual Career (DC) policies have evolved through initiatives like the National Academic Representation (Narodowa Reprezentacja Akademicka - NRA), coordinated by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education and the Academic Sports Association (AZS). The NRA supports university-level athletes by enabling flexible learning pathways, individual study arrangements, and academic counselling. While not directly enshrined in a dedicated law, NRA reflects many EU Guidelines (2012) principles through operational flexibility and cooperation between education and sports institutions. However, no comprehensive, centralized national DC strategy exists. Challenges include inconsistent implementation across universities, low support at secondary school levels, limited transition services for post-sport careers, and lack of a national monitoring framework.

Aspect	Cyprus	Greece	Romania	Poland
Formal DC Strategy	✗ None	✗ None	✗ None	✗ None
Legislative Support	Partial (ad hoc support, scholarships)	Partial (Law 2725/1999 - benefits-based)	Partial (No legal DC mention in Law 69/2000)	Partial (NRA program, Law on Higher Education autonomy)
EU Guidelines Transposition	✗ Not transposed	✗ Not transposed	✗ transposed	Partially (reflected in practice, not formally codified)
Institutional Flexibility	✓ Case-by-case	✓ Case-by-case	✓ Mentioned but inconsistent	✓ (via Individual Organization of Studies)

Table 2: Existing policies and strategies in the participating countries

Responsible Bodies and Institutions

The responsibility for DC implementation in all four countries is distributed across several ministries and organizations, yet none has established a centralized coordination mechanism. This contributes significantly to the fragmented nature of implementation.

In **Cyprus**, the Cyprus Sports Organisation (KOA) plays a key role in elite sport support but not specifically DC. The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth provides informal academic adjustments.

The Cyprus University Sports Federation focuses on competitions but not DC support, while the Pancyprian Footballers Association offers some educational scholarships independently.

In **Greece**, the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports and the General Secretariat of Sports are the central actors, offering legislative benefits and financial programs. The Hellenic Olympic Committee provides development support without direct DC oversight. Universities and secondary schools apply informal accommodations. Athlete associations, such as PSAP, initiate private sector collaborations, while sports federations engage sporadically.

In **Romania**, the Ministry of Education can provide flexible educational options. The Ministry of Sport is tasked with national policy and included DC in the 2022–2032 strategy but lacks implementation tools. The Romanian Olympic and Sports Committee supports retraining and education programs, often in partnership with the IOC. Federations sometimes cooperate with educational institutions. No institution has exclusive oversight of dual career.

In **Poland**, several entities share responsibility for Dual Career. The Ministry of Science and Higher Education oversees higher education and funds the NRA program. The Ministry of Sport and Tourism provides athlete scholarships and promotes alignment of sports training with educational needs. The Academic Sports Association (AZS) coordinates university sports and supports implementation of the NRA. The Polish Olympic Committee (PKOI) promotes career transition programs like “Be Your Own Boss.” Universities also play a key role by offering flexible academic arrangements. The Polish Paralympic Committee ensures inclusion of para-athletes. However, no single central coordinating body exists.

Institutional Coordination	Cyprus	Greece	Romania	Poland
Central Coordinating Body	✗ None	✗ None	✗ None	✗ None
Key Ministries Involved	Ministry of Education, KOA	Ministry of Education, General Secretariat	Ministry of Education, Ministry of Sport	Min. of Science & Higher Ed., Min. of Sport
Olympic Committee Role	Limited role	Education programs only	Retraining & education (some)	Career transitions (e.g., “Be Your Own Boss”)

Institutional Coordination	Cyprus	Greece	Romania	Poland
			active involvement)	
Federations' Role	Passive (except PASP)	Sporadic informal	Some cooperation with schools	Advisory role, alignment of training
Athlete Associations	Active (PASP scholarships)	Active private education partnerships (PSAP)	✗ Not explicitly mentioned	Active (AZS; PKOI; para-sports advocacy)

Table 3: Institutional coordination in the countries of the consortium

Conclusions and Policy Insights

In all four countries, the ProgressDC project is seen as a catalyst for systemic reform and a means to align national efforts with European standards.

In **Cyprus**, ProgressDC fosters cross-sectoral cooperation and promotes awareness of DC as a fundamental right. It aids capacity building through sharing best practices and tools for policy reform and facilitates policy dialogue across sectors. The project lays the foundation for a more coherent national strategy.

In **Greece**, the project addresses long-standing fragmentation by enhancing intersectoral cooperation, offering training for stakeholders, and promoting a shift from benefits-based to rights-based support. It supports harmonization with EU guidelines and helps stimulate national dialogue on the necessity of DC structures.

In **Romania**, ProgressDC addresses institutional gaps by providing policy recommendations, promoting inter-institutional partnerships, and raising awareness. It also develops practical tools (e.g., educational materials, counselling guides) and fosters local partnerships. The project encourages mindset changes among athletes, parents, and coaches regarding the importance of dual careers.

In **Poland**, the ProgressDC project fills a critical gap by systematizing support across educational levels and promoting cross-sector collaboration. It brings awareness to secondary-level DC challenges, offers new tools for career transition, and promotes early-stage support. The project complements the NRA initiative by supporting athletes beyond elite level, especially in schools and smaller universities.

Additionally, ProgressDC introduces innovative tools and cooperation models to improve the fragmented Polish DC landscape, helping build a more inclusive and sustainable system

ProgressDC Contributions	Cyprus	Greece	Romania	Poland
Raises awareness on DC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes
Promotes intersectoral cooperation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Among sport and education bodies	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Among education, sport, and public actors	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Among clubs, schools, ministries	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education–Sport–Labor market
Tools and educational materials	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Best practices shared	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adapted to Greek context	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Training, guides, counselling tools	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dual career guides, planning tools
Policy recommendations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes (aligned with EU guidelines)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes (sustainability focus)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concrete proposals for future national legislation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> For early intervention & national legislation monitoring system

Table 4: Progress DC contribution

Despite progress at a conceptual level, **Cyprus, Greece, Poland** and **Romania** all face considerable challenges in implementing Dual Career support systems. The absence of legal frameworks, centralized coordination bodies, and funding mechanisms hinders comprehensive implementation. Nevertheless, the **ProgressDC project** has begun to close these gaps through awareness, cross-sector collaboration, and the provision of concrete resources.

Best Practices Collected at the EU and National Level

A total of ten best practices were identified as part of the desk research conducted within the PROGRESS DC project. These practices represent a wide array of geographical, institutional, and organizational contexts, demonstrating the European commitment to enhancing dual career opportunities for athletes. They span both national and transnational levels, showcasing how countries and consortia are addressing the dual challenge of combining sports performance with academic, vocational, or professional growth.

The geographic reach of these practices covers a significant portion of the European Union, with implementation in countries such as **Cyprus, Greece, Romania, Poland, Sweden, Spain, France, Italy**,

Portugal, Malta, the Netherlands and Slovenia. In some cases, such as the Swedish National Guidelines and the Polish National Representation of Athletes (NRA) program, support systems have been institutionalized through national frameworks, emphasizing policy-driven and systemic approaches. Other practices—like the DONA project, STARTING 11, and the UNIC-FIFPro initiative—are built on European-wide partnerships, integrating universities, sports federations, NGOs, and professional athlete associations into coherent, cross-border support models.

These initiatives differ in their institutional anchors as well: some are rooted in educational settings (such as schools or universities), while others are led by sports organizations, public institutions, or multi-stakeholder alliances. Despite this diversity, all share a common objective: to provide athletes with the necessary tools, guidance, and flexibility to manage their dual commitments and secure a sustainable future beyond competitive sport.

No.	Title of Best Practice	Country / Region	Lead Organization(s)	Main Target Group	Logo
1	DONA – Dual Career for Women Athletes	Spain, France, Italy, Portugal, Malta, Netherlands, Slovenia	Associació Esportiva Carles Vallbona, EAS, University of Ljubljana	Young female volleyball athletes	 DUAL CAREER FOR WOMEN ATHLETES
2	STARTING 11 – European Dual Career Toolkit	Netherlands, France, Germany, Luxembourg, EU-wide	Amsterdam Univ. of Applied Sciences, EAS, CREPS, others	Elite/semi-professional athletes	 THE EUROPEAN DUAL CAREER TOOLKIT
3	Swedish National Guidelines for Dual Careers	Sweden	Swedish Sports Confederation (RF), RIUs, EVLs	University-level elite athletes	 Riksidrottsförbundet Swedish Sports Confederation Mästervägen 10a, Box 10300, 100 61 Stockholm Tel: +46 8 599 60 00 E-mail: riksidrottsforbundet@riksidrottsforbundet.se Website: www.riksidrottsforbundet.se

No.	Title of Best Practice	Country Region	Lead Organization(s)	Main Target Group	Logo
4	TJSS Athletes' Programme	Elite Cyprus	The Junior & Senior School (TJSS)	& Secondary school student-athletes	
5	UNIC-FIFPro Initiative	Cyprus Worldwide	& University of Nicosia, FIFPro	Professional football players	
6	NRA – National Representation of Athletes	Poland	Academic Sports Association, Ministry of Science	University-level athletes	
7	Be Your Own Boss	Poland	Polish Olympic Committee (PKOI)	Retiring/transitioning athletes	
8	The National Program for Athletes - Grants and Careers	Romania	Romanian Olympic and Sports Committee (COSR)	Football, Basketball, Volei, gimnastica, tenis	
9	The EdMedia project	Romania	"Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University Iasi (UAIC)	all athletes interested in developing a dual career	
10	Olympic Committees for Dual Career (OCDC)	Greece, Poland	Hellenic Olympic Committee (HOC)	Junior, senior, and retired Olympic sports athletes	

Table 5: Overview of the 10 Identified Best Practices

Target Groups Addressed

These practices encompass various stages of athletic careers, from young aspiring athletes to seasoned professionals transitioning into post-sport careers.

For younger athletes, particularly those in secondary education and early university years, programs like the TJSS Elite Athletes' Programme in Cyprus and the DONA project across several EU countries provide structured support. These initiatives focus on balancing academic commitments with intensive training schedules, offering mentorship, flexible learning pathways, and psychological support. Such programs are crucial in preventing early dropout rates and ensuring that young athletes can pursue both educational and sporting aspirations simultaneously.

At the elite and professional levels, initiatives like the Swedish National Guidelines and the UNIC-FIFPro Initiative address the complexities faced by athletes competing at the highest levels. These programs offer legal frameworks, academic accommodations, and career planning resources to help athletes manage the demands of professional sports alongside educational or vocational development.

For retiring or transitioning athletes, programs such as "Be Your Own Boss" in Poland and the Olympic Committees for Dual Career (OCDC) in Greece provide entrepreneurship training, career counseling, and support networks to facilitate smooth transitions into post-sport careers.

Collectively, these practices **highlight the importance of tailored support systems that consider the specific needs of athletes at different career stages**. By addressing the unique challenges faced by each group, these initiatives contribute to the overarching goal of the PROGRESS DC project: to promote sustainable dual career pathways for athletes across Europe.

All the above are illustrated through the infographic below.



Infographic 1: Target Groups Addressed in Dual Career Initiatives

Training Aims and Methods

At the core of these initiatives is the emphasis on holistic development, **where athletic performance is integrated with academic achievement, emotional resilience, and life skill acquisition**. For instance, the National Representation of Athletes (NRA) program in Poland and the Swedish National Guidelines embed dual career support within higher education institutions, ensuring that elite university athletes can benefit from individualized study plans, academic counseling, and coordinated support between faculty and sports staff. These models highlight a systemic approach, where flexibility in academic scheduling and dedicated dual career coordinators allow athletes to remain fully engaged in both domains without compromising performance or well-being.

On the other hand, programs such as DONA and the TJSS Elite Athletes' Programme showcase how this holistic model can be successfully adapted to younger athletes in secondary education or early stages of their sports careers. These initiatives combine structured sports training with academic mentoring and psychosocial support, ensuring that young athletes develop key competencies like time

management, communication, and goal setting from an early age. Furthermore, career readiness is not treated as a distant concern but as an integral part of the training process. STARTING 11, for example, introduces *digital tools to help athletes identify transferable skills and map future employment pathways*, while 'Be Your Own Boss' empowers retiring athletes through *entrepreneurship education and financial literacy*. These training aims not only prepare athletes for immediate academic and professional challenges but also lay a strong foundation for lifelong adaptability and confidence in transitioning between sport and post-sport careers.

Skills and Career Pathways Promoted

A defining feature across all ten dual career initiatives is their emphasis on developing **transferable skills** that extend beyond the sports field and into broader personal and professional life. Programs consistently integrate components that foster time **management, self-discipline, leadership, communication, and planning**—all essential for athletes to navigate the complex demands of balancing academic, vocational, and athletic commitments. These skills not only improve performance in sport and study but also enhance the athlete's capacity to transition into diverse career pathways. For example, initiatives like TJSS and DONA embed these competencies into mentorship and daily routines, ensuring athletes internalize them through real-life application. The holistic cultivation **of such soft skills** reflects a broader recognition that dual career support is not just about logistics, but about shaping adaptable, confident individuals prepared for long-term success.

Beyond soft skills, some programs also aim to provide concrete **professional qualifications and entrepreneurial capacities**. The UNIC-FIFPro initiative and Poland's 'Be Your Own Boss' program are standout examples, *directly addressing the often-overlooked challenge of life after elite sport*. These initiatives offer formal education—such as a Bachelor's in Sports Management or an MBA—while simultaneously **promoting entrepreneurial thinking through courses**, scholarship support, and career planning services. Such models are particularly impactful for athletes nearing the end of their competitive careers, as they provide both the knowledge and the mindset needed to launch businesses or pursue professional roles. While not all practices include structured **job placements or internships**, programs like STARTING 11 bridge this gap by creating institutional links that allow athletes to explore real job environments through employer collaborations. These forward-looking initiatives contribute to building career resilience among athletes, ensuring that their sporting success translates into meaningful professional futures.



Transferable (Soft) Skills

Time Management | Self-Discipline

Planning training, academics, and personal time efficiently,
Maintaining consistency and motivation under pressure

Leadership

Leading teams, setting examples, and making responsible decisions

Communication

Interacting effectively with coaches, teachers, mentors, and employers

Planning & Goal-Setting

Structuring long-term academic and career objectives alongside athletic goals

Integrated in: **TJSS Elite Athletes' Programme | DONA Project | Swedish National Guidelines | STARTING 11 toolkit**

Infographic 2: Dual Career Initiatives – Skills Development Overview, Soft Skills Integrated



Professional & Career-Oriented Skills

- Entrepreneurial Thinking
Understanding how to start and manage a business post-sport
- Financial Literacy
Managing income, budgeting, and planning for life after sport
- Career Planning
Exploring job sectors, building a CV, setting career milestones
- Workplace Exposure
Access to employer networks, internships, job “tasting” experiences

Promoted through: **UNIC-FIFPro Initiative | Be Your Own Boss | STARTING 11 | OCDC Project**

Infographic 3: Professional & Career – Oriented Skills promoted through the Best Practices

Types of Support Provided

A variety of support mechanisms have been implemented to ensure that athletes receive the guidance and flexibility necessary to thrive in dual careers. Central to these mechanisms are individualised academic plans, as seen in the NRA program in Poland and the Swedish National Guidelines, where universities play an active role in tailoring study paths to accommodate athletic demands. These personalized plans often include modified course loads, flexible exam schedules, and dedicated academic advisors who liaise with coaches and faculty to create a supportive learning environment. At the same time, mentorship programs embedded in initiatives like DONA and the TJSS Elite Athletes' Programme offer holistic support that goes beyond academics—providing emotional encouragement, guidance on personal development, and a trusted space where young athletes can express concerns and aspirations. This personal mentorship builds a strong foundation for resilience, helping athletes balance pressure from both academic and athletic commitments.

In addition to individualized learning and mentorship, several initiatives emphasize career counseling and the use of technology-enhanced learning to reach athletes across diverse geographies and schedules. The 'Be Your Own Boss' initiative stands out for offering structured career counseling aimed at empowering athletes during transitional phases, while the UNIC-FIFPro program exemplifies innovation through its fully asynchronous online learning platform—allowing professional footballers worldwide to pursue university degrees without compromising their sports careers. Furthermore, some practices introduced institutional funding to support tutoring services or to reduce course-related workload, making educational attainment more accessible. Others, such as STARTING 11 and UNIC-FIFPro, actively foster a sense of community by creating peer support networks and alumni engagement strategies. These networks are critical for sustaining motivation and offering post-program guidance, reinforcing the idea that dual career support does not end at graduation but continues through life transitions. Together, these mechanisms create a robust ecosystem of support tailored to the unique realities of athletic life.

Observed Outcomes and Impact

One of the most significant achievements is the **improved retention of athletes in education**, demonstrating that with the right support structures, athletes are not forced to choose between their academic goals and athletic careers. Programs like the Polish NRA have made substantial strides in this area, supporting over 3,000 university-level athletes since 2019 through flexible study arrangements and tailored dual career planning. Similarly, the UNIC-FIFPro initiative has opened doors for more than 1,000 professional footballers to obtain internationally recognized degrees, significantly enhancing their employability and long-term career options. These figures highlight the scalability and relevance of dual career frameworks when integrated effectively into existing institutional systems.

Beyond academic success, many initiatives have made a **notable contribution to reducing dropout rates from sport, particularly during critical transitional phases**. For example, the DONA project has effectively addressed the issue of early disengagement among adolescent female volleyball players by embedding mentorship and educational support into club structures. By offering personalized planning and emotional guidance, DONA has enabled these athletes to persist in both sport and school during their most vulnerable years. Meanwhile, STARTING 11 has empowered over 1,200 elite athletes per Olympic cycle to **engage in strategic career reflection, helping them to plan ahead for life after sport through soft skills identification and vocational exploration**.

These outcomes affirm that dual career programs are not just reactive interventions but proactive tools that can extend athletes' engagement in sport, enhance their confidence, and provide them with realistic, structured pathways toward fulfilling futures.

Innovation and Transferability

A key strength of the ten best practices lies in their innovative approaches to supporting dual careers, each offering unique features that contribute to the advancement of athlete development across Europe. The DONA project stands out for **its club-based mentoring model**, which integrates psychological support, academic guidance, and life planning directly within the athlete's training environment. By embedding these services into daily club operations and introducing tools to monitor competence development, DONA created a localized and continuous support mechanism tailored to the real-life challenges faced by young female athletes. Similarly, the STARTING 11 initiative introduces a **modular, digital toolkit** that not only empowers athletes to reflect on their strengths and plan their careers but also equips institutions with adaptable resources. These tools are designed for broad application, making them highly transferable across diverse European contexts, regardless of differences in language, structure, or sport.

What further distinguishes several of these initiatives is their attention to systemic integration and global adaptability. Sweden's dual career system, for example, represents one of the **most structured and scalable models in Europe**, anchored in legal agreements and multi-year university contracts. This level of national coordination ensures consistency in support and makes the model particularly attractive for replication in other countries seeking to formalise their dual career frameworks. At the same time, programs like UNIC-FIFPro offer a complementary innovation: **demonstrating how flexibility in delivery—through asynchronous, fully online degree programs**—and robust financial aid mechanisms can remove barriers for globally mobile athletes. By addressing both **structural and practical obstacles**, these innovative practices provide a blueprint for the future of dual career support, proving that with thoughtful design and inclusive planning, meaningful impact is possible across all levels of sport and education.

Alignment with Progress DC Objectives

All ten best practices examined clearly demonstrate alignment with the overarching mission of the Progress DC project, which is to foster professional growth for athletes through structured dual career support and high-quality educational opportunities. Each initiative, whether locally embedded or transnationally developed, contributes to this aim by offering athlete-centered approaches that prioritize the long-term development of individuals beyond their competitive years. These practices

place the athlete at the heart of the system—not as a passive recipient of services, but as an active agent in shaping their academic, vocational, and personal journey. The emphasis on customization, empowerment, and holistic development is evident across programs like TJSS, UNIC-FIFPro, and the Swedish National Guidelines, which recognize that supporting athletes' educational and career aspirations is essential to sustaining their well-being and preventing disengagement from sport.

Furthermore, these initiatives provide strong evidence of the value of cross-sectoral collaboration and scalable models, which are central to the PROGRESS DC vision. Programs such as STARTING 11 and DONA have gone beyond isolated interventions by creating toolkits, mentoring systems, and implementation frameworks that can be adapted across different countries, sports disciplines, and institutional contexts. These transferable resources exemplify the kind of innovation and strategic design needed to institutionalize dual career support throughout Europe. By showcasing how partnerships between sports clubs, universities, policy makers, and employers can result in integrated solutions, these initiatives reinforce the potential for long-term sustainability. In doing so, they directly contribute to PROGRESS DC's goal of shaping a unified, inclusive European approach to dual careers that enables athletes to pursue excellence both on and off the field.

3.1.2. Conclusions from desk research

The analysis of national policies and strategies in Cyprus, Greece, Poland, and Romania reveals a common challenge: the lack of a comprehensive, coordinated, and national-level framework to support athletes pursuing dual careers combining sports with academic or professional development. While the importance of dual careers is widely recognised, policy implementation remains fragmented, with limited legislative backing, insufficient coordination, and notable gaps in specialised psychological and career counselling services, as well as in the training of professionals supporting athletes.

Cyprus and Greece have yet to fully adopt European dual career guidelines, and their support services are mostly fragmented and focused on specific benefits rather than on holistic support systems. Romania incorporates the concept in strategic documents but struggles with implementation, lacking dedicated laws and funding. Poland has developed promising practices, such as the National Representation of Athletes (NRA) program at universities, yet it lacks a national, systemic strategy, and support at secondary education levels remains underdeveloped.

At the same time, the research on best practices at the EU and national levels highlights innovative initiatives and exemplary models that can serve as foundations for developing robust dual career

support systems across these countries. Initiatives such as Sweden's National Guidelines, Poland's NRA program, the UNIC-FIFPro initiative, and the DONA project cover a broad spectrum of athlete needs - from young athletes balancing school and training to professionals and those transitioning out of sport.

A common thread among these best practices is their holistic approach, which includes:

- **Flexible academic arrangements** and individualized study plans tailored to athletes' demanding schedules.
- **Mentorship and psychosocial support** that foster resilience and personal growth.
- **Training in transferable skills** such as time management, communication, and leadership, equipping athletes to handle dual commitments and prepare for life beyond sports.
- **Career transition support** through counseling, entrepreneurship education, and digital tools that facilitate flexible learning and skill development.

These programs demonstrate that with appropriate support, athletes can successfully complete their education, reduce dropout rates during critical phases, and transition smoothly into new careers. Furthermore, they highlight the essential role of collaboration among sports organizations, educational institutions, policy makers, and employers in creating sustainable and athlete-centered dual career ecosystems.

The Progress DC project acts as a key driver for change and harmonization with European standards by fostering cross-sector partnerships and disseminating best practices. Its focus on developing high-quality education and training for dual career counselors supports the creation of inclusive, scalable systems tailored to athletes' real needs.

The findings of this research provide a strong basis for advancing national policies and enhancing European cooperation, ultimately building a unified and supportive environment where athletes can excel both in their sports and their post-athletic careers.

3.2. Survey with the Use of the 'Athletes Skills Inventory Tool' (ASIT)

The following four sections present the results of the deployment of the ASIT tool in the four countries of the consortium.

The following table presents the number of participants per country.

County	Number of participants
Cyprus	35
Greece	27
Romani	33
Poland	60
Total Number of participants	155

Table 6: Participants using the ASIT tool per country

The analysis of the results of the ASIT tool per country is presented in the following sections:

- **Demographics** (age, gender, sport and type of sport, years and level of involvement)
- Combination of sports with education and employment
- **Skills athletes have related to the key European frameworks:** The third part of the ASIT tool aims to identify the existence of skills and competences of athletes that relate to the key European frameworks and more specifically ENTRECOMP, LifoComp, DigComp and Green Comp

3.2.1. Survey in Cyprus

Demographics

25,7% of the athletes participating in the Cyprus research belong to the age group 19 - 23, followed by 20% in the age group 24 – 29 and 30 - 39. 51% of the participants were male and 49% female. The highest percentages of participants came primarily from football 40% and basketball 22,9%. Additionally, 71% of the athletes are involved in team sports, while 29% participate in individual sports. Over 40% are involved in the sports sector for more than 16 years, and another 29% for 6–10 years. 43% of the participants are professionals, while 49% consider themselves semi-professionals.

1. Age

● <16	1
● 16 - 18	5
● 19 - 23	9
● 24 - 29	7
● 30 - 39	7
● 40+	6

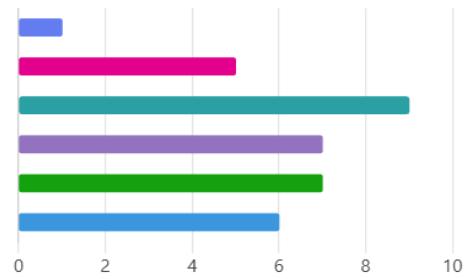


Figure 2: Age of participants in Cyprus

2. Gender

● Woman	17
● Man	18
● Non-binary	0
● Prefer not to say	0

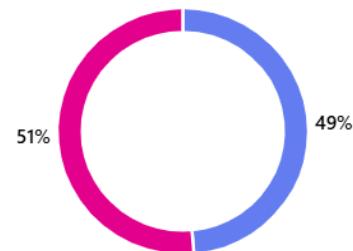


Figure 3: Gender of participants in Cyprus

3. Sport

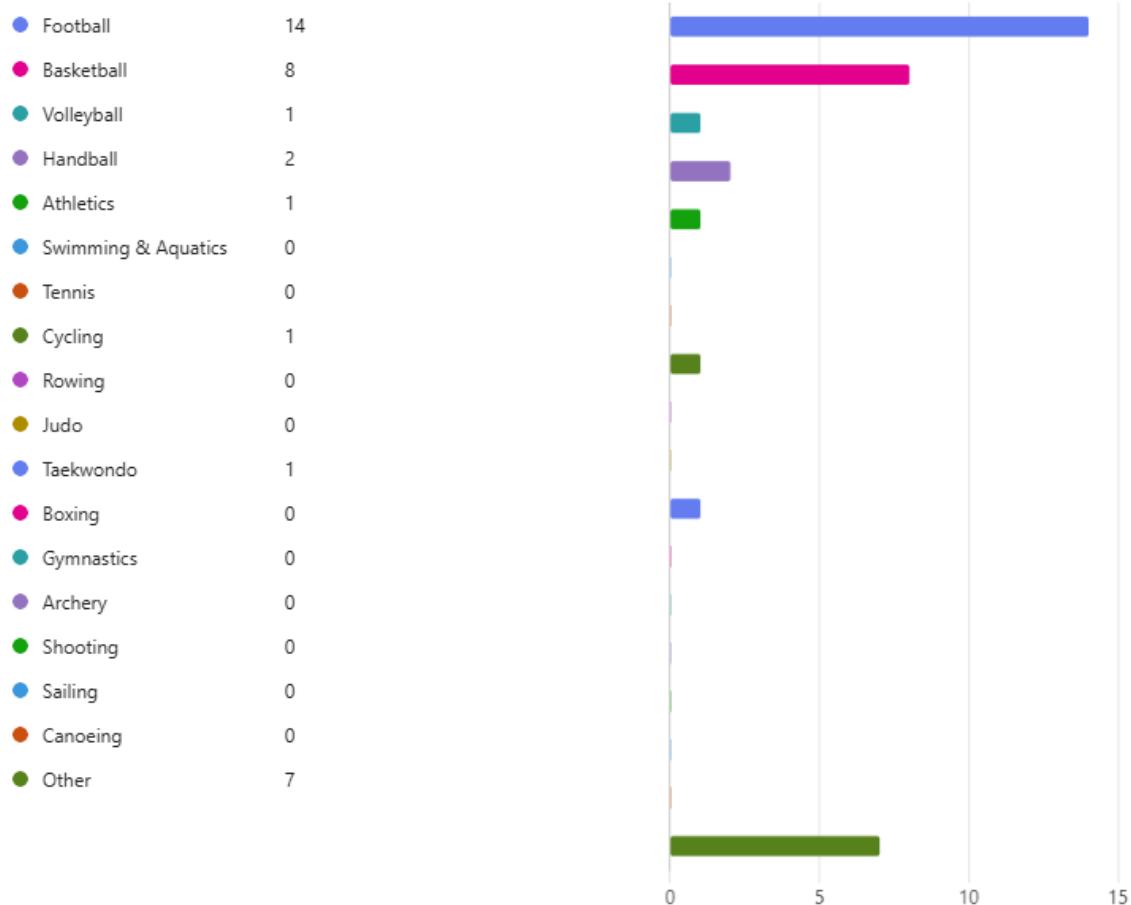


Figure 4: Sport of participants in Cyprus

4. Sport Type



Figure 5: Sport Type of participants in Cyprus

5. Years of Involvement in Sport

● 0 - 2	0
● 3 - 5	2
● 6 - 10	10
● 11 - 15	9
● 16+	14

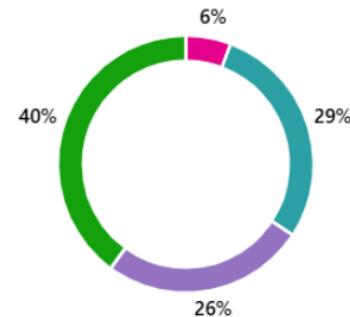


Figure 6: Years of Involvement in Sport of participants in Cyprus

6. Level of Involvement in Sport

● Amateur	3
● Semi-professional	17
● Professional	15

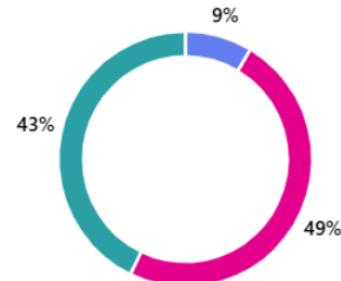


Figure 7: Level of Involvement in Sport of participants in Cyprus

Combination of sports with education and employment

One question in the research was whether sports and education are combined. In Cyprus, 63% of participants stated that they combine sports with education, as shown in the figure below.

7. Are you currently combining sports with education?

- Yes 22
- No 13

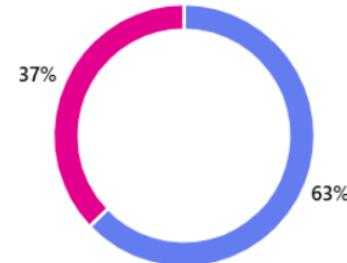


Figure 8: Combination of sports with education in Cyprus

Another question was whether sports and employment are combined. 60% of participants stated that they combine employment with sports.

8. Are you currently combining sports with any type of employment (full-time, part-time, etc.) or with any job shadowing or internship opportunities?

- Yes 21
- No 14

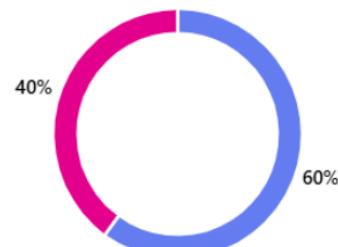


Figure 9: Combination of sports with employment in Cyprus

Skills and competences ride identified related to the key European Frameworks

The third part of the ASIT tool aims to identify the existence of skills and competences of athletes that relate to the key European frameworks and more specifically EntreComp, LifeComp, Green Comp and DigComp. Participants rated each skill using a 5-point Likert scale. The following graphs present the mean scores for each skill, organized by their corresponding European framework.

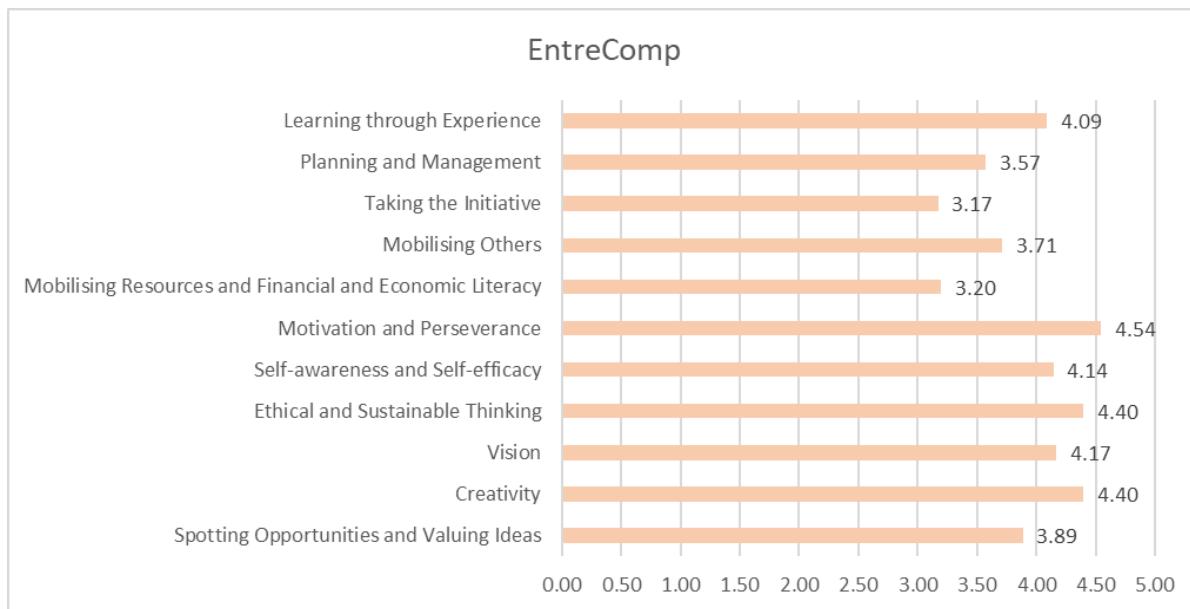


Figure 10: EntreComp competences developed through sports

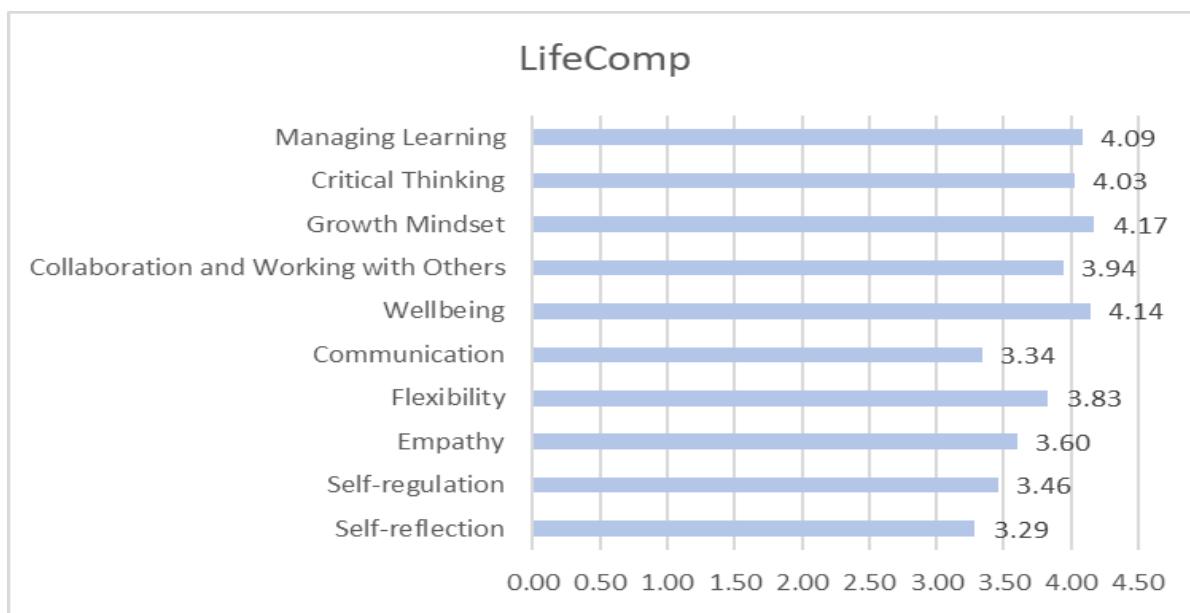


Figure 11: LifeComp competences developed through sports

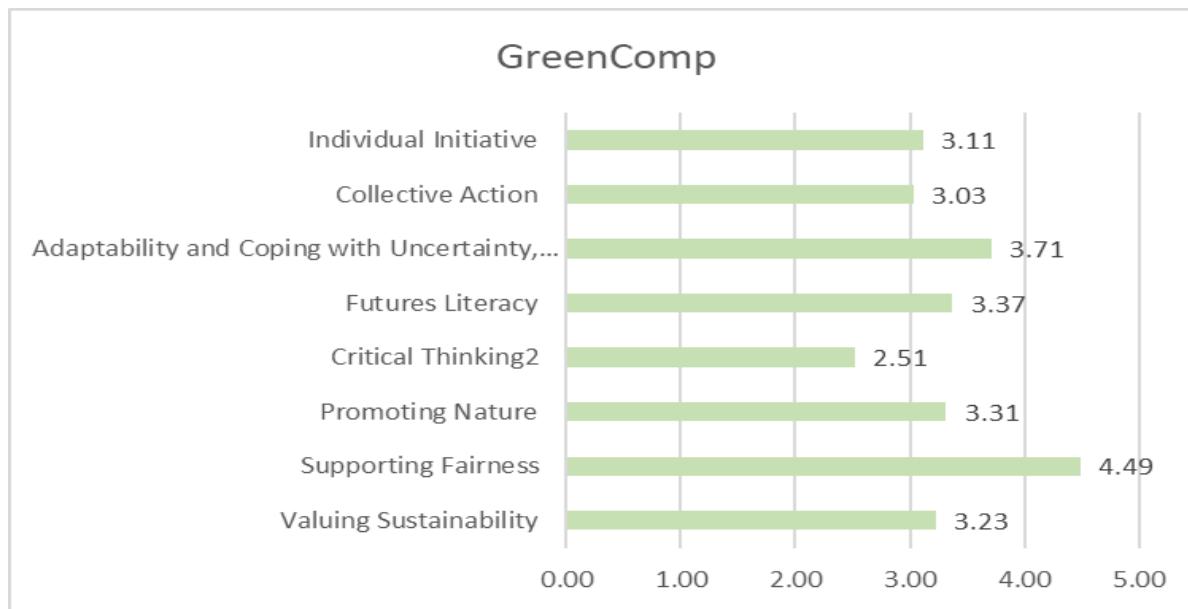


Figure 12: GreenComp competences developed through sports

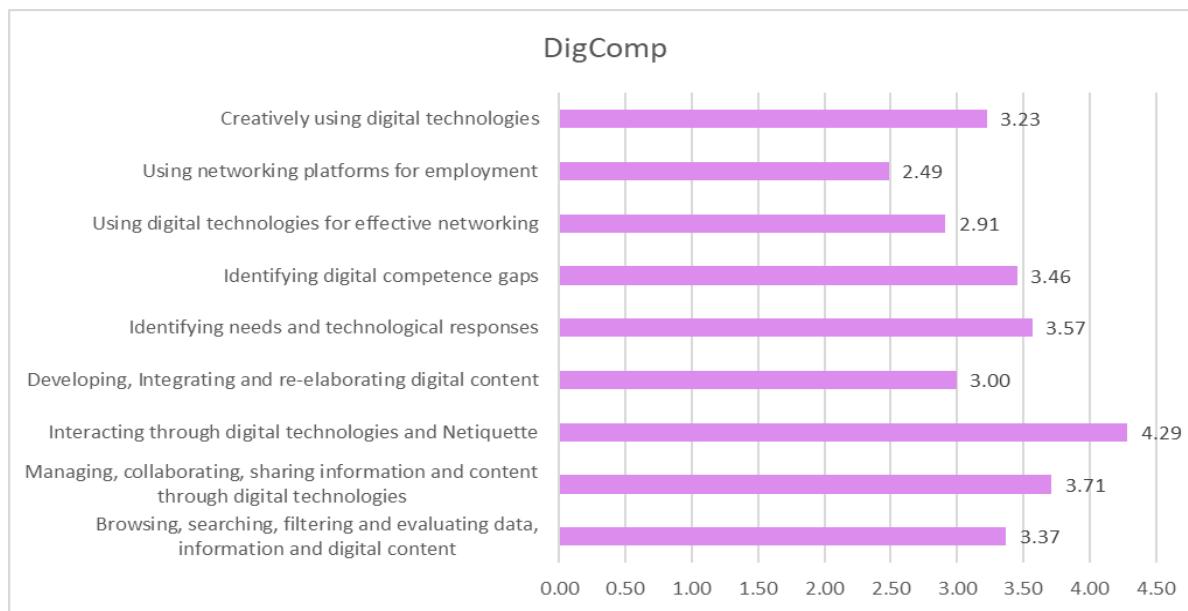


Figure 13: DigComp competences developed through sports

3.2.1.1. Conclusions from the survey in Cyprus

EntreComp, LifeComp, GreenComp, and DigComp, reveals clear strengths alongside areas requiring development.

In terms of strengths, athletes demonstrate high levels of motivation, perseverance, creativity, ethical awareness, and wellbeing. Specifically, within the EntreComp framework, **motivation and perseverance (4.54)** and **creativity (4.40)** emerge as standout strengths, reflecting athletes' strong

internal drive and innovative thinking. In the LifeComp framework, **growth mindset (4.17)** and **wellbeing (4.14)** further highlight athletes' capacity for continuous personal development and emotional balance. From the GreenComp perspective, **supporting fairness (4.49)** and **adaptability and coping with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk (3.71)** reflect athletes' commitment to equity and their ability to manage dynamic environments. Within DigComp, athletes demonstrate solid performance in **interacting through digital technologies and netiquette (4.29)** and **managing, collaborating, and sharing content through digital technologies (3.71)**, indicating confidence in digital communication and teamwork. They also show a positive mindset towards learning and adaptability, as well as effective communication and collaboration in digital environments.

Conversely, several skill areas are less developed. These include personal initiative and financial literacy, reflective and self-regulation abilities, environmental critical thinking and active engagement, as well as advanced digital skills related to professional networking and content creation. EntreComp underscores strong personal drive but weaker initiative and resource mobilization; in particular, **taking the initiative (3.17)** and **mobilising resources and financial and economic literacy (3.20)** appear as the lowest-rated skills within this framework. LifeComp reveals solid emotional resilience but some challenges in communication and self-reflection, especially in **self-reflection (3.29)** and **communication (3.34)**. GreenComp shows commitment to fairness but less engagement with sustainability actions, as reflected in **critical thinking (2.51)** and **collective action (3.03)**. DigComp indicates good basic digital interaction skills but limited use of digital tools for career advancement, particularly in **using networking platforms for employment (2.49)** and **using digital technologies for effective networking (2.91)**.

Each competence framework highlights these contrasts: EntreComp underscores strong personal drive but weaker initiative and resource mobilization; LifeComp reveals solid emotional resilience but some challenges in communication and self-reflection; GreenComp shows commitment to fairness but less engagement with sustainability actions; and DigComp indicates good basic digital interaction skills but limited use of digital tools for career advancement.

Overall, while athletes possess a solid foundation of personal and ethical competences, targeted development in strategic, environmental, and advanced digital skills could further enhance their readiness for diverse career paths.

3.2.2. Survey in Greece

Demographics

33,3% of the athletes participating in the Greece research belong to the age group 30 - 39, followed by 29,6% in the age group 24 – 29. 48% of the participants were male and 52% female. The highest percentage of participants came primarily from volleyball 48,2%. Additionally, 67% of the athletes are involved in team sports, while 33% participate in individual sports. Over 48% are involved in the sports sector for more than 16 years, and another 22% for 6–10 years. 52% of the participants are semi-professionals, while 41% consider themselves amateur.

1. Age

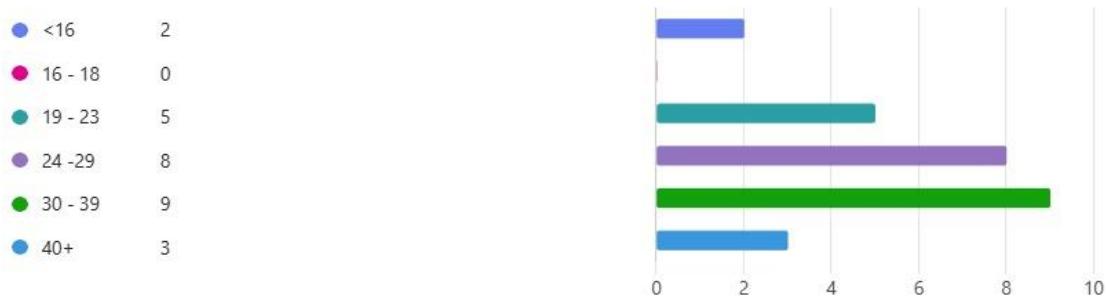


Figure 14: Age of participants in Greece

2. Gender



Figure 15: Gender of participants in Greece

3. Sport

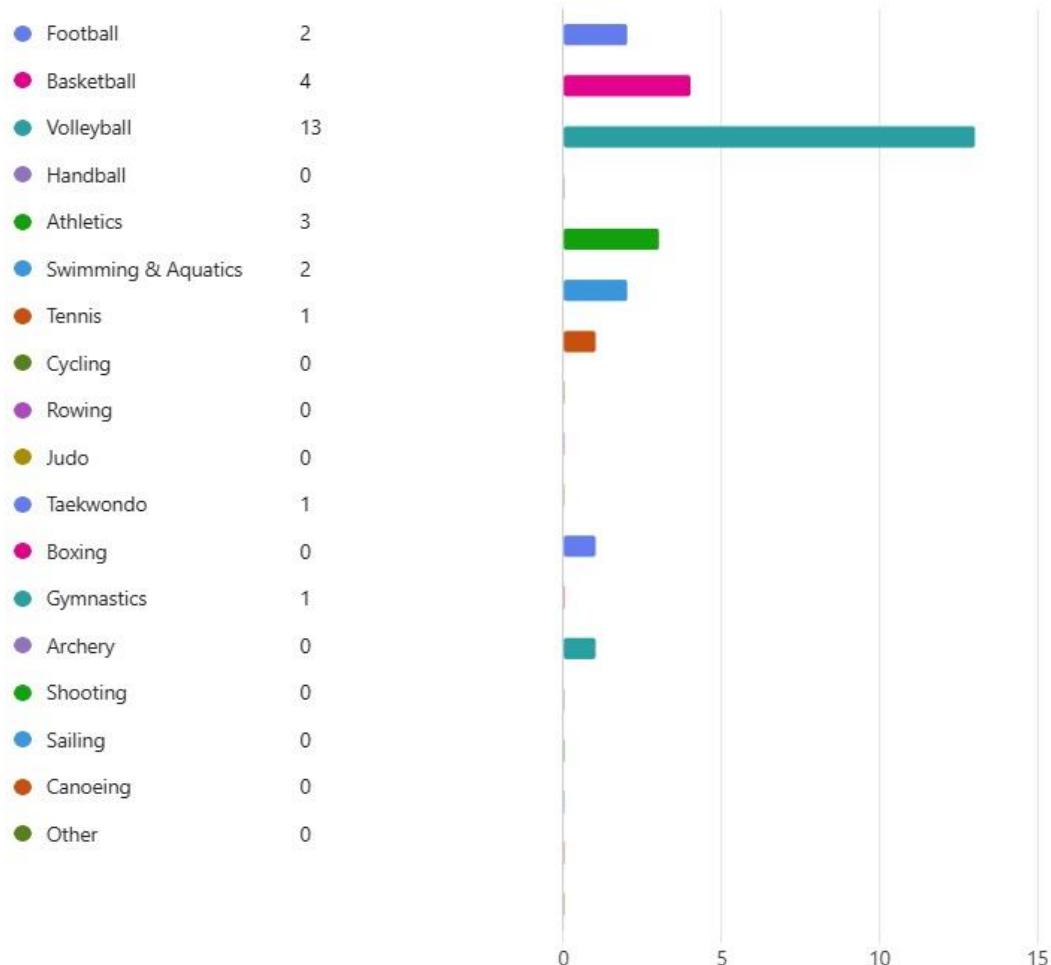


Figure 16: Sport of participants in Greece

4. Sport Type



Figure 17: Sport Type of participants in Greece

5. Years of Involvement in Sport

● 0 - 2	2
● 3 - 5	2
● 6 - 10	6
● 11 - 15	4
● 16+	13

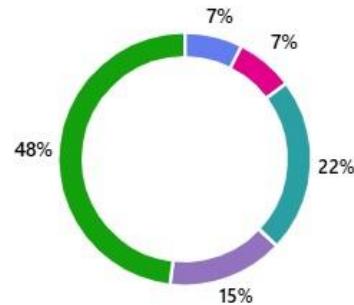


Figure 18: Years of Involvement in Sport of participants in Greece

6. Level of Involvement in Sport

● Amateur	11
● Semi-professional	14
● Professional	2

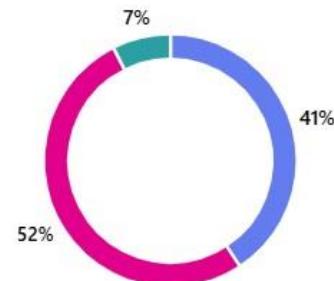


Figure 19: Level of Involvement in Sport of participants in Greece

Combination of sports with education and employment

One question in the research was whether sports and education are combined. In Greece, 52% of participants stated that they combine sports with education, as shown in the figure below.

7. Are you currently combining sports with education?

● Yes	14
● No	13

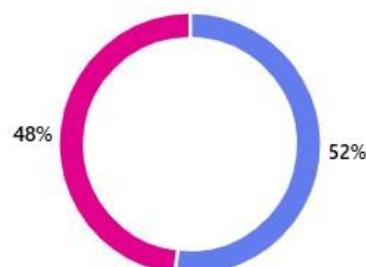


Figure 20: Combination of sports with education in Greece

Another question was whether sports and employment are combined. 70% of participants stated that they combine employment with sports.

8. Are you currently combining sports with any type of employment (full-time, part-time, etc.) or with any job shadowing or internship opportunities?



Figure 21: Combination of sports with employment in Greece

Skills and competences ride identified related to the key European Frameworks

The third part of the ASIT tool aims to identify the existence of skills and competences of athletes that relate to the key European frameworks and more specifically EntreComp, LifeComp, Green Comp and DigComp. Participants rated each skill using a 5-point Likert scale. The following graphs present the mean scores for each skill, organized by their corresponding European framework.

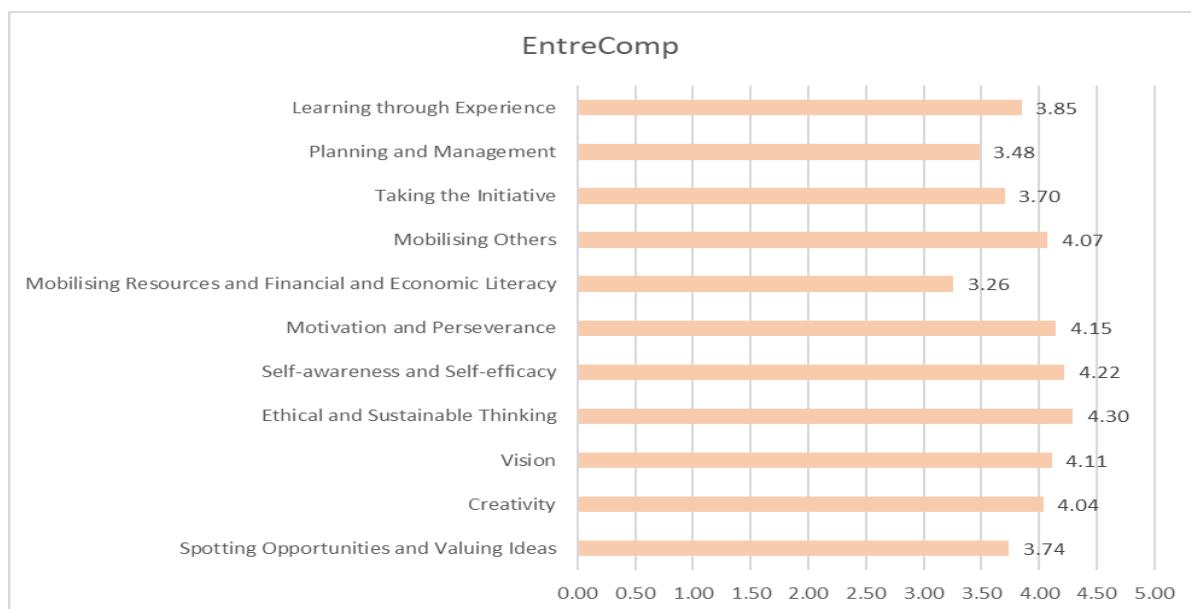


Figure 22: EntreComp competences developed through sports

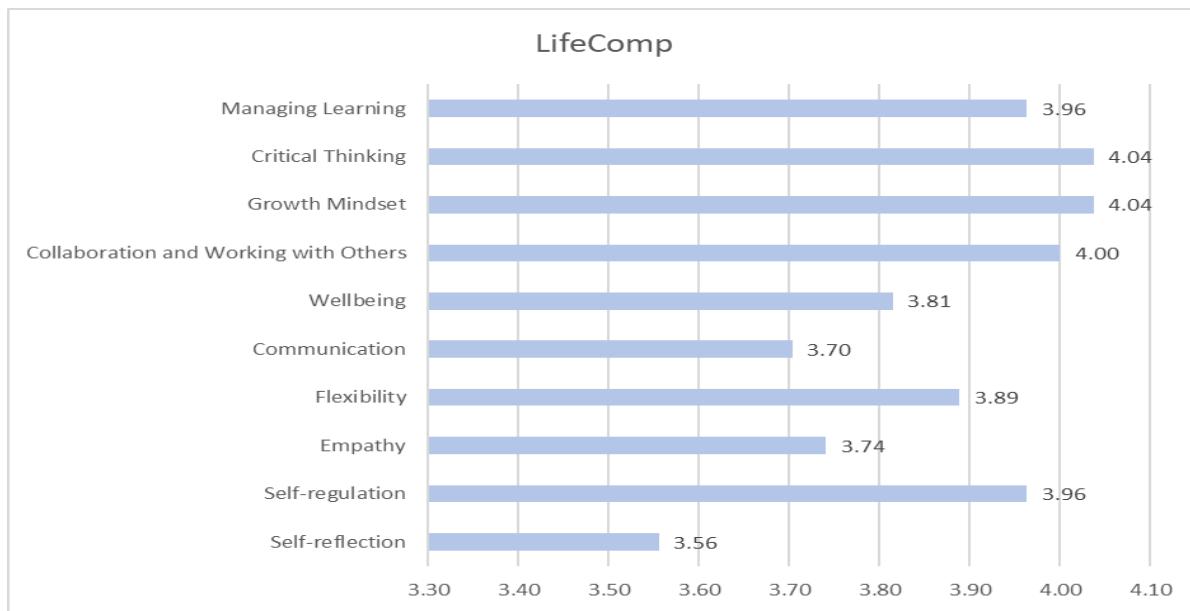


Figure 23: LifeComp competences developed through sports

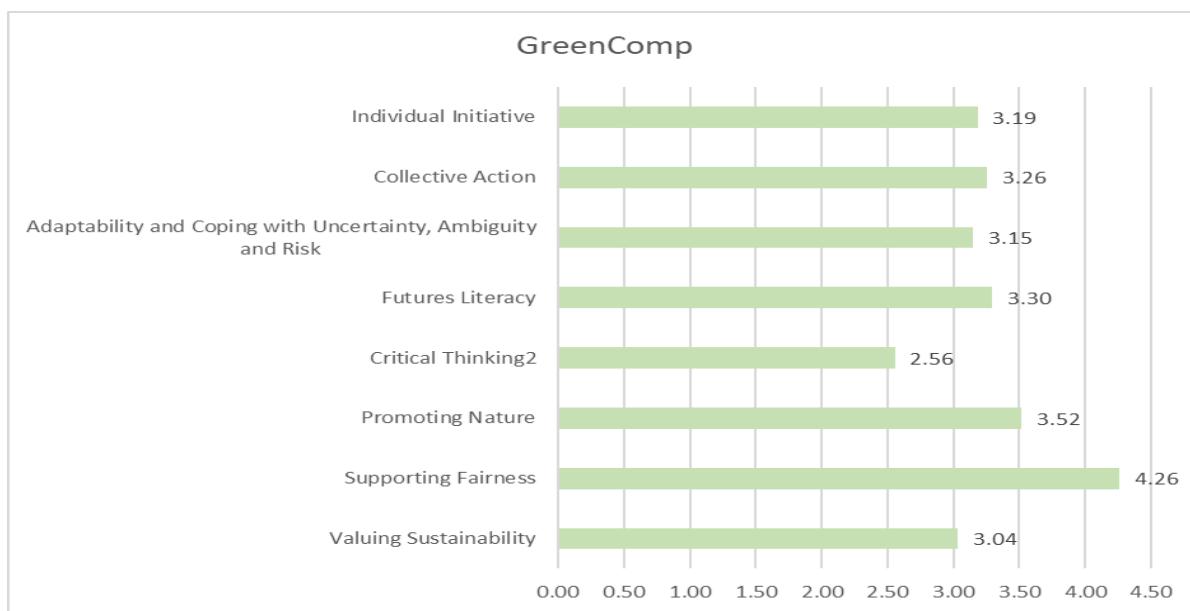


Figure 24: GreenComp competences developed through sports

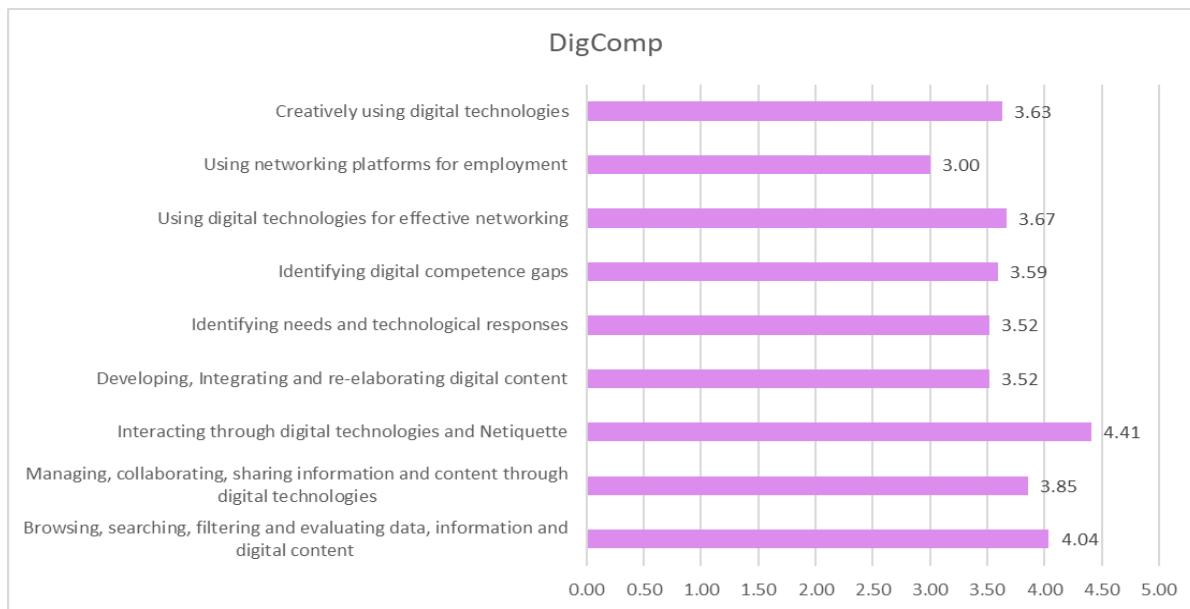


Figure 25: DigComp competences developed through sports

3.2.2.1. Conclusions from the survey in Greece

The skills profile of athletes in Greece, as reflected through the four European competence frameworks, indicates a strong presence of personal, cognitive, and social-emotional competences, alongside moderate development in practical, strategic, and sustainability-related areas.

Athletes show particular strength in qualities such as motivation, creativity, ethical awareness, and self-efficacy. Specifically, within the EntreComp framework, **ethical and sustainable thinking (4.30)** and **self-awareness and self-efficacy (4.22)** stand out as key strengths, underscoring athletes' ethical sensitivity and confidence in their abilities. In the LifeComp framework, **growth mindset (4.04)** and **critical thinking (4.04)** further emphasize athletes' cognitive flexibility and capacity for deep analysis. From the GreenComp perspective, **supporting fairness (4.26)** and **promoting nature (3.52)** highlight athletes' alignment with environmental values and advocacy for ecological protection. Within DigComp, athletes excel in **interacting through digital technologies and netiquette (4.41)** and **browsing, searching, filtering and evaluating data, information and digital content (4.04)**, indicating strong basic digital communication and information processing skills. They appear confident in their ability to manage learning, think critically, adapt to changing circumstances, and collaborate effectively. Skills such as emotional regulation, flexibility, and digital communication also stand out as well-developed, suggesting a solid capacity to operate within both personal and team-based environments.

At the same time, a number of areas emerge as less developed. These include initiative-taking, financial and resource management, and structured planning. EntreComp highlights this with comparatively lower scores in **planning and management (3.48)** and **mobilising resources and financial and economic literacy (3.26)**, pointing to opportunities for growth in strategic and economic competences. LifeComp also shows some challenges in **self-reflection (3.56)** and **communication (3.70)**, potentially affecting personal expression and goal setting. GreenComp reflects a need for stronger critical engagement and coping skills, with lower ratings in **critical thinking (2.56)** and **adaptability and coping with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk (3.15)**. DigComp indicates good basic digital skills but more limited use of digital tools for career advancement, particularly in **using networking platforms for employment (3.00)** and **using digital technologies for effective networking (3.67)**.

In the sustainability domain, athletes demonstrate alignment with fairness and general awareness of environmental issues, but show lower levels of critical engagement and limited initiative when it comes to taking action. Environmental literacy, future-oriented thinking, and the practical application of sustainability principles remain underdeveloped compared to other skill areas.

Overall, the findings suggest that athletes in Greece possess a strong base of internal drive, ethical sensitivity, and interpersonal competence. However, certain applied, reflective, and strategic skills, particularly those relevant to long-term planning, environmental responsibility, and digital career development, present meaningful opportunities for growth.

3.2.3. Survey in Romania

Demographics

33,3% of the athletes participating in the Romania research belong to the age group 24 - 29, followed by 30,3% in the age group 19 – 23. 52% of the participants were male and 48% female. The highest percentages of participants came primarily from basketball and athletics with 15,2% each and football and volleyball with 12,1% each. Additionally, 48% of the athletes are involved in team sports, while 52% participate in individual sports. Over 61% are involved in the sports sector for 6 - 10, and another 27% for 3 - 5 years. 45% of the participants are semi-professionals, while 33% consider themselves amateurs.

1. Age

● <16	1
● 16 - 18	6
● 19 - 23	10
● 24 - 29	11
● 30 - 39	4
● 40+	1

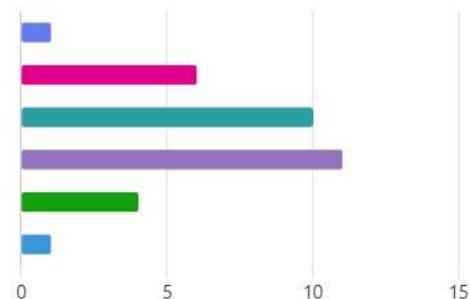


Figure 26: Age of participants in Romania

2. Gender

● Woman	16
● Man	17
● Non-binary	0
● Prefer not to say	0

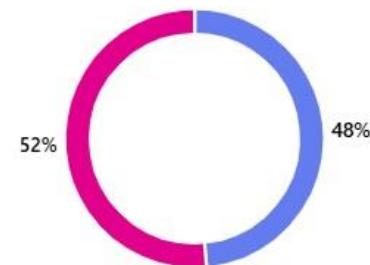


Figure 27: Gender of participants in Romania

3. Sport

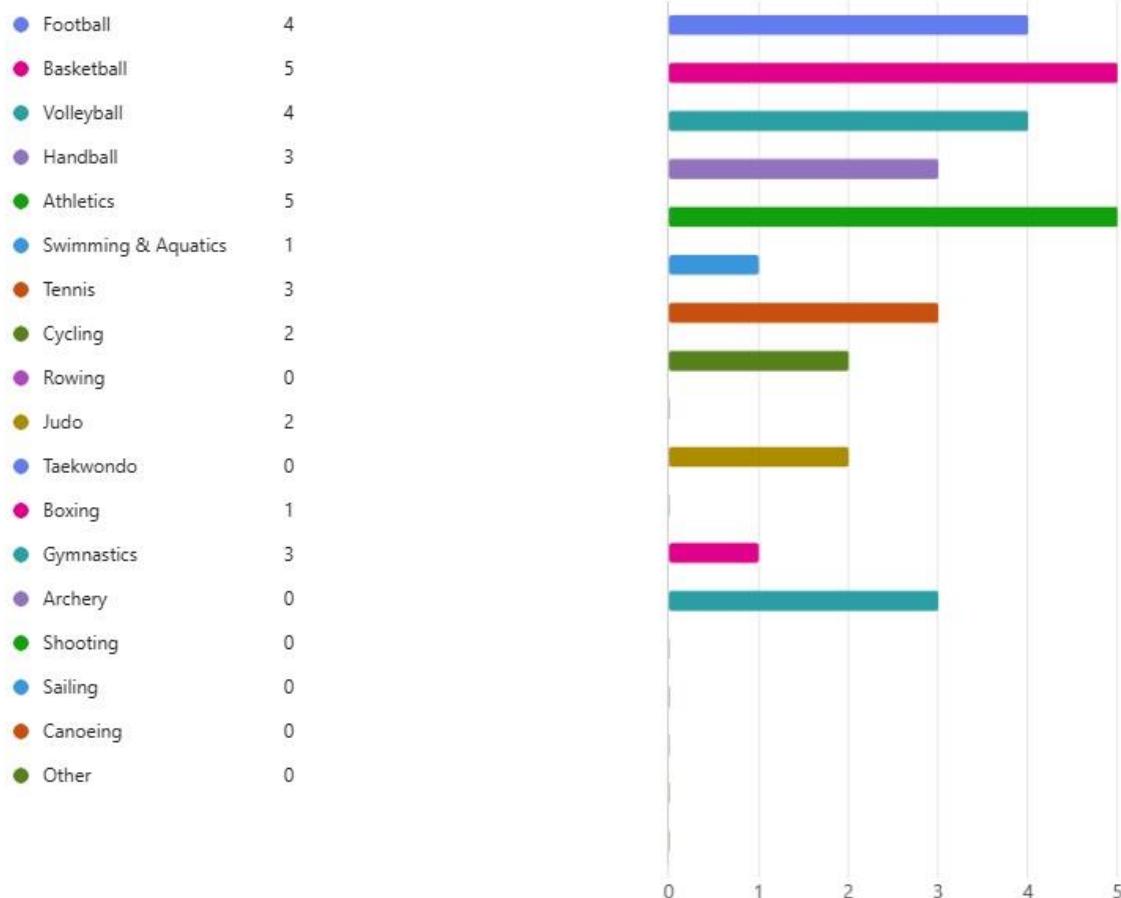


Figure 28: Sport of participants in Romania

4. Sport Type



Figure 29: Sport Type of participants in Romania

5. Years of Involvement in Sport



Figure 30: Years of Involvement in Sport of participants in Romania

6. Level of Involvement in Sport



Figure 31: Level of Involvement in Sport of participants in Romania

Combination of sports with education and employment

One question in the research was whether sports and education are combined. In Romania, 42% of participants stated that they combine sports with education, as shown in the figure below.

7. Are you currently combining sports with education?



Figure 32: Combination of sport with education in Romania

Another question was whether sports and employment are combined. 18% of participants stated that they combine employment with sports.

8. Are you currently combining sports with any type of employment (full-time, part-time, etc.) or with any job shadowing or internship opportunities?



Figure 33: Combination of sport with employment in Romania

Skills and competences ride identified related to the key European Frameworks

The third part of the ASIT tool aims to identify the existence of skills and competences of athletes that relate to the key European frameworks and more specifically EntreComp, LifeComp, Green Comp and DigComp. Participants rated each skill using a 5-point Likert scale. The following graphs present the mean scores for each skill, organized by their corresponding European framework.

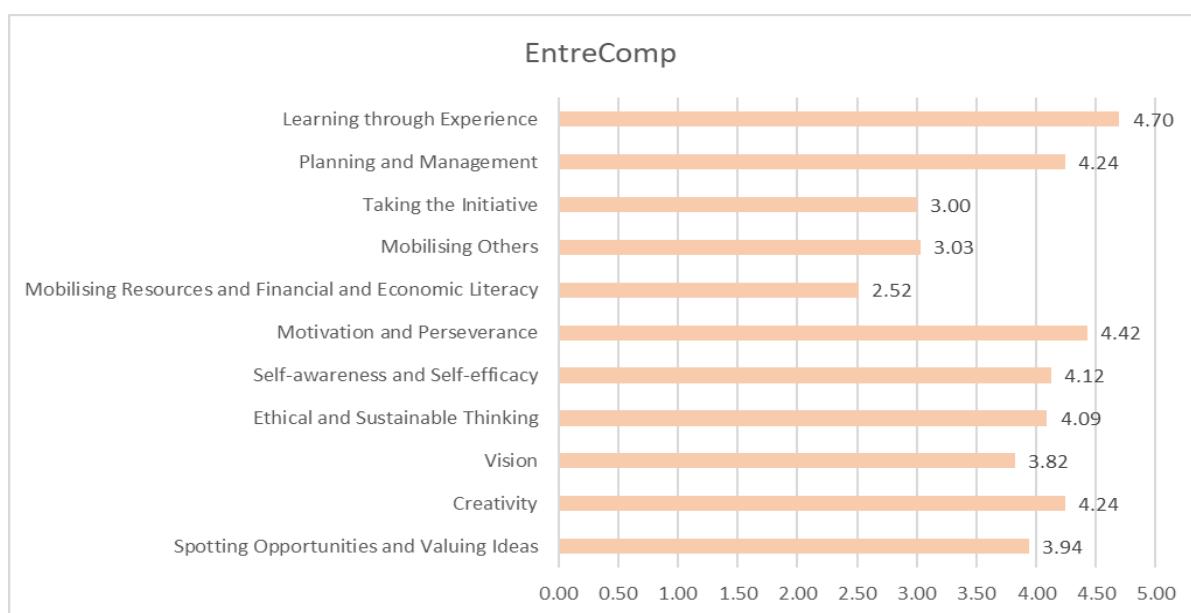


Figure 34: EntreComp competences developed through sports

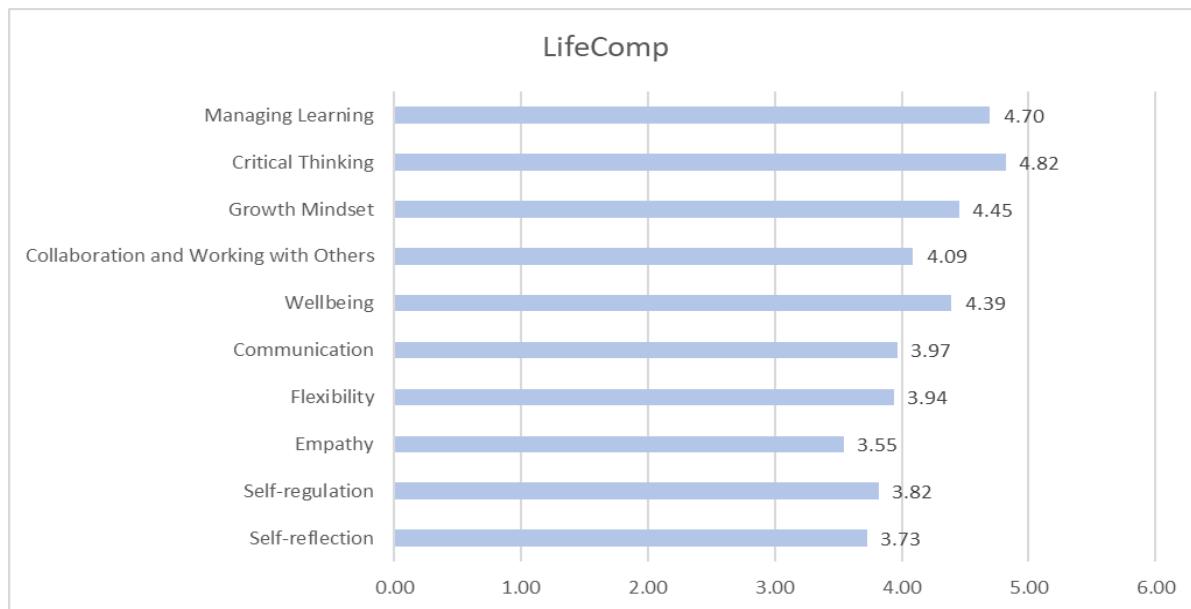


Figure 35: LifeComp competences developed through sports

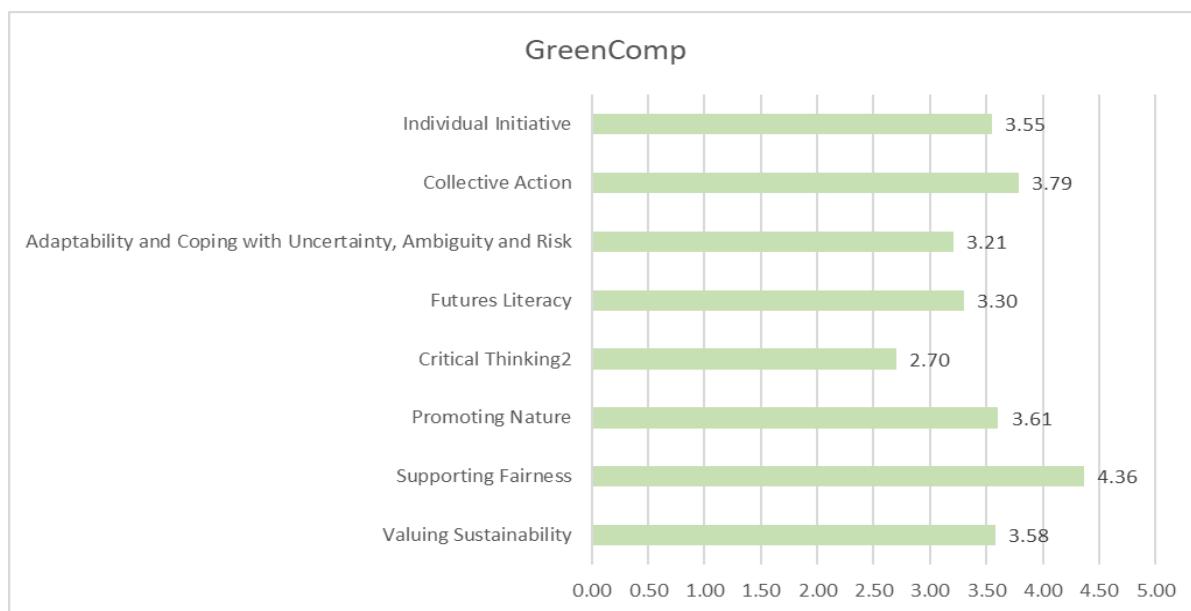


Figure 36: GreenComp competences developed through sports

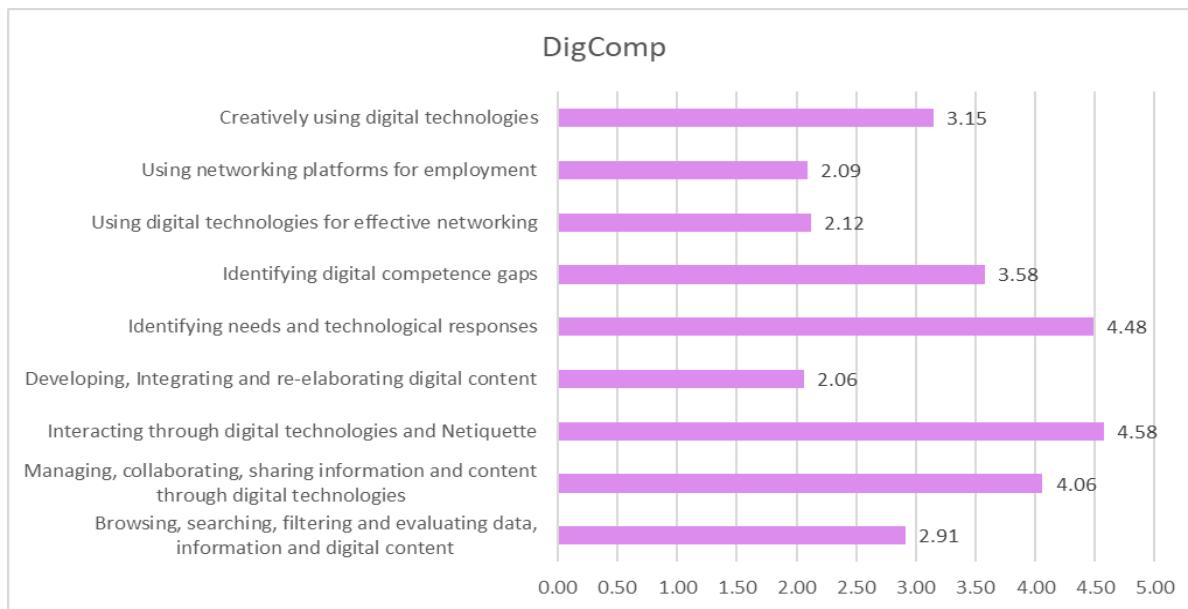


Figure 37: DigComp competences developed through sports

3.2.3.1. Conclusions from the survey in Romania

The skill profile of athletes in Romania, as shown through the four European competence frameworks, highlights a robust foundation in motivation, creativity, and ethical awareness, alongside well-developed cognitive and social-emotional skills. However, some practical, strategic, and professional digital competences appear less mature and suggest areas for further development.

In terms of strengths, athletes demonstrate high levels of **motivation and perseverance (4.42)** as well as effective **learning through experience (4.70)** from EntreComp. From LifeComp, they show advanced **critical thinking (4.82)** and **managing learning skills (4.70)**. GreenComp highlights strong commitment to **supporting fairness (4.36)** and **collective action (3.79)**. In DigComp, athletes excel in **interacting through digital technologies and Netiquette (4.58)** and **identifying needs and technological responses (4.48)**.

Conversely, several skill areas are less developed. EntreComp reveals lower skills in **mobilising resources and financial literacy (2.52)** and **taking initiative (3.00)**. LifeComp points to weaker **empathy (3.55)** and **self-reflection (3.73)**. GreenComp shows limited **critical environmental thinking (2.70)** and **adaptability in uncertainty (3.21)**. DigComp indicates challenges in **developing and re-elaborating digital content (2.06)** and **using networking platforms for employment (2.09)**.

Overall, Romanian athletes present a balanced mix of strong personal motivation and social competences, combined with developing strategic, sustainability, and advanced digital skills, suggesting targeted support could enhance their long-term career adaptability.

3.2.4. Survey in Poland

Demographics

25% of the athletes participating in the Poland research belong to the age group 30 – 39 and 40+ each, followed by 20% in the age group 24 – 29. 68% of the participants were male and 30% female. The highest percentage of participants came primarily from football 36,7%. Additionally, 62% of the athletes are involved in team sports, while 38% participate in individual sports. Over 42% are involved in the sports sector for 11 – 15 years, and another 32% for more than 16 years. 40% of the participants are professionals, while 38% consider themselves semi-professionals.

1. Age

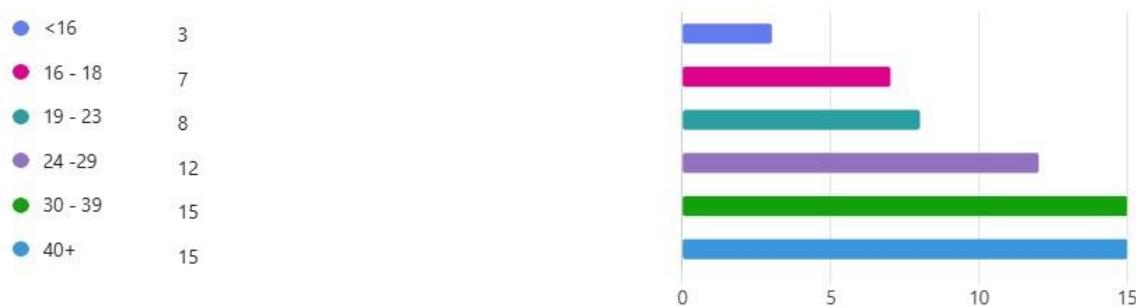


Figure 38: Age of participants in Poland

2. Gender



Figure 39: Gender of participants in Poland

3. Sport

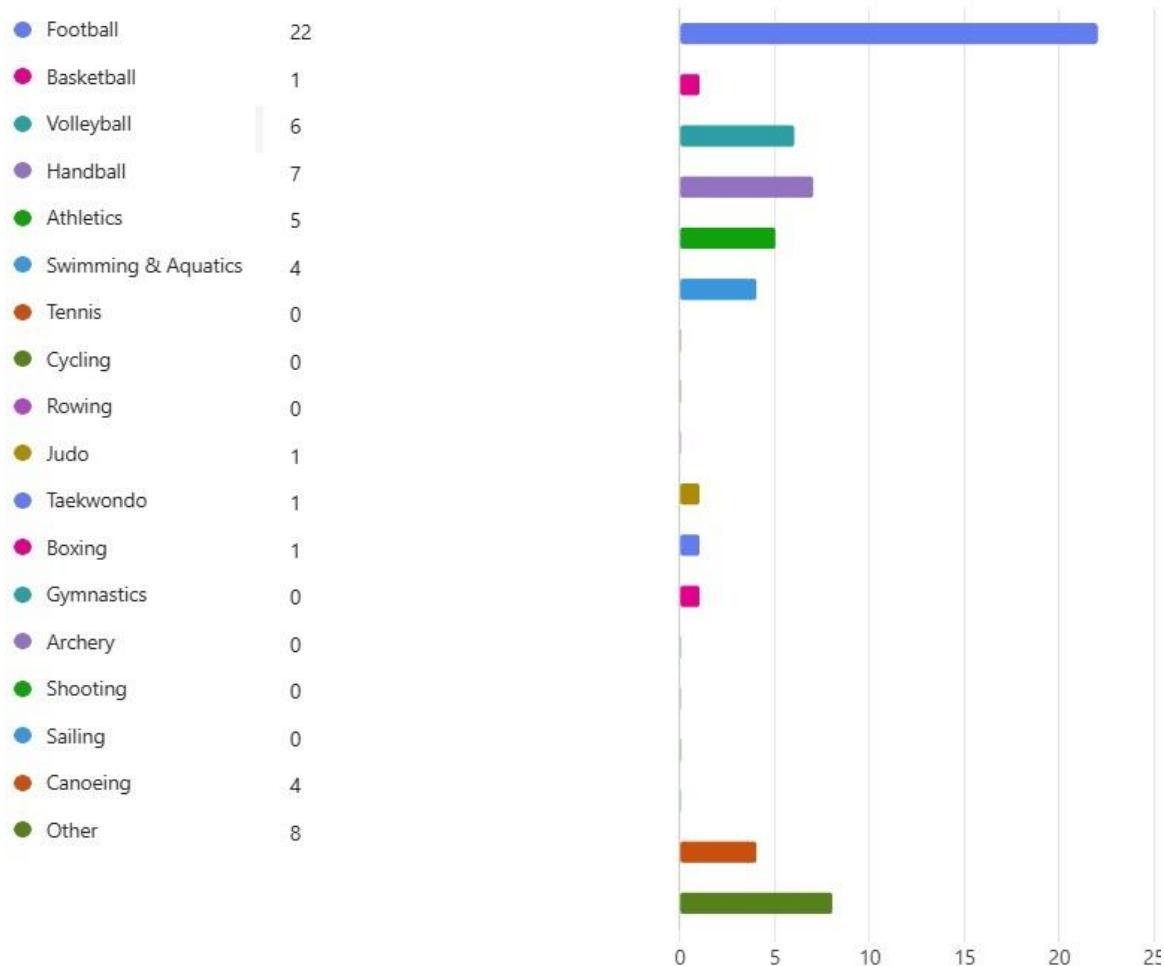


Figure 40: Sport of participants in Poland

4. Sport Type



Figure 41: Sport Type of participants in Poland

5. Years of Involvement in Sport

● 0 - 2	0
● 3 - 5	6
● 6 - 10	10
● 11 - 15	25
● 16+	19

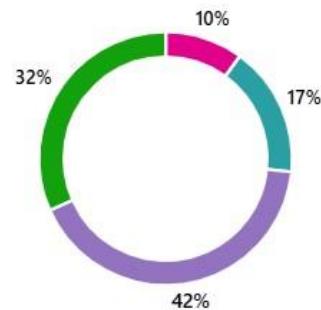


Figure 42: Years of Involvement in Sport of participants in Poland

6. Level of Involvement in Sport

● Amateur	13
● Semi-professional	23
● Professional	24

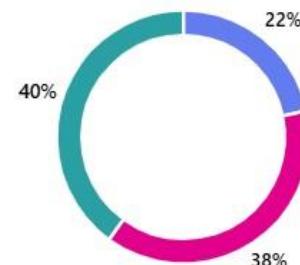


Figure 43: Level of Involvement in Sport of participants in Poland

Combination of sports with education and employment

One question in the research was whether sports and education are combined. In Poland, 53% of participants stated that they combine sports with education, as shown in the figure below.

7. Are you currently combining sports with education?

● Yes	32
● No	28

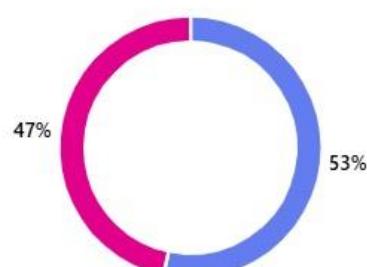


Figure 44: Combination of sport with education in Poland

Another question was whether sports and employment are combined. 62% of participants stated that they combine employment with sports.

8. Are you currently combining sports with any type of employment (full-time, part-time, etc.) or with any job shadowing or internship opportunities?

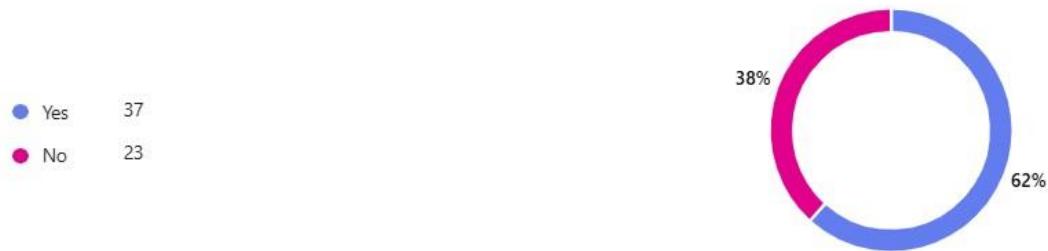


Figure 45: Combination of sport with employment in Poland

Skills and competences ride identified related to the key European Frameworks

The third part of the ASIT tool aims to identify the existence of skills and competences of athletes that relate to the key European frameworks and more specifically EntreComp, LifeComp, Green Comp and DigComp. Participants rated each skill using a 5-point Likert scale. The following graphs present the mean scores for each skill, organized by their corresponding European framework.

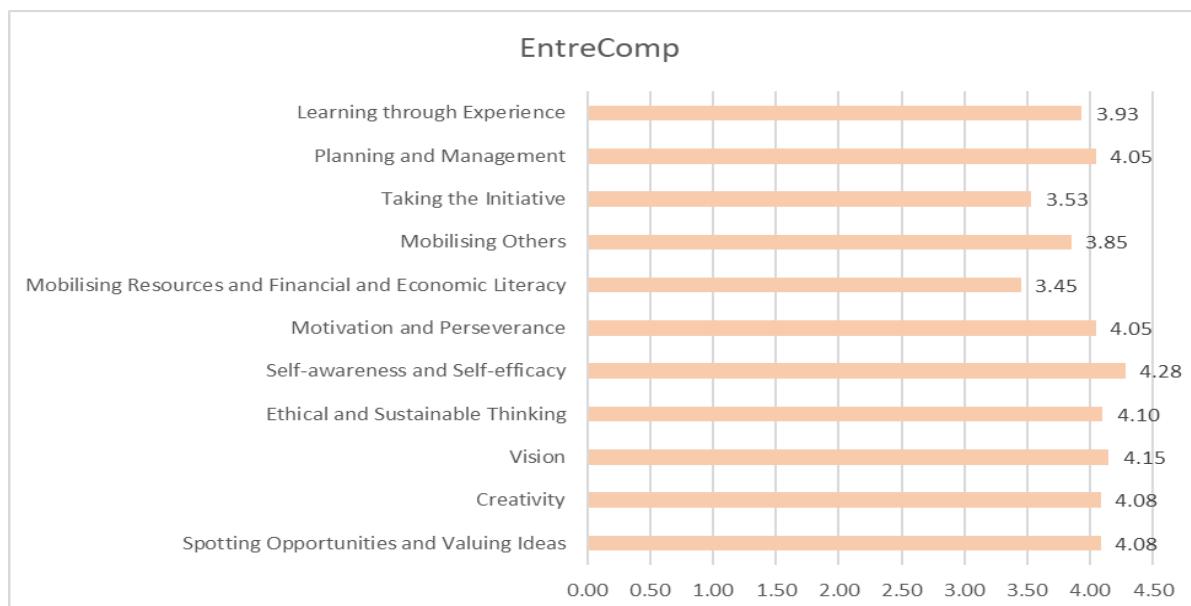


Figure 46: EntreComp competences developed through sports

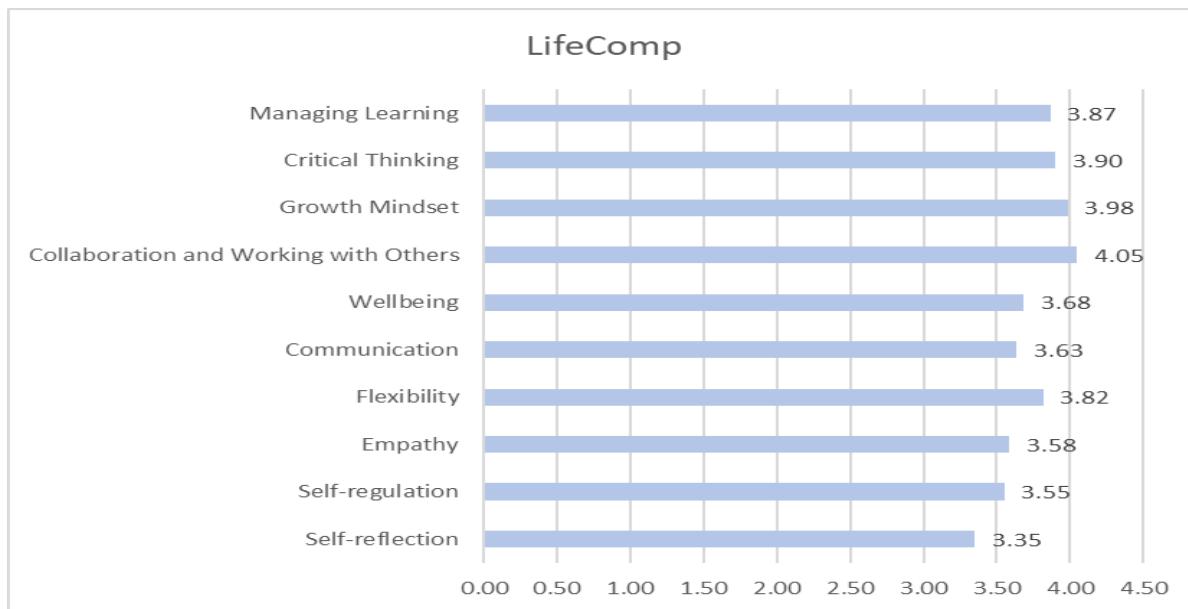


Figure 47: LifeComp competences developed through sports

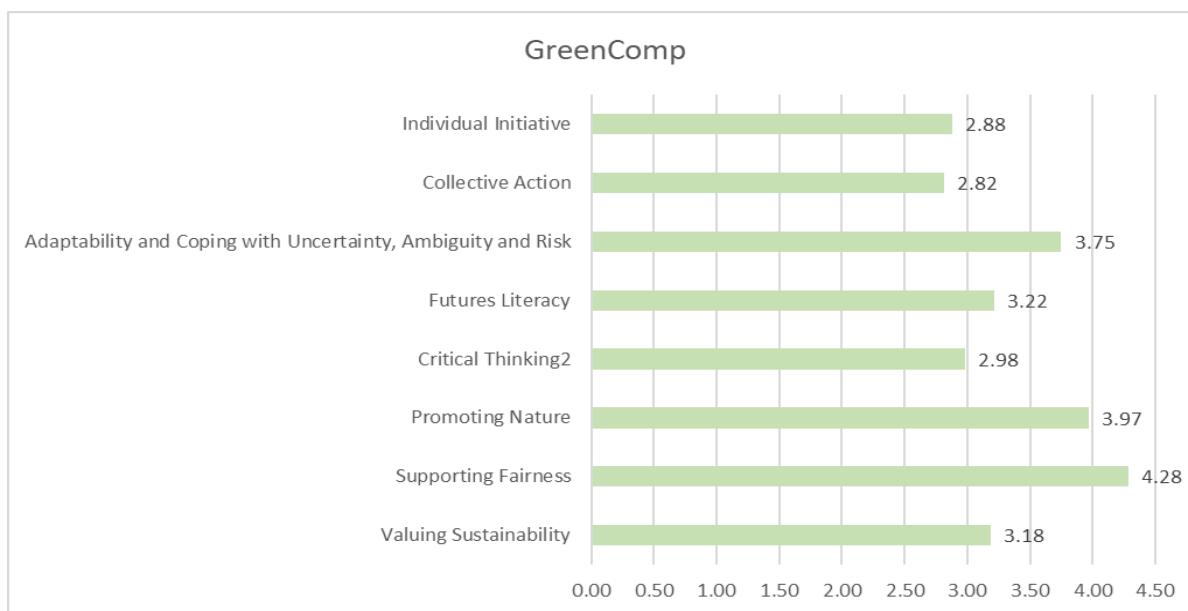


Figure 48: GreenComp competences developed through sports

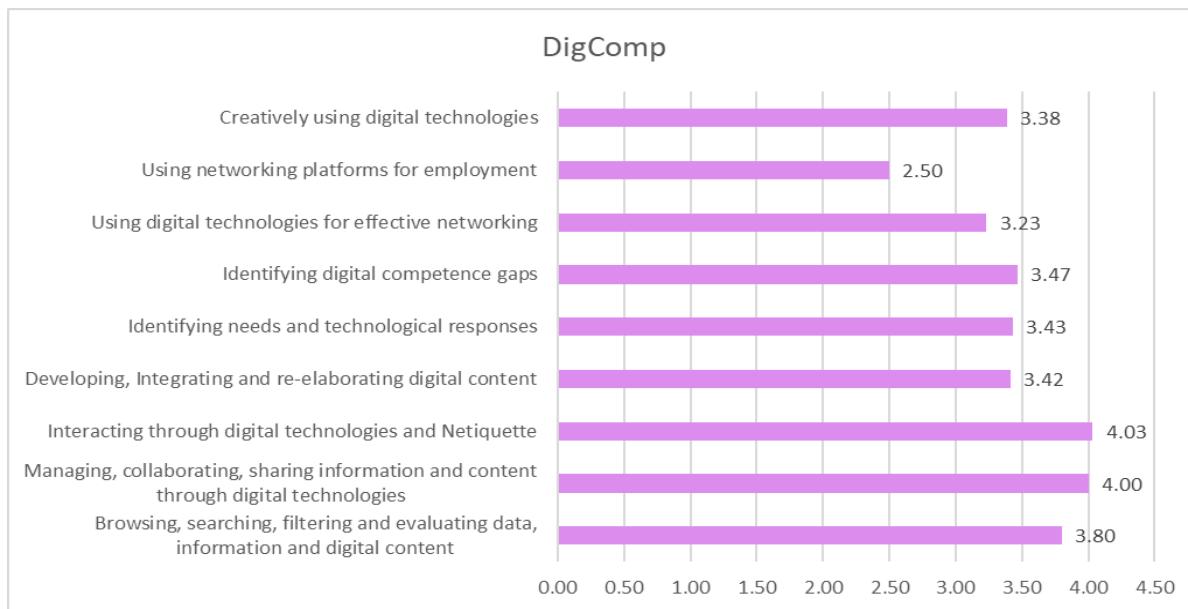


Figure 49: DigComp competences developed through sports

3.2.4.1. Conclusions from the survey in Poland

The skills profile of athletes in Poland reflects a strong foundation in creativity, self-awareness, ethical thinking, and motivation, coupled with effective planning and collaboration abilities. Their capacity for vision and perseverance supports a proactive mindset, although some aspects of financial literacy and resource mobilisation present moderate challenges.

In terms of strengths, athletes demonstrate high levels of **self-awareness and self-efficacy (4.28)** as well as **vision (4.15)** from EntreComp. LifeComp highlights well-developed **collaboration and working with others (4.05)** and a **growth mindset (3.98)**. GreenComp shows strong commitment to **supporting fairness (4.28)** and **promoting nature (3.97)**. In DigComp, athletes excel in **interacting through digital technologies and Netiquette (4.03)** and **managing, collaborating, and sharing information through digital technologies (4.00)**.

Conversely, several skill areas are less developed. EntreComp reveals lower skills in **taking initiative (3.53)** and **mobilising resources and financial literacy (3.45)**. LifeComp points to weaker **self-reflection (3.35)** and **self-regulation (3.55)**. GreenComp shows limited **collective action (2.82)** and **individual initiative (2.88)**. DigComp indicates challenges in **using networking platforms for employment (2.50)** and **using digital technologies for effective networking (3.23)**.

Overall, Polish athletes demonstrate a balanced mix of personal motivation, ethical awareness, and social collaboration, with clear strengths in creativity and planning. Still, further development in

strategic, reflective, sustainability-related, and advanced digital competences would better prepare them for career transitions beyond their sporting activities.

3.2.5. Survey Findings on an Aggregate Basis

Skills and competences related to the EntreComp framework

The following graph shows the level of skills and competences identified in athletes that relate to the EntreComp framework.

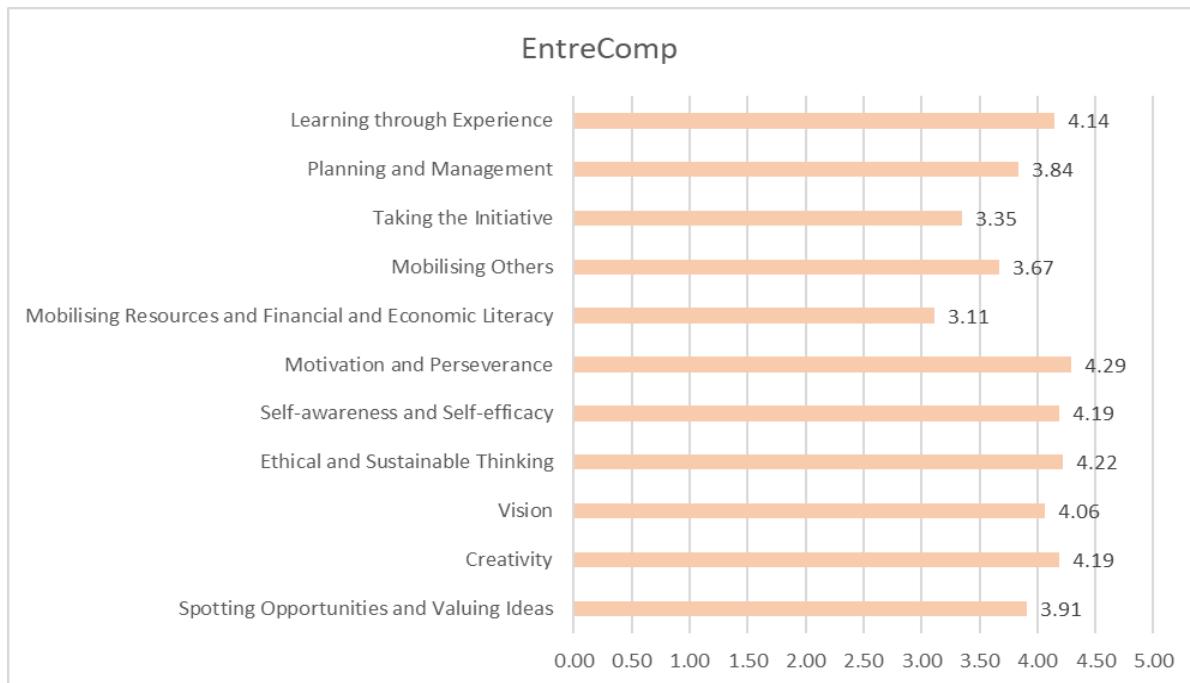


Figure 50: EntreComp competences developed through sports – Consortium Level

In the countries of the consortium, athletes demonstrate notable strengths in several key entrepreneurial competences. **Creativity, ethical and sustainable thinking, self-awareness and self-efficacy, motivation and perseverance, and the ability to learn through experience** all stand out as well-developed skills. These indicate a solid foundation of personal drive, ethical values, and adaptive learning, which are essential for navigating both sporting and professional environments.

Vision and spotting opportunities also receive relatively high recognition, showing that athletes generally possess the ability to identify new possibilities and envisage future scenarios, crucial for innovation and personal growth.

Conversely, certain competences appear less developed across the consortium. **Mobilising resources and financial literacy** score lower, suggesting that managing financial and economic aspects remains

a challenge. Similarly, **taking initiative** and **mobilising others** also rank on the lower side, pointing to potential difficulties in proactive leadership and collaborative resource management.

Planning and management show moderate levels, indicating room for improvement in organising and structuring activities efficiently to achieve goals.

Overall, while athletes in the consortium exhibit strong motivation, creativity, and ethical awareness, targeted efforts could focus on enhancing strategic and leadership skills, particularly those related to resource management and proactive engagement, to support more effective entrepreneurial actions.

Skills and competences related to the LifeComp framework

The following graph shows the level of skills and competences identified in athletes that relate to the LifeComp framework.

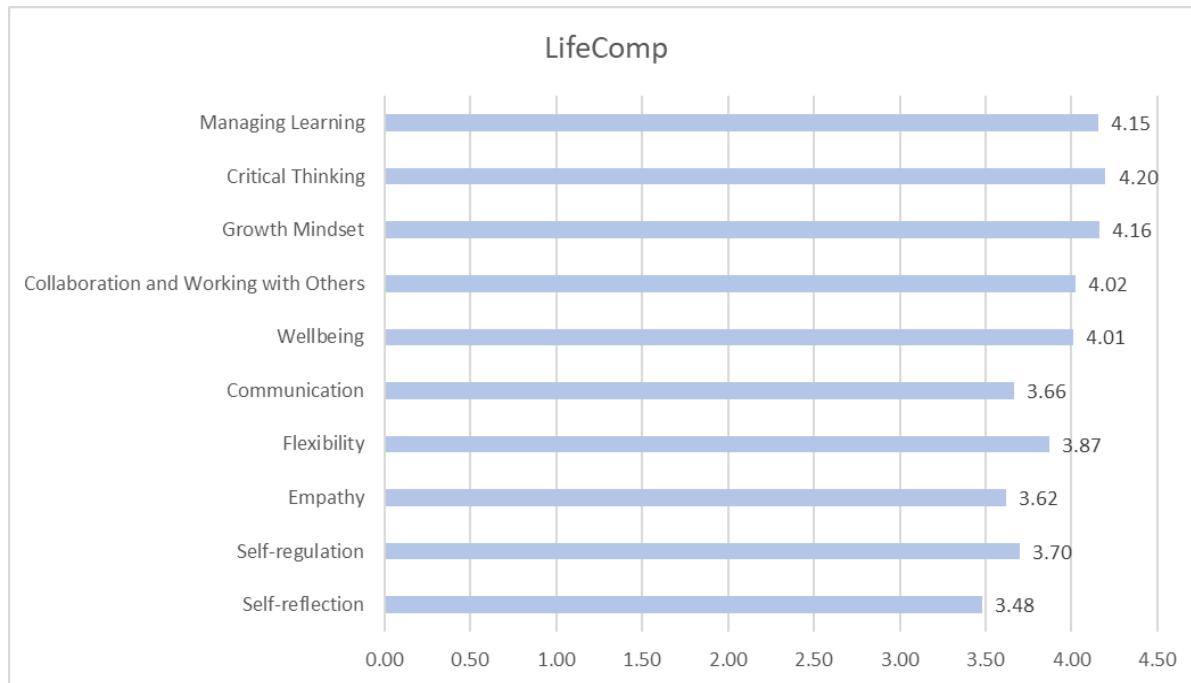


Figure 51: LifeComp competences developed through sports – Consortium Level

Within the countries of the consortium, athletes show strong competences in **critical thinking**, **growth mindset**, **managing learning**, **wellbeing**, and **collaboration**. These areas highlight their capacity to **think deeply and adaptively**, **maintain a positive approach to challenges**, **manage their own learning processes effectively**, and **work well with others** while sustaining their mental and physical health.

Flexibility also scores well, indicating athletes' ability to adapt to changing circumstances, a crucial skill both in sports and beyond.

On the other hand, **self-reflection**, **self-regulation**, **empathy**, and **communication** show comparatively lower scores. This suggests that while athletes are generally strong in cognitive and social collaboration skills, there is potential for growth in **personal introspection**, **emotional regulation**, **empathetic understanding**, and **effective communication**.

Overall, the consortium displays a solid foundation in key cognitive and social competences, yet strengthening the more introspective and interpersonal dimensions could support a more balanced personal and professional development.

Skills and competences related to the GreenComp framework

The following graph shows the level of skills and competences identified in athletes that relate to the GreenComp framework.

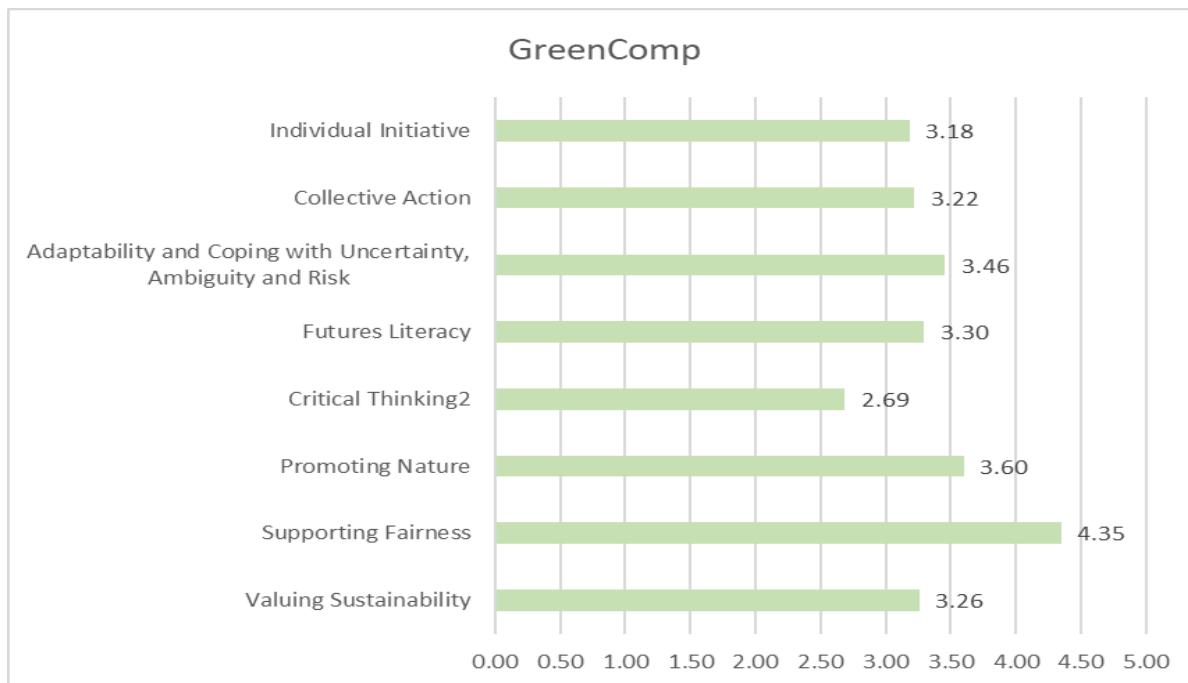


Figure 52: GreenComp competences developed through sports – Consortium Level

The data from across the consortium reveals that athletes generally demonstrate **strong alignment with** fairness and ethical values, as seen in the high score for supporting fairness. This suggests a **shared sense of justice and social responsibility** among athletes, which reflects positively on their awareness of inclusive and equitable practices.

However, several sustainability-related competences appear to be underdeveloped. **Critical thinking about sustainability**, **futures literacy**, and **individual initiative in environmental contexts** are all among the lowest-scoring skills. These gaps suggest that while athletes may care about **environmental**

and ethical issues in principle, they may lack the tools, knowledge, or motivation to actively engage in sustainability-driven thinking or take concrete action in this domain.

Competences such as **valuing sustainability, promoting nature**, and collective action fall in the mid-range, indicating moderate awareness and engagement, but still showing room for growth in moving from values to action.

Overall, the consortium presents a profile of athletes who care about fairness and show some sensitivity to sustainability issues, yet often lack the critical, future-oriented thinking and initiative required to actively participate in or lead sustainability efforts. Targeted support and education in these areas could empower athletes to translate values into meaningful, forward-looking action.

Skills and competences related to the DigComp framework

The following graph shows the level of skills and competences identified in athletes that relate to the DigComp framework.

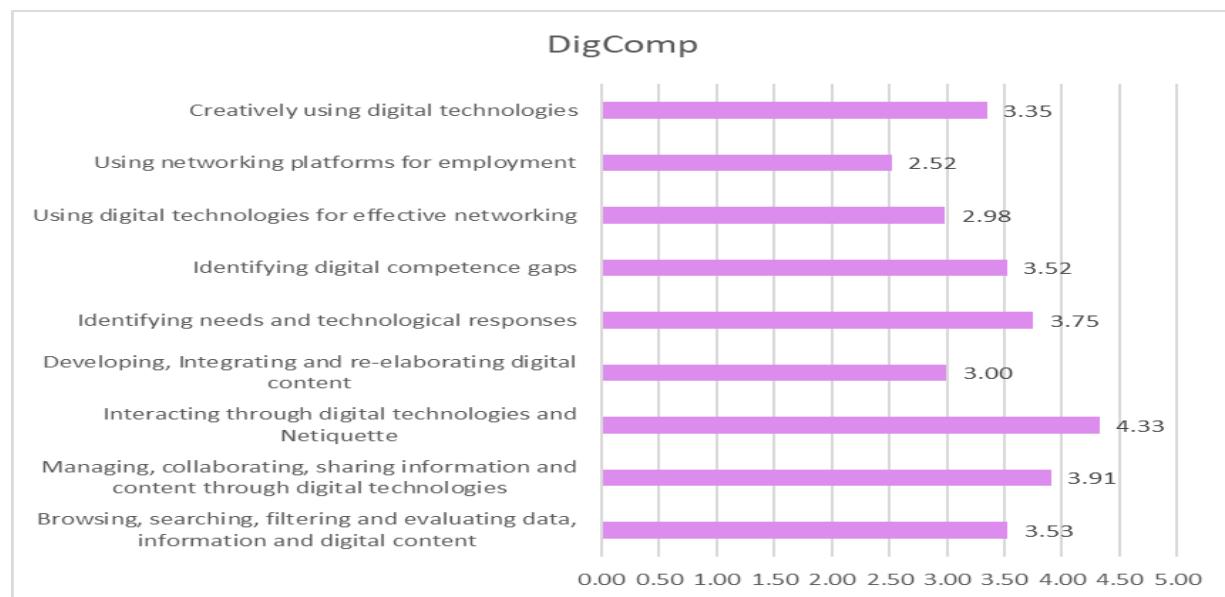


Figure 53: DigComp competences developed through sports – Consortium Level

Athletes across the consortium display strong digital competences in areas related to **interacting online** and **collaborating through digital tools**, reflecting their familiarity with day-to-day digital communication and teamwork in virtual environments. They also show a moderate ability to **manage digital content, identify technological needs, and adapt to digital challenges**, indicating a solid functional digital literacy.

However, several competences remain underdeveloped, particularly those linked to career-oriented digital engagement. Skills such as using **networking platforms for employment, professional**

networking, and developing digital content score significantly lower, revealing a gap between general digital fluency and the strategic use of digital technologies for professional advancement.

In addition, creative **use of digital tools** and identification of competence gaps are moderate, suggesting that while athletes can engage with technology, there may be a lack of confidence or opportunity in applying these tools in more innovative or self-reflective ways.

Overall, the athletes in the countries of the consortium shows a good baseline of everyday digital competence, particularly in communication and collaboration, but greater attention is needed to develop skills that link technology with long-term career development and personal digital agency.

3.2.5.1. Overall Conclusion on competences of athletes at the level of the consortium

The following figure presents the results from all countries of the consortium on the four competence frameworks used.

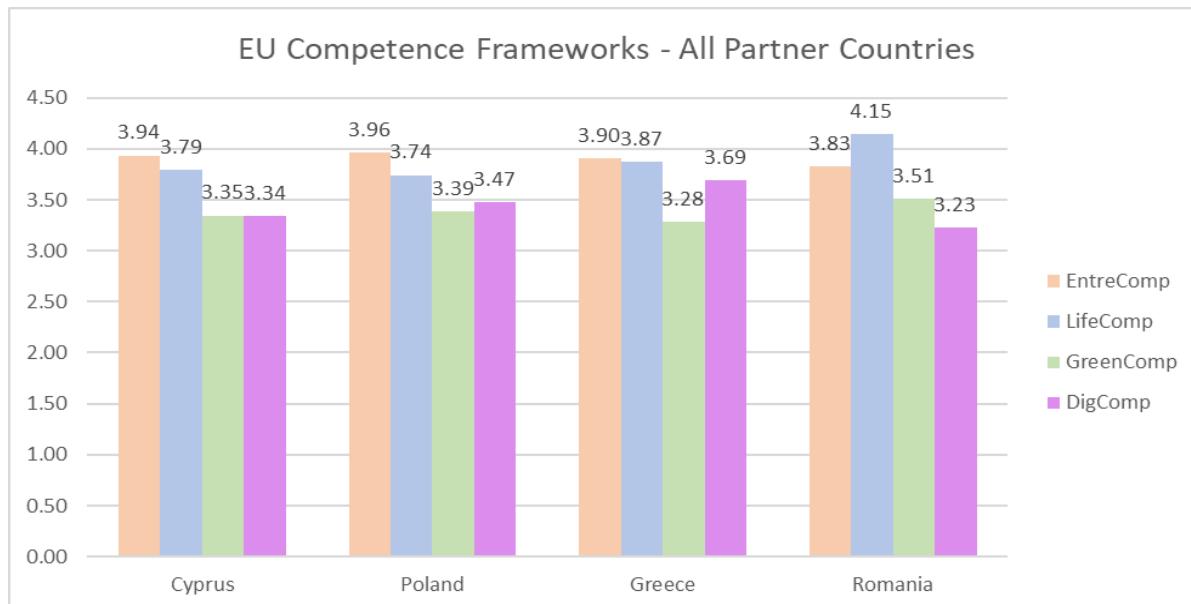


Figure 54: EU Competence Frameworks – All Partner Countries at Consortium Level

The following presents the aggregate results (all athletes participating in the research).

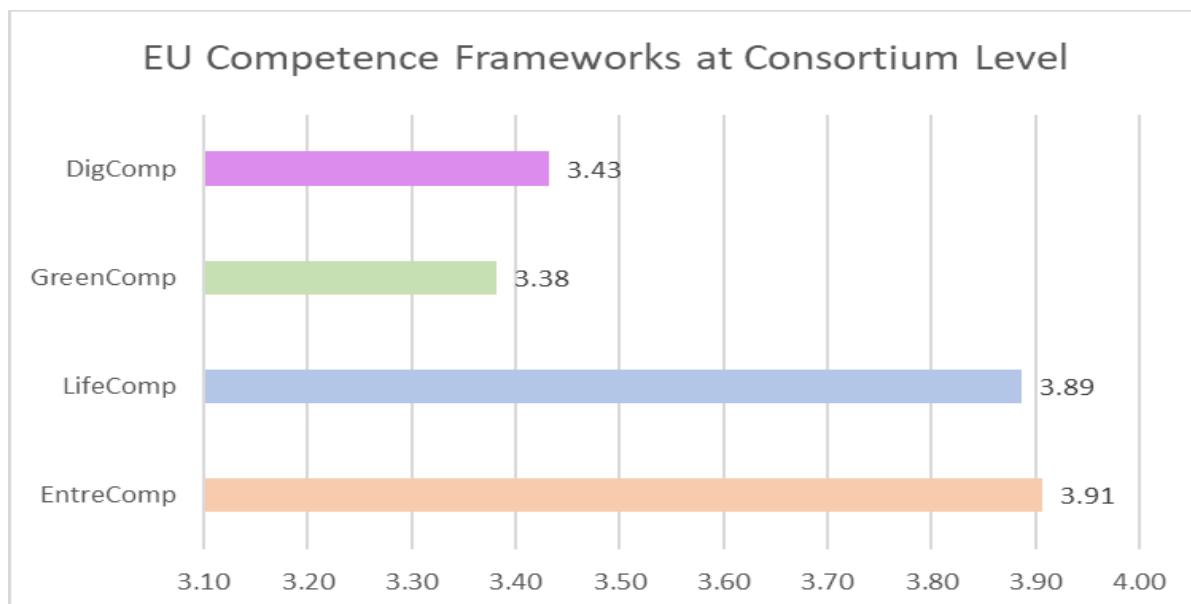


Figure 55: EU Competence Frameworks at Consortium Level

The overall competence profile of athletes across the consortium countries (Cyprus, Greece, Romania, and Poland) reveals a diverse yet coherent pattern of strengths and areas for development, as captured through the four European frameworks: EntreComp, LifeComp, GreenComp, and DigComp.

Among these, EntreComp emerges with the highest average score (3.91), followed closely by LifeComp (3.89), suggesting that athletes are generally strong in entrepreneurial thinking and personal, social, and learning-to-learn competences. In contrast, GreenComp (3.38) and DigComp (3.43) present lower averages, indicating that sustainability-related and advanced digital competences are less developed across the group.

Across all frameworks, athletes demonstrate clear strengths in several transversal skills. **Motivation and perseverance, self-awareness, and ethical and sustainable thinking** are consistently high, highlighting a strong inner drive and values-based orientation among athletes. **Creativity, critical thinking, and a growth mindset** also score well, suggesting athletes are well-equipped to adapt, learn, and innovate. Furthermore, competences such as **collaboration, learning through experience, and wellbeing management** reflect the interpersonal maturity and reflective learning capacities developed through elite sport environments.

However, the data also points to recurring skill gaps. Athletes tend to **struggle with financial literacy, mobilising resources, and taking initiative**, indicating challenges in assuming proactive or leadership roles beyond sport. In the digital domain, while communication and online collaboration are well established, athletes often **lack the skills to use technology strategically for professional growth**, such as networking for employment, creating digital content, or identifying their own digital skill gaps.

Sustainability-related competences remain among the least developed. Although there is **a strong ethical foundation**, particularly in supporting fairness, athletes appear to engage less with **critical sustainability thinking, future literacy, and individual or collective environmental action**. These gaps suggest that sustainability is viewed more as a value than a set of actionable, future-oriented competences.

In conclusion, the consortium's athletes present a solid foundation in personal, ethical, and interpersonal competences, with notable strengths in creativity, reflection, and motivation. However, to fully support dual career development and lifelong adaptability, there is clear potential to strengthen applied competences in strategic planning, financial and digital self-management, and sustainability-oriented action. Addressing these gaps would better equip athletes not only for transitions beyond sport but also for active participation in the evolving social, environmental, and digital landscapes of the modern world.

3.3. Interviews with Ex Professional Athletes on their Career and Skills

3.3.1. Interviews in Cyprus

The following table presents important information related to the interviews in Cyprus.

Interviewee Code or Full Name	CYP01	CYP02	CYP03	CYP04
Interviewer Name	George Vrakkis	George Vrakkis	George Vrakkis	Ioannis Valanides
Interview Date	02/09/2025	03/09/2025	05/09/2025	28/08/2025
Interview Mode (e.g., Online (through Zoom), In-person)	In-person	In-person	In-person	Online (through Teams)
Interviewee Age	40	37	54	49
Interviewee Gender	Male	Female	Male	Male
Interviewee Sport	Basketball	Basketball	Football	Football
Interviewee Years as a Professional Athlete	23	14	18	16
Interviewee Years Since Retirement	4	5	19	13

Interviewee	Trainer – Architect	Football manager-coach	Executive president at PASP union of football players Cyprus / Vice - President FIFPRO EUROPE
Current Occupation (if applicable)	Basketball coach		

Table 7: Interviews in Cyprus

3.3.1.1. Conclusions from the interviews in Cyprus

The interviews conducted in Cyprus reveal a shared perception among former professional athletes that pursuing a dual career is not merely advantageous, but essential—particularly in smaller countries where long-term financial security through sport alone is rarely attainable.

Participants consistently acknowledged the short-lived nature of athletic careers and emphasised the need for early planning and investment in education to facilitate a smooth career transition. Those who had engaged in formal education during their sporting years felt significantly better prepared for life after retirement. However, achieving this balance proved challenging, especially in rigorous academic fields or while competing at the highest levels of sport.

A prominent theme across the interviews was the lack of institutional support for dual career development. Athletes noted that their post-sport success often relied more on personal initiative, informal support systems, and public recognition, rather than on structured national or European programmes. In some cases, athletes even encountered discouragement when trying to pursue education concurrently with their athletic commitments.

The interviews also highlighted several transversal skills that former athletes identified as crucial for their professional reintegration, including:

- Time management and long-term planning
- Resilience and adaptability
- Stress management
- Teamwork and leadership
- Discipline and consistency in routine

Additionally, a number of participants described the psychological toll of retirement from sport, mentioning the loss of identity, public attention, and structure in daily life. These experiences

underscore the need for proactive mental health support and structured transition planning well before athletes exit their sports careers.

Several former athletes successfully transitioned into roles within the sports ecosystem—such as coaching, gym ownership, or sports administration—particularly when their academic background aligned with their sporting experience. These cases suggest that career alignment, combined with continuous professional development (e.g. coaching certifications, business training), can significantly ease the post-sport transition.

Overall, there was strong consensus that dual career pathways should be systematically supported through targeted policies, funding, flexible learning opportunities, and athlete-specific career counselling. Without this systemic backing, athletes are likely to face continued difficulties in their transition to the labour market, often accompanied by financial instability and emotional stress.

3.3.2. A. Interviews in Greece

The following table presents important information related to the interviews in Greece.

Interviewee Code or Full Name	GRE01	GRE02	GRE03
Interviewer Name	Mylona Paraskevi	Mylona Paraskevi	Mylona Paraskevi
Interview Date	26/08/2025	26/08/2025	26/08/2025
Interview Mode (e.g., Online (through Zoom), In-person)	In-person	In-person	In-person
Interviewee Age	35	37	47
Interviewee Gender	Female	Male	Male
Interviewee Sport	Volleyball	Basketball	Volleyball
Interviewee Years as a Professional Athlete	15	5	7
Interviewee Years Since Retirement	5	3	7
Interviewee Current Occupation (if applicable)	Agricultural Economist	Basketball coach	Business Consultant

Table 8: Interviews in Greece

3.3.2.1. Conclusions from the interviews in Greece

The interviews with former athletes in Greece reveal a diverse range of experiences regarding the transition from professional sport to post-athletic careers. While each individual followed a distinct path, several shared insights emerged, particularly around the transferable skills acquired through sport and the strategies that supported successful reintegration into the labour market.

All participants highlighted that their athletic careers had equipped them with a solid foundation of transversal skills, including:

- Discipline and goal orientation
- Resilience in the face of setbacks
- Teamwork and collaboration
- Strategic and critical thinking
- Responsibility and consistency in routine

These competencies were seen as valuable assets that could be applied across a variety of fields, provided that the transition was approached with intentionality and planning.

Many former athletes expressed that meaningful career options existed in areas such as:

- Leadership and project coordination
- Mentorship and coaching
- Community engagement and social impact initiatives
- Education and youth development

A recurring theme across the interviews was the importance of **self-awareness** and **proactive career planning**. Athletes who reflected on their personal goals, actively sought advice, and experimented with different roles were better able to identify pathways that aligned with their strengths and interests. Openness to change, coupled with ongoing skill development, emerged as a key factor for long-term professional fulfilment.

Although the departure from full-time sport was often emotionally challenging—due to loss of routine, identity, or social status—several interviewees reported finding renewed purpose by applying their sports-learned mindset to new, meaningful pursuits. Remaining involved in sport through mentoring, youth programmes, or local initiatives was particularly valued.

Overall, the findings from Greece reinforce the notion that former athletes possess a broad portfolio of transferable skills. However, the success of their transitions depends heavily on access to career support, the cultivation of personal reflection, and the willingness to invest in continuous personal and professional growth.

3.3.3. Interviews in Romania

The following table presents important information related to the interviews in Greece.

Interviewee Code or Full Name	ROM01	ROM02	ROM03	ROM04
Interviewer Name	Alexandra Sfirlogea	Alexandra Sfirlogea	Alexandra Sfirlogea	Alexandra Sfirlogea
Interview Date	01.08.2025	15.08.2025	01.08.2025	01.08.2025
Interview Mode (e.g., Online (through Zoom), In-person)	In-person	Online (through Zoom)	In-person	In-person
Interviewee Age	39	23	19	16
Interviewee Gender	Female	Male	Male	Female
Interviewee Sport	Martial Arts	Handball	Handball	Handball
Interviewee Years as a Professional Athlete	12	13	4	2
Interviewee Years Since Retirement	18	2 years and 4 months	1	3
Interviewee Current Occupation (if applicable)	Sales Director	Financial counselor and planner	Law university student	Military high school student

Table 9: Interviews in Romania

3.3.3.1. Conclusions from the interviews in Romania

The interviews conducted in Romania with former professional athletes provide valuable insights into the diverse career trajectories available after sport, as well as the transferable skills that can support a successful transition. Although the individuals interviewed followed different paths, common themes emerged regarding the opportunities, challenges, and key enablers of dual careers.

Participants had transitioned into a variety of professional domains, including sales management, financial consulting, legal studies, and public service within the military. At first glance, these sectors may appear unrelated to sport; however, they reflect the foundational strengths that athletes often develop over the course of their sporting careers—such as discipline, leadership, and adaptability.

While sport had initially shaped the identity and life direction of most interviewees, many came to realise that their experiences on and off the field had equipped them for success in fields requiring:

- High levels of personal responsibility
- Strong teamwork and coordination
- Stress tolerance and decision-making under pressure
- Goal orientation and performance mindset

Some athletes also chose to remain engaged with the sports sector in alternative roles—such as coaching, youth development, or volunteering—demonstrating that meaningful and rewarding career continuity within the sports ecosystem is possible, even after retiring from competition.

The most commonly identified career pathways included:

- Leadership and management positions (e.g. sales director, team coordinator)
- Finance and business advisory roles
- Legal and academic professions
- Military or public sector service
- Coaching and sports education
- Youth mentorship and volunteerism

Crucially, the interviews highlighted that a successful career transition is rarely automatic. It requires a conscious and proactive decision, often supported by access to education, structured guidance, and motivational reinforcement. Athletes who had access to these resources were significantly better prepared to pivot into new roles, whereas others struggled with uncertainty or reactive transitions following injury or burnout.

Overall, the findings underscore the importance of early career planning, access to flexible education opportunities, and tailored support services to empower athletes in Romania to explore and commit to meaningful post-sport careers.

3.3.4. Interviews in Poland

Interviewee Code or Full Name	PL001	PL002	PL003	PL004
Interviewer Name	Karolina Sikora	Patrycja Taratuta	Piotr Dudzik	Maciej Guzik
Interview Date	03.09.2025	03.09.2025	05.09.2025	05.09.2025
Interview Mode (e.g., Online (through Zoom), In-person)	online	Online	online	Online
Interviewee Age	25	24	24	50
Interviewee Gender	Female	Female	Male	Male
Interviewee Sport	Volleyball	Athletics (Running 3,5 and 10 KM)	Football	Basketball
Interviewee Years as a Professional Athlete	10 years	10	2	15
Interviewee Years Since Retirement	3 years	5	3	18

Interviewee Current Occupation (if applicable)	Coordinator Academic Sports Association at University of Economics in Kraków, Poland	Trainer	Footballer (4 Polish League)	Trainer and commissioner in the Polish Basketball Association
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3.3.4.1. Conclusions from the interviews in Poland

The interviews conducted in Poland with former professional athletes reveal a dual landscape of strong individual potential alongside systemic shortcomings in dual career support. While participants demonstrated high levels of motivation and adaptability, they also identified several institutional gaps that complicate the transition from sport to alternative career pathways.

A core theme was the set of **transferable skills** athletes developed through their sporting experience. These included:

- **Time management and self-discipline** – managing complex schedules and sustaining commitment over time
- **Teamwork and communication** – operating effectively in group settings and building mutual respect
- **Resilience and emotional regulation** – coping with pressure, setbacks, and high-performance expectations
- **Adaptability and problem-solving** – reacting to uncertainty and devising creative responses
- **Leadership and interpersonal skills** – taking initiative and managing responsibilities
- **Language and intercultural awareness** – particularly through exposure to international environments

These competencies were seen as critical assets in navigating new professional roles. However, despite their strengths, many athletes reported **limited access to structured support**—noting that most guidance came informally through family, friends, or coaches.

Key **barriers** to effective career development included:

- A lack of institutional or state-sponsored career counselling
- Financial insecurity during or after sporting careers
- Overwhelming time demands from training, education, and part-time work

- Career decisions often made without long-term planning or strategic advice

Despite these challenges, interviewees had transitioned into various **career pathways**, such as:

- Coaching and youth development
- Sports management and administration
- Teaching and physical education
- Refereeing and officiating
- Sport-related entrepreneurship (e.g. marketing, consulting)
- Talent identification and scouting

These outcomes highlight the potential for successful dual careers, particularly when sporting experience is paired with formal education and practical training. Nonetheless, the findings stress the need for **more structured national support systems**, including flexible study options, financial aid, and professional guidance tailored to athletes' realities.

Overall, the Polish case demonstrates that while athletes often possess the mindset and skills required for success beyond sport, the absence of institutional support places a heavy burden on individual initiative. Strengthening dual career infrastructures is essential to ensure smoother transitions and long-term employability for athletes.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations from the current research study

4.1. Conclusions

The three-phase research design produced a coherent evidence base that links the policy and practice landscape to the lived experience of athletes and the measured distribution of their transversal competences. Beginning with a systematic review of European and national provisions, moving through a consortium-wide survey with the Athletes Skills Inventory Tool (ASIT), and concluding with in-depth interviews of former professional athletes, the study generated mutually reinforcing insights that will directly inform ProgressDC's educational and advisory interventions. This sequencing ensured that each phase built on the previous one, enabling a robust synthesis of where systems currently fall short, which skills athletes already possess, and what must be strengthened to support durable dual careers.

Desk research reveals a shared structural challenge across Cyprus, Greece, Romania, and Poland: none of the countries has yet institutionalized a comprehensive, coordinated national framework for dual careers, even though the concept is widely acknowledged. Implementation remains fragmented, legal bases are partial or benefits-oriented rather than process-supportive; central coordination is absent; and specialized career and psychological counselling services are sparse, with limited training pathways for the professionals expected to support athletes. Romania references dual careers in strategy but lacks concrete instruments and funding; Poland has promising university-level mechanisms (e.g., the NRA) but no fully integrated, system-wide approach; Cyprus and Greece operate with ad hoc measures and informal arrangements that do not amount to a coherent system. At the same time, the European and national best practices mapped by the project demonstrate workable models, flexible academic pathways, mentoring and psychosocial support, and targeted training in transferable skills and entrepreneurship, showing that coordinated, athlete-centred ecosystems improve completion rates and smooth transitions out of sport. This evidence positions ProgressDC not only as a gap-filler but as a catalyst for alignment with EU guidance by promoting cross-sector partnerships, scalable tools, and policy dialogue in each partner country.

Quantitative survey with ASIT provides a clear competence profile at consortium level. Across the four EU frameworks, EntreComp registers the highest mean (3.91) followed closely by LifeComp (3.89), while DigComp (3.43) and GreenComp (3.38) lag, indicating strong entrepreneurial and personal-social learning capacities, but comparatively weaker advanced digital and sustainability-oriented competences. Transversal strengths include motivation and perseverance, self-awareness, ethical and sustainable thinking, creativity, critical thinking, growth mindset, collaboration, learning through experience, and wellbeing management, capacities plausibly nurtured by elite sport settings. Recurrent gaps appear in financial literacy and mobilising resources, initiative-taking and mobilising others, and planning/management, areas central to assuming proactive leadership beyond sport. On the digital side, everyday online interaction and collaboration are solid, yet career-oriented uses of technology, professional networking, leveraging platforms for employment, and creating or re-elaborating digital content, score significantly lower, revealing an underused lever for employability. In LifeComp, self-reflection, self-regulation, empathy, and communication are comparatively weaker, pointing to developmental needs in the introspective and interpersonal domains that underpin effective transitions and workplace integration. In GreenComp, athletes show a strong fairness/ethics orientation but limited critical sustainability thinking, futures literacy, and action (individual or collective), suggesting values without the future-oriented tools to translate them into practice. These patterns are consistent across countries, with local variation: for example, Cyprus and Romania display

strong motivation and digital netiquette but lower initiative and career-oriented digital creation; Poland shows creativity, planning, and collaboration strengths alongside similar gaps in initiative and financial literacy, together reinforcing the consortium-wide picture. Finally, the survey's sample (n=155) across the four partners provides sufficient breadth to lend weight to these aggregate conclusions while also signposting where tailored national adaptations will be necessary.

Phase 3 (Qualitative interviews) adds depth to the quantitative findings and clarifies mechanisms behind successful, and difficult, transitions. Former athletes consistently described a portfolio of transferable strengths (discipline, resilience, teamwork, critical/strategic thinking, responsibility) and reported that early, intentional planning enables alignment between these strengths and realistic career pathways—often in leadership, coaching/education, community engagement, or roles that reward coordination and decision-making under pressure. At the same time, interviewees repeatedly highlighted the emotional toll of retirement, loss of identity, public recognition, and daily structure, underscoring the need for proactive mental-health support and guided self-reflection well before exit from sport. Crucially, many transitions depended more on personal initiative and informal networks than on structured, state-sponsored support; athletes cited gaps in counselling, time-flexible education, and financial stability during the pivot to a new field. Yet, where education, guidance, and incremental upskilling were available, athletes more readily converted their sporting mindset into meaningful employment within and beyond the sport ecosystem.

Taken together, the three phases converge on a single, actionable conclusion: athletes in the consortium possess a strong, values-based, and adaptive foundation shaped by high-performance sport, but they operate within policy environments that are fragmented and under-coordinated, and they face consistent, skills-level gaps in strategic planning and initiative, financial literacy and resource mobilisation, career-oriented digital proficiency (networking and content creation), and the introspective/interpersonal cluster of communication, empathy, self-reflection, and self-regulation, alongside limited futures-oriented sustainability competences. Addressing these deficits through structured, system-level support and targeted, competence-based training, beginning with the preparation of DC Advisers and extending to athletes, emerges as the critical pathway for enabling confident, timely, and equitable transitions from sport to the labour market across the partner countries.

4.2. Recommendations

The consortium recognises that the results obtained across the three phases of the research, desk analysis, athlete survey, and qualitative interviews, offer a robust evidence base for the next stages of ProgressDC. These findings will be systematically reviewed and discussed among partners at a later stage, in order to jointly decide on the structure and content of the training curricula. This curriculum will first target the education and professionalisation of Dual Career Advisers, who will act as key multipliers in the system, and will subsequently be adapted for athletes themselves.

A central focus will be the reinforcement of transversal skills, which have been identified as both a strength and an area for further development. While competences such as perseverance, critical thinking, and collaboration are relatively strong, gaps are evident in financial literacy, planning and management, initiative-taking, communication, and empathy. Addressing these areas will be essential to ensure that athletes can effectively manage their transitions and future career paths.

Equally important is the enhancement of digital competences, where significant deficits were revealed. Future training will therefore emphasise professional networking, online identity management, purposeful use of digital platforms for employment, and digital content creation. These skills are vital in today's labour market and must become a core element of the dual career support offer.

At the same time, the consortium recognises the need for flexibility. The list of skills and competences will remain open to further refinement, allowing new priorities to emerge based on stakeholder consultations, evolving contexts, and the continuous monitoring of athletes' needs. This adaptive approach will ensure that the training programme remains both evidence-based and responsive to real-world challenges.

In this way, the consortium commits to transforming the research findings into practical educational tools that will empower advisers and athletes alike, bridging the current gaps and equipping future generations with the competences necessary for sustainable dual careers.

5. Appendices

Annex 1 Best Practices' Recording Template

Annex 2 'Athletes Skills Inventory Tool' (ASIT)

Annex 3 Interviews' Questionnaire

5.1. Annex 1

PROGRESS DC - PROfessional GRowth through Education in the Sport Sector by pursuing a Dual Career

T2.1 - Desk research on best practices in promoting athletes' dual career through training and career advising (or other) at a national and European level.

Submission Deadline: 10/04/2025

Submit to: zervas@dimitra.gr & anastasopoulou@dimitra.gr

Instructions: Partners are requested to fill in this template for each identified good practice that promotes athletes' dual careers. For this project, a good practice is an initiative or project that effectively helps athletes balance their sports careers with education, training, or work, ensuring long-term career opportunities. It should have proven results, be transferable, and show a positive impact on athletes' professional growth. Examples include career counseling, mentorship programs, job placements, flexible learning options, and policies supporting dual careers. Practices that build soft skills, connect athletes with industries, and promote career sustainability are highly valued.

This activity is part of the **desk research phase** of the project, during which partners will identify **a minimum of two good practices** related to athletes' dual careers. The aim is to document those best practices that can be adapted or implemented in different contexts.

The aim is to document those best practices that can be adapted or implemented in different contexts. Please ensure to include your name and organization when submitting the template.

Contact Person	Email	Organization
[Name]	[Email]	[Institution]

1. Good Practice Title

1.1 General Information

Field	Details
Title of Best Practice	[Clear, descriptive title]
Country/Countries of Implementation	[Where was this practice implemented?]
Implementation Lead/Partner Organizations	
Athletic Sector(s) Covered	Football, Basketball etc
Duration	24 Months
Target Group(s)	[Sports clubs, organizations/associations that need to promote dual careers for their athletes, athletes, coaches, Athletic Policy Makers etc.]
Website	

1.2 Description & Objectives

Field	Details
Main Goal	<p>What was the main goal of this good practice?</p> <p>Minimum 3 paragraphs</p>
Objectives	<p>How does it support athletes in balancing sports and career development? What problems/obstacles were addressed by this initiative?</p> <p>Minimum 3 paragraphs</p>
Focus area	<p>Does it focus on career transition, upskilling, job placements, or another area? If yes, then describe why. If other, then describe where.</p> <p>Minimum 3 paragraphs</p>
Target Group support	<p>What kind of support does the good practice provide to athletes, or other athletic roles ?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial support (scholarships, grants, sponsorships)? • Guidance and counseling for career transition? • Flexible scheduling to accommodate training and competition? • Other? <p>Minimum 3 paragraphs</p>
Stakeholders involved	<p>Which organizations (sports clubs, federations, training institutions, companies, etc.) were implementing it?</p> <p>Minimum 1 paragraph presenting the organizations</p> <p>What role do policy-makers, employers, and educational institutions played?</p>

Field	Details
	<p>Minimum 3 paragraphs presenting the organizations</p> <p>Number of people benefited?</p>
Lessons learned	<p>Describe the lessons learned by implementing this initiative?</p> <p>Minimum 2 paragraphs presenting the organizations</p>
Relevance	<p>How does this initiative can be connected with the scope and the aim of the PROGRESS DC - PROfessional GRowth through Education in the Sport Sector by pursuing a Dual Career?</p> <p>Minimum 2 paragraphs presenting the organizations</p>

1.3 Training Activities & Innovation

Field	Details
Training aim	<p>Does it initiative offered specific mentorship, career coaching, networking opportunities, or professional training? If yes, name them.</p> <p>Minimum 3 paragraphs</p>
Job related	<p>Are there structured job placements, internships, or "job tasting" experiences?</p> <p>Minimum 3 paragraphs</p>

Field	Details
Certification	<p>Does it include any certification or recognition for the athletes upon completion?</p> <p>Minimum 3 paragraphs</p>
How is this practice structured?	<p>Is it part of a formal program (e.g., university collaboration, national sports federation initiative)? Does it include synchronous and asynchronous types of training?</p> <p>Minimum 3 paragraphs</p>
Innovation	<p>What distinguishes this initiative from other dual-career programs?</p> <p>Minimum 2 paragraphs</p>
Expected short-term and long-term outcomes	<p>What impact has it had on the career progression of participating athletes or other athletic roles?</p> <p>Minimum 2 paragraphs</p> <p>Are there any recommendations for improving or adapting the approach?</p> <p>Minimum 2 paragraphs</p>

5.2. Annex 2

Athlete Skills Inventory Tool (ASIT):

Skill-Based Questions from Key EC Competence Frameworks to Explore the Skills and Skill Gaps of Athletes

Thank you for considering participating in this survey, which is conducted in four EU countries (Cyprus, Greece, Poland, and Romania), within the framework of the EU-funded project 'PROfessional Growth through Education in the Sport Sector by pursuing a Dual Career' (Progress DC). Your input into the study is highly valued.

ABOUT THE 'PROGRESS DC' PROJECT

The 'Progress DC' project embraces the principles of the EU Guidelines (2012) by supporting professional athletes through a structured approach: **training and certifying Dual Career (DC) Advisers within sports organisations**, offering athletes flexible training in transversal and digital skills, and raising awareness among stakeholders and policy makers. By **bridging the gap between sports and education**, Progress DC helps athletes thrive *during and after their sporting careers*.

The overall aim of Progress DC is to **empower professional athletes to successfully prepare for and pursue a dual career by combining their sporting commitments with education and professional development**. Recognising the challenges athletes face *during and after their sporting careers*, the project seeks to provide them with the necessary tools, guidance, and support to transition smoothly into the labour market. By introducing the role of the **certified Dual Career Adviser within sports organisations**, offering targeted training in transversal and digital skills, and fostering strong collaboration between the sports and education sectors, Progress DC aspires to build **a sustainable framework that enables athletes to thrive both on and off the field**.

ABOUT THE 'PROGRESS DC' SURVEY

The completion of the Athlete Skills Inventory Tool (ASIT) aims to facilitate the **identification of the skills that most athletes develop during their sporting career, as well as the skills that athletes lack**.

DEMOGRAPHICS

1. Age

<16 / 16-18 / 19-23 / 24-29 / 30-39 / 40+

2. Gender

Male / Female / Other

3. Sport

Football / Basketball / Volleyball / Handball / Athletics / Swimming & Aquatics / Tennis / Cycling / Rowing / Judo /
Taekwondo / Boxing / Gymnastics / Archery / Shooting / Sailing / Canoeing / Other

4. Sport Type

Individual / Team

5. Years of Involvement in Sport

0-2 / 3-5 / 6-10 / 11-15 / 16+

6. Level of Involvement in Sport

Amateur / Semi-professional / Professional

7. Are you currently combining sports with education?

Yes / No

8. Are you currently combining sports with any type of employment (full-time, part-time, etc.) or with any job shadowing or internship opportunities?

Yes / No

QUESTIONS

(Scale: 1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much)

EntreComp (CA1:5; CA2:5; CA3:3) (13/15) (11)

1. During my sporting activities, I often identify opportunities for improvement and appreciate creative ideas that could benefit my team or performance. [1.1 Spotting Opportunities & 1.4 Valuing Ideas]

1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much

2. I enjoy looking for effective solutions or trying new techniques to improve my performance. [1.2 Creativity]

1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much

3. When setting long-term goals, I often visualise the impact I want to create on both sports and life. [1.3 Vision]

1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much

4. *In sports and life, I consider whether my actions respect others and the environment.* [1.5 Ethical and Sustainable Thinking]

1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much

5. *Through sports, I identify my strengths and weaknesses and I feel confident in overcoming challenges.* [2.1 Self-awareness and Self-efficacy]

1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much

6. *I keep pushing myself during training to reach the expected results even when it takes time to show.* [2.2 Motivation and Perseverance]

1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much

7. *I am aware of how sponsorships, funding, or scholarships can influence my career and I know how to look for such opportunities for growth.* [2.3 Mobilising Resources and 2.4 Financial and Economic Literacy]

1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much

8. *In team settings, I often take the initiative to coordinate tasks and support my teammates.* [2.5 Mobilising Others]

1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much

9. *I am often the one suggesting new ideas or strategies during practice or meetings.* [3.1 Taking the Initiative]

1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much

10. *I use training plans and other schedules to balance sports with other commitments effectively.* [3.2 Planning and Management]

1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much

11. *Each training session or competition experience helps me reflect on what to improve and how I can improve.* [3.5 Learning through Experience]

1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much

LifeComp (P:3; S:3; L:3) (9/9) (1) (10)

12. *I regularly reflect on how my identity and values might evolve once my sports career ends.*

1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much

13. *I manage my emotions and thoughts well during stressful competitions or other difficult situations.* [P1 Self-regulation]

1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much

14. I try to understand what my teammates feel even if they do not express themselves directly. [S1 Empathy]

1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much

15. When unexpected changes occur (such as a canceled match), I adapt quickly to the new plan. [P2 Flexibility]

1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much

16. During team activities or competitions often taking place in multicultural settings, I express my ideas clearly and listen actively to others' input. [S2 Communication]

1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much

17. I make sure that I rest, eat well, and maintain healthy routines. [P3 Wellbeing]

1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much

18. I feel confident in contributing to group tasks and appreciate joint success. [S3 Collaboration and 3.4 Working with Others]

1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much

19. I see challenges as opportunities to learn and improve, even when progress is slow. [L1 Growth Mindset]

1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much

20. I evaluate advice and feedback from coaches or peers before deciding what works for me. [L2 Critical Thinking]

1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much

21. I regularly reflect on my progress and set goals to improve further. [L3 Managing Learning]

1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much

GreenComp (CA1:3; CA2:1; CA3:1; CA4:2) (8/12) (8)

22. I try to make environmentally conscious choices in my sporting activities, such as using reusable bottles. [1.1 Valuing Sustainability]

1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much

23. I actively promote fair play and respect for the rules during training sessions and competitions. [1.2 Supporting Fairness]

1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much

24. I choose outdoor activities that help me connect with and appreciate the natural environment.

[1.3 Promoting Nature]

1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much

25. I question claims about eco-friendly products before accepting them, by checking the products' labels and the production processes. [2.2 Critical Thinking]

1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much

26. I often think about how my choices in life today could contribute to a more sustainable future.

[3.1 Futures Literacy]

1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much

27. I am open to changing my habits when I discover more sustainable or effective ways of doing things, even in uncertain or ambiguous situations. [3.2 Adaptability and 3.3 Coping with Uncertainty, Ambiguity and Risk]

1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much

28. I enjoy participating in group efforts promoting environmental protection. [4.2 Collective Action]

1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much

29. I take personal action to reduce environmental impact, even when I am not asked to do so. [4.3 Individual Initiative]

1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much

DigComp (CA1:2 covering 3; CA2: 2 covering 4; CA3:1 covering 2; CA4:0; CA5:2) (9/21) (6) (3) (9)

30. I can filter the data, information, and other content that I find online and assess their reliability.

[CA1 Information and Data Literacy: 1.1 and 1.2]

1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much

31. I use digital tools (such as social media or other platforms) to collaborate effectively with teammates or other people with whom I work or interact. [CA2 Collaboration and Communication: 2.2 and 2.4; CA1 Information and Data Literacy: 1.3]

1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much

32. When communicating with my team or sport community online, I make sure that my messages are respectful and positive. [CA2 Collaboration and Communication: 2.1 and 2.5]

1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much

33. I often use digital platforms and programmes to create and edit content and to express myself in different formats (Microsoft office files, etc.). [CA3 Developing Digital Content: 3.1 and 3.2]

1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much

34. I use digital calendars and apps to manage my time and training schedule efficiently. [CA5 Problem Solving: 5.2]

1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much

35. I often watch online tutorials or videos to improve my knowledge or learn how to use a new tool related to my sport or work. [CA5 Problem Solving: 5.4]

1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much

36. When preparing for networking in unfamiliar professional settings, I actively use digital platforms to research and connect with relevant people.

1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much

37. I use professional networking platforms (e.g. LinkedIn) to explore employment or internship opportunities beyond sports.

1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much

38. I can create or update a digital portfolio/CV showcasing both my athletic achievements and non-sport skills for potential employers.

1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Quite a lot, 5 = Very much

PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION

Collection, Processing, Use, and Storage

By participating in this survey, I acknowledge that I have read and understood the information provided below and consent to the collection, processing, use, and storage of your personal data for the below-stated research purposes:

Your participation in the survey is entirely voluntary. All responses will be treated confidentially. The data collected will be used and processed solely for research purposes and will be published in aggregate form (at national and/or consortium level), that is, your individual responses will not be identifiable in any reports or publications. All personal data will be kept secure and stored in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation GDPR EU 2016/679. Access to the data will be limited to the project's research team and, if requested, the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), the European Commission's body responsible for the project.

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please contact the project's partner organisation conducting the survey in your country.

Consent

Thank you for completing the questionnaire!

5.3. Annex 3

Interview Questions for Ex Professional Athletes on their Career and Skills

Demographic Information

- How old are you?
- In what sport was your professional career?
- For how many years were you active as a professional athlete?
- How many years have passed since your retirement from professional sports?

Questions on Career and Skills

Q1 – Sports Career and Current Occupation

Can you briefly describe your sports career and your current occupation (if any)?

Q2 – Combination of Sports with Employment/Education

Were you able to combine sports with any form of employment and/or education? If yes, how? If not, why?

Q3 – ‘Dual Career’ Definition

What does a ‘dual career’ mean to you, based on your experience?

Q4 – Challenges in Sports and Beyond

What were the biggest challenges you faced in managing your athletic and professional goals (in sports or any other field)? If any, how did you address them?

Q5 – Skills from Sports Career

What skills developed through sports were the most helpful in transitioning to your current role?

Q6 – Strategies Applied

Were there any strategies that you applied during your sports career regarding your future development that didn’t work as expected? Why?

Q7 – Support System/Guidance

Did you receive any institutional and/or informal support to plan for a second career, while still active in sports? If yes, can you explain? If not, why?

Q8 – Advice to Current Athletes

What advice would you give to young athletes today regarding career planning in general?

Q9 – Other Comments

Would you like to add anything else to the discussion?