



DAFNE

DAFNE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DUAL CAREER AND DATA ANALYSIS IN FOOTBALL



Co-funded by
the European Union



DAFNE - 101182928

First Edition, 2025

© 2025, Universidad de Murcia

Edition: Guillermo Felipe López Sánchez, Salvador Angosto (Idi4Sport)

Printing: Online report

The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Disclaimer: This handbook is not intended to be marketed or used for profit, its main purpose is to fulfil an educational mission within the Partnership for Cooperation Project funded by the European Commission under the Erasmus+ Sport programme to show the interested public as complete a picture as possible to improve the conditions for the practice of athletics and swimming in young people with disabilities.

INDEX

1. BACKGROUND.....	1
1.1. Stakeholder mapping.....	1
1.1.1. Portugal.....	1
1.1.2. Spain.....	2
1.1.3. Germany.....	5
1.1.4. Italy.....	12
1.1.5. Romania.....	13
1.1.6. Slovenia.....	15
1.2. Issues, numbers, opinions, models and measures currently in place..	18
1.3. Organisational models.....	19
1.3.1. Best practices currently in force in Europe.....	19
1.3.2. Analysis of the American and Australian models.....	20
1.4. Success stories, useful experiences and testimonials.....	21
2. METHODS.....	22
2.1. Participants.....	22
2.2. Instrument and procedures.....	22
2.3. Statistical analysis.....	22
3. RESULTS.....	23
4. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS FOR ORGANISATIONAL AND DECISION-MAKING MODELS.....	27
5. REFERENCES.....	29

1. BACKGROUND

1.1. Stakeholder mapping

Below is the stakeholder mapping of the six countries participating in this project.

1.1.1. Portugal

Stakeholder Category	Names
Player Unions & Associations	Professional Football Players Union (SJPF) https://sjogadores.pt
Football Clubs (Lower Leagues)	37 Regional Football Clubs of the Bragança FA 21 Regional Football Associations in Portugal https://www.fpf.pt/pt/Institucional/Associa%C3%A7%C3%B5es
Coaches & Technical Staff	National Football Coaches Association https://antf.pt
Education Institutions (High Schools, Universities, Vocational Schools)	Bragança Polytechnic University https://ipb.pt EPA Carvalhais (Vocational School) https://epacarvalhais.com
Players (Low Categories)	21 Regional Football Associations representative of the Amateur Players https://www.fpf.pt/pt/Institucional/Associa%C3%A7%C3%B5es
Scouting & Recruitment Staff	None
Data Analytics & AI Companies	None
Labour Market Operators (Employers, HR, Job Portals, Internship Providers)	Portugal Sports Hub https://portugalsportshub.eu
Policymakers (Ministry of Sports, Ministry of Education, Governmental Agencies); Local Governments & Municipalities	- 12 Municipalities on the Bragança Region - Bragança - Mirandela - Macedo de Cavaleiros - Alfândega da Fé - Torre de Moncorvo - Vila Flor - Vinhais - Mogadouro - Miranda do Douro - Freixo de Espada à Cinta - Carrazeda de Ansiães

	- Vimios
Football Federations	Portuguese FA https://www.fpf.pt
National Olympic Committee & Sport Authorities	Portuguese Olympic Committee https://comiteolimpicoportugal.pt
Players' Families	None
Media & Sports Journalists	Regional Media (Newspaper, Radio & Tv Online) - https://www.jornalnordeste.com - https://www.mdb.pt - https://www.canaln.tv

1.1.2.Spain

1.1.2.1. Stakeholders in dual career in football

Dual career refers to balancing athletic and academic/professional development.

Stakeholder Group	Examples / Description	Interest	Influence Level
Athletes (Youth & Pro)	Footballers in academies, semi-pro, pro clubs	High – direct impact on life outcomes	High
Clubs & Academies	La Liga clubs, Segunda División clubs, grassroots academies	Medium – player development, well-being	High
Parents & Families	Families of youth players	Medium – long-term stability for children	Medium
Educational Institutions	Secondary schools, universities (e.g., INEF, UCAM, Universitat Ramon Llull)	High – deliver flexible or sports-specific education	Medium
Government & Policy Makers	Ministry of Education, Consejo Superior de Deportes	Medium – policies on dual career, funding	High
Spanish Football Federation	RFEF	High – can promote/mandate dual career pathways	High
Players' Associations	AFE (Asociación de Futbolistas Españoles)	High – career transition support, protection	Medium–High
Private Support Services	Career counselors, psychologists, tutors	Medium – provide support services	Low–Medium
UEFA & EU Programs	EU Dual Career initiatives (e.g., Erasmus+ SPORT)	High – funding and best-practice dissemination	Medium

1.1.2.2. Stakeholders in data analysis in football

Stakeholder Group	Examples / Description	Interest	Influence Level
Football Clubs	Top-tier (Barcelona, Real Madrid), lower divisions	High – data for performance, scouting, and strategy	Very High
Coaches & Technical Staff	First-team and youth coaches	High – tactical planning, decision-making	High
Players	All levels of footballers	Medium – performance tracking, injury prevention	Medium
Analysts & Data Scientists	Club-employed or outsourced (e.g., analytics firms)	High – design, interpret data systems	High
Technology Providers	Catapult, StatsBomb, Wyscout, OPTA, SAP Sports One	High – provide tools and data infrastructure	High
Academic & Research Centers	INEFC (Barcelona), UCAM, Universidad de Granada (sports science depts)	Medium – research and training	Medium
La Liga Tech / RFEF Tech	In-house data solutions and broadcasting analytics	High – league-wide solutions, innovation	Very High
Regulators / Federations	RFEF, La Liga, UEFA	Medium – compliance, innovation, fair play	High
Fans & Media	Sports journalists, broadcasters, public	Low – consumers of stats, indirectly impact demand	Low–Medium

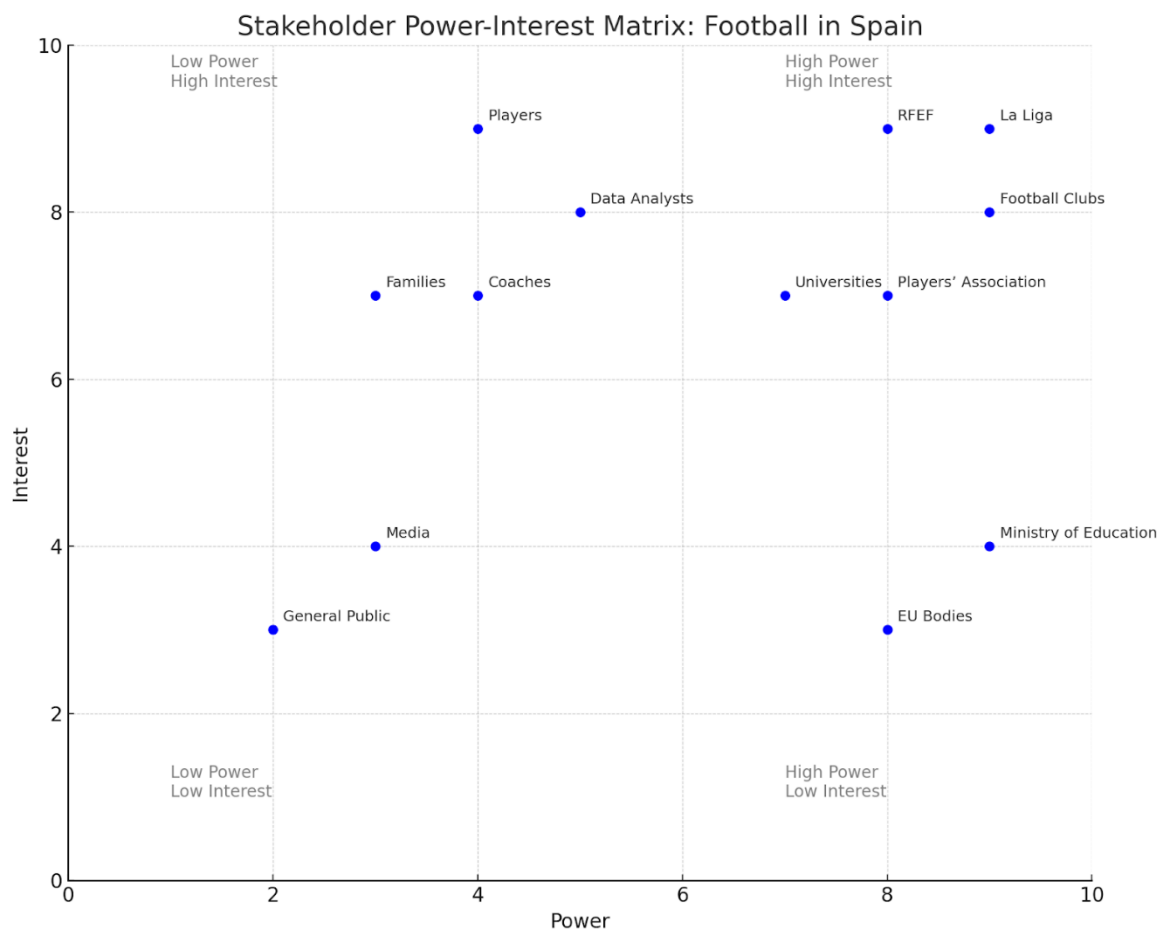
1.1.2.3. Combined stakeholder interest map (Dual Career + Data Analysis)

Stakeholder	Dual Career Focus	Data Analysis Focus	Notes
Football Clubs	Support education, life after football	Tactical, medical, scouting data	Central actor in both
RFEF / La Liga	Youth development, player welfare	Tech and performance innovation	Influence over regulations and strategy
Universities	Dual-career academic pathways	Sports science, analytics degrees	Growing collaboration with clubs
Athletes / Players	Career planning, well-being	Self-awareness, contract leverage	End users and beneficiaries

Tech Providers	Limited (possible educational tech)	Core providers for data tools	Opportunity for dual-career tech training platforms
Government / EU	Policy & funding support	Research & innovation grants	Dual-career is an EU priority

1.1.2.4. Stakeholder Mapping Matrix (Power vs. Interest)

Category	Stakeholders
High Power, High Interest	RFEF, La Liga, Football Clubs, Universities, Players' Association
High Power, Low Interest	Ministry of Education, EU Bodies (may need activation)
Low Power, High Interest	Players, Families, Coaches, Data Analysts
Low Power, Low Interest	General Public, Media (in context of dual career)



1.1.2.5. Strategic recommendations

The main strategic recommendations are the following:

- Strengthen dual-career policies through club-university partnerships (e.g., online degrees for youth academy players).
- Foster data literacy as part of dual-career paths—players learning performance analytics.
- Develop cross-stakeholder workshops involving clubs, educational institutions, and federations.
- Leverage EU programs for funding and knowledge exchange (e.g., Erasmus+ SPORT, EDGE project).

1.1.3. Germany

Effective implementation of football analytics and dual-career initiatives in Germany involves a range of stakeholders. Below is a map of key stakeholders, categorized by their role, with an assessment of their influence and interest (on a 1–5 scale), and suggested engagement strategies. Contact information (website or email) is provided where available:

Stakeholder	Category (Core / Enabler / Facilitator / Influenced)	Influence (1–5)	Interest (1–5)	Engagement Strategy	Contact / Notes
DFB (German Football Association)	Core stakeholder (governing body for German football)	5/5 (sets youth developme nt and coaching standards nationwide)	<i>Interest: 5/5</i> (highly interested in leveraging data for sporting success and supporting player careers);	Collaborate on integrating data analytics into coach education and talent development programs; align project outcomes with DFB’s digital innovation and dual- career	info@dfb.de , website: dfb.de .

Stakeholder	Category (Core / Enabler / Facilitator / Influenced)	Influence (1–5)	Interest (1–5)	Engagement Strategy	Contact / Notes
				support efforts.	
DFL Deutsche Fußball Liga	Core (organizer of Bundesliga and 2. Bundesliga professional leagues)	5/5 (controls league-wide initiatives, funding, and tech adoption)	5/5 (strong interest in data-driven products for competition integrity, fan engagement, and club support – e.g. the DFL drives projects like Sportec Solutions and Sports Innovationdf1.de df1.de)	Secure buy-in for analytics programs at club level, possibly through DFL commissions . Partner on data standards, share best practices across clubs, and obtain sponsorship for analytic tools	kontakt@df1.de; website: df1.de
Bundesliga Clubs (e.g. FC Bayern München)	Core stakeholders (end-users/employees of analytics; sites of dual-career implementation for academy players)	5/5 (particularly top clubs like Bayern, Dortmund influence trends and allocate resources to analytics);	4/5 (competitive advantage drives interest in analytics – e.g. Bayern’s use of SAP Sports One for scoutingsap.com – though interest level can vary by club culture/management)	Work with club sporting directors and analysis departments to pilot analytics initiatives. Demonstrate ROI in performance to sustain club support. For dual careers, engage club academy managers to	Each club via website (fcbayern.com, etc.) or analytics leads (e.g. FC Bayern Campus education program contacts).

Stakeholder	Category (Core / Enabler / Facilitator / Influenced)	Influence (1–5)	Interest (1–5)	Engagemen t Strategy	Contact / Notes
				ensure youth player education is prioritized.	
DFB- Akademie (German Football Academy)	Facilitator (DFB department focused on coach education, innovation, and player development);	4/5 (shapes curriculum for coaching licenses and offers knowledge exchange platforms)	<i>Interest: 5/5</i> (very interested in modernizing training with data – the academy hosts analytics workshops and develops tools for coaches)	Integrate project findings into DFB Academy courses (e.g. include a module on data analytics in UEFA A license). Enlist Academy as a disseminatio n channel (seminars, research publications)	dfb-akademie.de (Email: akademie@dfb.de; Tel: +49 69 6788- 0)
BDFL (Bund Deutscher Fußball- Lehrer)	Facilitator (professional association of football coaches in Germany)	3/5 (represents ~5,500 licensed coaches, has voice in coaching matters)	4/5 (keen on continued education – ran a match analysis congress in 2023)	Partner to reach coaching practitioners – e.g. co- create guidelines for incorporatin g data into coaching, present at BDFL’s International	info@bdf.de, website: bdf.de

Stakeholder	Category (Core / Enabler / Facilitator / Influenced)	Influence (1–5)	Interest (1–5)	Engagemen t Strategy	Contact / Notes
				Coaches Congress (ITK). Leverage BDFL communicati ons to promote dual-career awareness for aspiring analyst- coaches	
Sportec Solutions AG	Enabler (tech provider for match data and analytics) – joint venture of DFL	4/5 (high technical influence – provides the backbone of official data to all clubs, though strategic decisions lie with DFL/DFB)	4/5 (interested in developing advanced analytics products and talent – e.g. hiring data operators and engineerssportec = solutions.jobs.p ersonio.de);	Involve Sportec in defining data standards and validation for analytics. Possibly establish an internship pipeline for former players or sports science graduates to work as data analysts (leveraging Sportec’s experience).	info@sportec- solutions.com sport ec-solutions.de ; website: sportec- solutions.de .
Kinexon Sports	Enabler (provider of tracking technology);	3/5 (its real-time data enhances	5/5 (core business is sports analytics innovation, very	Kinexon could offer training sessions for	sales@kinexon.co m ; website:

Stakeholder	Category (Core / Enabler / Facilitator / Influenced)	Influence (1–5)	Interest (1–5)	Engagement Strategy	Contact / Notes
	<i>Influence: 3/5</i> (its real-time data enhances training but clubs decide usage);	training but clubs decide usage)	interested in demonstrating use-cases in football) kinexon-sports.com	coaches/analysts on using tracking insights, aiding dual-career athletes transitioning into tech roles. <i>Contact:</i> sales@kinexon.com; website: kinexon-sports.com.	kinexon-sports.com
German Sport University Cologne (DSHS)	Facilitator (education & research institution)	4/5 (Germany's only sports-focused university, with a dedicated Institute for Sport Informatics influencing sports tech R&D) bildungsserver.de	5/5 (strong academic interest in performance analytics – hosts the Matchplan conference, runs degree programs in Performance Analysis, etc.) dshs-koeln.de dshs-koeln.de	Collaborate on research (validation of analytics methods, sports science studies). Tap into student talent via internships on analysis projects; possibly co-develop a certificate course for ex-players in sports data. DSHS can also evaluate dual-career	dshs-koeln.de (Email: zentrales@dshs-koeln.de).

Stakeholder	Category (Core / Enabler / Facilitator / Influenced)	Influence (1–5)	Interest (1–5)	Engagement Strategy	Contact / Notes
				efficacy through its sports management research.	
Athleten Deutschland e.V.	Influenced / facilitator (independent athletes’ union, mainly Olympic sports)	3/5 (advocates for athletes’ rights and career support at policy level)	4/5 (very interested in dual-career improvements; lobbies for better academic and job support for athletes transitioning from sport) adh.deadh.de	Though footballers have their own union, Athleten Deutschland can provide insights from other sports and support broad dual- career initiatives. Engage them to pressure for policies benefiting all athletes (e.g. government funding for education). They could disseminate project findings on career pathways in data analytics to athlete	info@athleten- deutschland.org; website: athleten- deutschland.org.

Stakeholder	Category (Core / Enabler / Facilitator / Influenced)	Influence (1–5)	Interest (1–5)	Engagement Strategy	Contact / Notes
				communities	
VDV (Vereinigung der Vertragsfußba llspieler)	Facilitator/In fluenced (players’ union for footballers, similar to FIFPro’s German chapter);	4/5 (represents players’ interests, runs programs for out-of- contract players)	5/5 (high interest in players’ welfare and post- career opportunities – VDV offers support such as training schemes in trades or academia for retired players);	Partner with VDV to identify former players inclined towards data analytics careers and provide them training/men torship. VDV can help advertise dual-career education programs (like an analytics bootcamp) to its members. They also can contribute to adjusting perceptions among players that pursuing education (e.g. programmin g skills)	info@spielergewe rkschaft.de; website: vdv.de.

Stakeholder	Category (Core / Enabler / Facilitator / Influenced)	Influence (1–5)	Interest (1–5)	Engagement Strategy	Contact / Notes
				during a football career is beneficial.	

1.1.4. Italy

Stakeholder	Description	Power	Interest	Role
FIGC (Italian Football Federation)	National governing body of football	High	High	Regulates competitions, promotes dual career and data initiatives
CONI (Italian National Olympic Committee)	National Olympic authority overseeing sports	High	High	Supports dual career policies across sports
Lega Serie A / B / C	Organizers of professional leagues	High	High	Implements technology and educational policies
Professional Clubs (Serie A, B, C)	Employers of athletes and users of data analytics	High	High	Integrate academic pathways and data-driven approaches
Youth Academies and Training Centers	Develop young talents	Medium	High	Apply dual career models and technology
Football Players (professional and youth)	Core participants in dual career and data use	Low (individually)	High	Beneficiaries and subjects of data analysis
Universities and Technical Institutes (e.g., University of Rome, Bicocca, Foro Italico)	Providers of academic and vocational education	Medium	Medium	Support dual career paths and research collaboration
Coaches and Sports Data Analysts	Use analytics to optimize performance	Medium	High	Key actors in digital transformation of sport

Stakeholder	Description	Power	Interest	Role
Sports Tech Companies (e.g., Wyscout, Dartfish, InStat)	Developers of analytic software and platforms	Medium	Medium	Provide tracking, scouting, and performance tools
Ministry of Education and Merit / Ministry of Sport	Policy makers for education and sport	High	Medium	Create frameworks to combine education and sport
Athletes' Families	Influence educational decisions	Low	Medium	Support or condition academic continuity
Player Agents / Representatives	Intermediaries in career decisions	Medium	Medium	Influence priorities between education and early professional career
AIC (Italian Footballers' Association)	Players' union	High	Medium	Advocates for labor, education, and post-career rights
European Institutions (e.g., Erasmus+ Sport, EACEA)	Funders of dual career projects	Medium	High	Promote best practices and international cooperation
Researchers and Sports Think Tanks	Generate knowledge and innovation	Low	High	Evaluate impact and propose policy and tech improvements

1.1.5. Romania

1.1.5.1. Subjects impacted by the project (Direct beneficiaries & key actors)

Stakeholder	Interest & Needs
Players (Low Categories)	Need support balancing football and education/work; career uncertainty
Players' Families	Want financial stability & career security for their children
Football Clubs (Lower Leagues)	Need sustainable player development & retention models
Coaches & Technical Staff	Need tools & knowledge to support dual career pathways

Stakeholder	Interest & Needs
Education Institutions (High Schools, Universities, Vocational Schools)	Need policies to integrate student-athletes effectively
Labour Market Operators (Employers, HR, Job Portals, Internship Providers)	Need a skilled workforce and talent integration models
Player Unions & Associations	Advocate for better career transition support
Scouting & Recruitment Staff	Want to identify players with potential & career stability
Data Analytics & AI Companies	Can provide insights into career trends & performance sustainability

1.1.5.2. *Subjects that can impact the project (influencers & decision makers)*

Stakeholder	Influence Level & Role
Policymakers (Ministry of Sports, Ministry of Education, Governmental Agencies)	Can create regulations & funding for dual career programs
Football Federations	Can implement dual-career policies within football governance
UEFA & FIFA	Can provide strategic frameworks & funding
National Olympic Committee & Sport Authorities	Can support policy alignment across sports
Local Governments & Municipalities	Can fund grassroots programs & dual-career centers
Sponsors & CSR-Focused Companies	Can finance scholarships, internships, and programs
Media & Sports Journalists	Can influence public awareness & policy discussions
Research Institutions & Universities	Can contribute data-driven insights for policy improvements

In this stakeholder mapping table, the stakeholders are categorized into four quadrants:

1. Manage Closely (High Influence, High Interest)
2. Keep Informed (Low Influence, High Interest)
3. Keep Satisfied (High Influence, Low Interest)
4. Minimal Contact (Low Influence, Low Interest)

1.1.5.3. Stakeholder mapping table

Quadrant	Stakeholders
Manage Closely (High Influence, High Interest)	Football Federations, UEFA & FIFA, Policymakers, Football Clubs, Education Institutions, Player Unions, National Olympic Committee & Sport Authorities
Keep Informed (Low Influence, High Interest)	Players, Players' Families, Coaches & Technical Staff, Scouting & Recruitment Staff, Data Analytics Companies
Keep Satisfied (High Influence, Low Interest)	Sponsors & CSR-Focused Companies, Local Governments & Municipalities
Minimal Contact (Low Influence, Low Interest)	Media & Sports Journalists, Research Institutions & Universities, Labour Market Operators

1.1.6.Slovenia

1.1.6.1. Stakeholders supporting dual careers in football in Slovenia

Stakeholder Group	Examples (with Links)	Role in Dual Career	Collaborates With
Government Institutions	Ministry of the Economy, Tourism and Sport https://www.gov.si/drzavni-organi/ministrstva/ministrstvo-zagospodarstvo-turizem-in-sport/ Ministry of Education https://www.gov.si/drzavni-organi/ministrstva/ministrstvo-zavzgojo-in-izobrazevanje/	Funding, legislation, athlete status, employment opportunities	Football Association of Slovenia, Olympic Committee of Slovenia, educational institutions, Army, Police

Stakeholder Group	Examples (with Links)	Role in Dual Career	Collaborates With
	<p>Employment Service of Slovenia https://www.ess.gov.si/</p> <p>Ministry of Defence https://www.gov.si/drzavni-organi/ministrstva/ministrstvo-za-obrambo/</p> <p>Ministry of the Interior https://www.gov.si/drzavni-organi/ministrstva/ministrstvo-za-notranje-zadeve/</p>		
Football Organizations	<p>Football Association of Slovenia (NZS) https://www.nzs.si/</p>	<p>Strategy, status recognition, youth development, connection with UEFA/FIFA</p>	<p>Clubs, schools, Olympic Committee, UEFA, FIFPro</p>
Football Clubs and Academies	<p>NK Maribor – https://www.nkmaribor.com/</p> <p>NK Olimpija – https://nkolimpija.si/</p> <p>NK Domžale – https://www.nkdomzale.si/</p> <p>NK Bravo – https://www.nk-bravo.si/</p>	<p>Training, career development, school coordination, athlete status</p>	<p>Football Association, parents, schools, universities</p>
Educational Institutions	<p>Gimnazija Šiška – https://www.gimnazija-siska.si/</p> <p>Gimnazija Bežigrad – https://www.gimnazija-bezigrad.si/</p> <p>University of Ljubljana – Faculty of Sport – https://www.fsp.uni-lj.si/</p> <p>University of Primorska – https://www.upr.si/</p> <p>University of Maribor – https://www.um.si/</p> <p>National Education Institute – https://www.zrss.si/</p>	<p>Program adaptation, athlete status, tutoring support</p>	<p>Clubs, Football Association, Ministry of Education, parents</p>

Stakeholder Group	Examples (with Links)	Role in Dual Career	Collaborates With
Support Organizations	Olympic Committee of Slovenia – https://www.olympic.si/ Career Center for Athletes – https://www.olympic.si/karierni-center Institute of Sport (UL) – https://www.fsp.uni-lj.si/o-fakulteti/institut-za-sport/ Sports Foundation of Slovenia – https://www.sport.si/	Career counseling, transition support, psychological assistance	Football Association, athletes, universities
Family and Personal Network	Parents, coaches, psychologists, counselors (no official websites)	Emotional, informational, logistical support	Clubs, schools, Career Center for Athletes
Employers and Sponsors	Slovenian Armed Forces – https://www.slovenskavojska.si/ Police – https://www.policija.si/ Corporate sponsors (e.g., Nova KBM – NK Maribor sponsor)	Flexible employment, post-career transition, sponsorships	Athletes, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Interior, Olympic Committee
International Organizations	UEFA – https://www.uefa.com/ FIFPro – https://fifpro.org/ Erasmus+ Sport – https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-b/key-action-2/small-scale-partnerships-in-sport	Education, dual career projects, international best practices	Football Association, Olympic Committee, universities
Player Union	Union of Professional Football Players of Slovenia (SPINS) https://www.spins.si	Advocates for players' rights, contracts, post-career support	Players, Clubs, Football Association, FIFPro
Amateur Players (Lower Leagues)	Players in 3rd and 4th Slovenian National Leagues, regional youth leagues	Grassroots development, career balancing	Regional Football Associations, clubs, schools, families
Scouting and Football Agencies	Pro Futuro Sports, licensed FIFA agents	Career management, transfers, negotiation, post-career planning	Players, clubs, Football Association of Slovenia

Stakeholder Group	Examples (with Links)	Role in Dual Career	Collaborates With
Data & Analytics Companies	Wyscout, InStat, Scoutium (used in Slovenia)	Performance tracking, player profiling	Clubs, coaches, agents
Media and Sports Journalists	RTV Slovenija – https://www.rtvlo.si Sportklub – https://sportklub.n1info.si Ekipa24 – https://ekipa.svet24.si	Awareness, media pressure, public image building	Clubs, Football Association, fans, general public
Municipalities and Local Communities	Municipalities with strong football presence (e.g., Maribor, Ljubljana, Domžale)	Facility access, funding for local sports programs	Clubs, schools, Football Association, Ministry of Sport

1.2. Issues, numbers, opinions, models and measures currently in place

In the realm of football, dual-career development (combining sport with education or work) faces several critical challenges that affect both athletic performance and long-term life satisfaction. Athletes are often required to prioritize training and competition at the expense of formal education, limiting their options once their sports career ends (SportEnt, 2024).

According to FIFPRO (2023), 67% of professional footballers express uncertainty about their career transition after retirement. This finding reveals a systemic lack of structured support for career planning during the active playing years. In contrast, a study on Germany’s women’s Bundesliga showed that over 90% of players engage in either academic or vocational education alongside their athletic careers, indicating that structured support can yield positive results (Ehnold, Gohritz, Lotzen, & Schlesinger, 2024).

Stakeholder opinions vary: players generally welcome opportunities to pursue flexible academic paths, citing benefits in mental health, identity development, and stress reduction (Cruyff Institute, 2022). Meanwhile, coaches and federations often emphasize immediate sporting performance, with less consistent attention paid to educational development.

Multiple models address these concerns. The European Commission (2012) developed guidelines advocating for dual-career policies that include legislative, financial, and educational components. In Norway, Dual Career Development Environments (DCDEs) have been categorized into “elite sport schools” and “sports-friendly schools,” each offering different levels of

institutional coordination and support (Sæther et al., 2022). The more structured environments are linked to better academic outcomes and lower injury risks.

Concrete measures have been implemented in some countries. The Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) in the UK runs a Business School offering degrees and certifications in coaching, sports media, and data analysis, tailored to the unique schedules of footballers (PFA, 2024). University Academy 92 (UA92), founded by former Manchester United players, introduced a “Business of Football” programme that integrates academic study with data analytics for careers in management, scouting, and media (FourFourTwo, 2024).

Despite these advances, the implementation of dual-career support and data literacy initiatives remains uneven across clubs, regions, and national federations. Stronger cross-sectoral policy coordination is essential to ensure that athletes are adequately prepared for life after sport.

1.3. Organisational models

The management of dual careers, balancing athletic performance with academic or vocational development, requires effective organisational frameworks that support athletes throughout and beyond their sporting careers. Various countries have implemented successful models that can serve as benchmarks for policy design within football. This section outlines leading practices currently in place in Europe and presents a comparative analysis of the models adopted in the United States and Australia, with the aim of identifying transferable strategies.

1.3.1. Best practices currently in force in Europe

In Europe, dual career policies have been widely promoted through the European Union's *Guidelines on Dual Careers of Athletes* (2012), which encourage integrated national frameworks involving educational, sports, and labor institutions.

Some of the most notable examples include:

- **France – INSEP (National Institute of Sport, Expertise, and Performance):** Offers a fully integrated model combining elite sports training with academic programs. Athletes benefit from tailored academic support, mentoring, and coordinated schedules between coaches and educators.
- **Spain – “ADESP Dual Career” Project:** Led by the Spanish Sports Association (ADESP), it supports high-level athletes through vocational training, academic counseling, and employment transition services after retirement from sport.

- **Italy – CONI & University Collaborations:** Involves strategic agreements between the Italian Olympic Committee and universities to provide flexible learning pathways, academic tutoring, and psychological support for student-athletes.
- **Netherlands – CTOs (Centres for Topsport and Education):** Combine high-performance training centers with academic institutions, offering highly personalized support to help athletes manage both training and studies effectively.

These models emphasize a multidisciplinary approach in which collaboration among key stakeholders is essential. They serve as practical references for developing structured dual career systems within football clubs, academies, and federations.

1.3.2. Analysis of the American and Australian models

1.3.2.1. United States

The U.S. model is characterized by a structural integration of sport within the educational system, particularly through the collegiate sports system. The NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) oversees university-level competitions, providing student-athletes with athletic scholarships that enable them to pursue higher education alongside competitive sport.

- **Strengths:** Institutionalized system, extensive access to facilities and academic programs, structured academic support for athletes.
- **Challenges:** High competitive pressure, risk of imbalance between athletic and academic commitments, limited focus on long-term career planning beyond sport.

1.3.2.2. Australia

Australia has implemented a more athlete-centered approach through the Athlete Career and Education (ACE) program, managed by the *Australian Institute of Sport (AIS)*. This model focuses on career planning, academic guidance, psychological support, and transition services.

- **Strengths:** Holistic development of the athlete, emphasis on post-sport transition, flexible pathways aligned with labor market demands.
- **Challenges:** Less formal integration with educational institutions compared to the U.S. system.

1.3.2.3. Comparative summary

The European model is largely based on cross-sector collaboration supported by public policy; the U.S. model integrates sport and education through scholarships and institutional sports

programs; and the Australian model focuses on individual athlete development with an emphasis on life after sport. Each system presents valuable lessons for implementing effective dual career strategies in football, especially in designing support structures that balance athletic excellence with personal and professional development.

1.4. Success stories, useful experiences and testimonials

Several football clubs and institutions across the world have successfully implemented dual career strategies, showing positive results for both players and organisations.

- FC Midtjylland (Denmark): Combines data-driven performance with academic support in its academy. Players follow flexible education plans, leading to lower dropout rates and better long-term planning.
- *"Studying while playing gave me security beyond football."* – Former academy player
- Toni Duggan (England): Completed her university degree while playing at an elite level. She highlights education as a tool for mental balance and post-career preparation.
- *"Education helped me manage pressure and think long-term."*
- AIS – Athlete Career and Education (Australia): Provides structured support for athletes' academic and career development. Former footballers report smoother transitions into post-sport careers.
- Athletic Club Bilbao (Spain): Promotes education and values alongside football training, through strong ties with local schools and universities.
- *"We're not just creating footballers, but well-rounded individuals."* – Academy Director

These examples show that dual career programs improve athlete well-being, support smoother transitions, and align with long-term club values.

2. METHODS

2.1. Participants

A total of 211 football players who played in Europe participated in our survey. Regarding gender, there were 170 men (80.6%), 40 women (18.9%) and 1 non-binary (0.5%). The age range of the participants was 12-63 years, and the average age was 23.23 ± 8.89 years.

2.2. Instrument and procedures

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to football players using Microsoft Forms. The survey consisted of 13 items designed to gather information relevant to the objectives of the study. The questionnaire was composed of closed-ended questions, allowing for standardized responses and facilitating quantitative analysis. Participants were invited to complete the form electronically, ensuring accessibility and convenience. Prior to distribution, the questionnaire was reviewed to ensure clarity and relevance of the items. Participation was voluntary.

2.3. Statistical analysis

A descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to examine the data collected from the survey. Measures of central tendency (means), dispersion (standard deviation), and distribution (minimum and maximum values) were calculated. In addition, frequencies and percentages were used to describe categorical variables. The analysis was performed using Microsoft Excel for initial data handling and IBM SPSS Statistics (version 25) for statistical processing and output generation.

3. RESULTS

Age: The age range of the participants was 12-63 years, and the average age was 23.23 ± 8.89 years.

Gender: Regarding gender, the following pie chart shows a large majority of men (81%), while the percentage of women is only 19%.

● Man	170
● Woman	40
● Non-binary	1
● Prefer not to say	0



Current football level: Regarding the current football level of the sample, most participants are amateur (51%), 18% play in third división, and the remaining 31% play in other categories.

● Third Division	38
● Amateur League	107
● Otras	66



How many years have you been playing football competitively? The average number of years that the players of the sample have been playing football competitively is 10.68 ± 7.29 years (minimum: 1; maximum: 40).

Are you familiar with the concept of "dual career" in sports? Most participants are familiar with the concept of "dual career" in sports (41%), while 34% are not familiar with this concept. The rest of the respondents (25%) have heard of it but do not fully understand it.

● Yes	87
● No	72
● I've heard of it but don't fully ...	52



Are you currently combining your sports career with academic studies or professional work?

Most of the participants are currently combining their sports career with their academic studies (47%), while 32% are combining it with professional work and 11% with both academic studies and work.

● Yes, with academic studies	99
● Yes, with professional work	68
● Yes, with both	24
● No	20



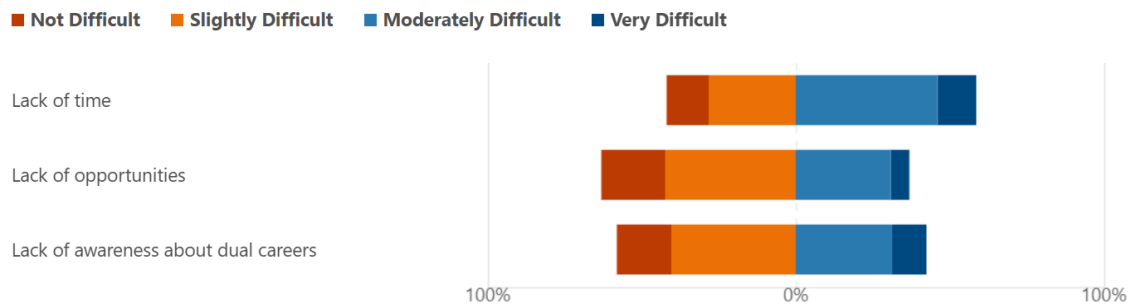
How difficult is it for you to combine your sports career with studies or work? (Scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is "very easy" and 5 is "very difficult")

The average difficulty was 2.97 ± 1.03 . As it can be seen in the following table, the most chosen answer was 3 (46.4%), followed by 4 (22.3%), 2 (14.2%), 1 (11.4%) and 5 (5.7%).

	Frequency	Percent
1,0	24	11,4
2,0	30	14,2
3,0	98	46,4
4,0	47	22,3
5,0	12	5,7
Total	211	100,0

What challenges do you face when pursuing a dual career? The most important challenge for our participants was lack of time (very difficult for 12.3% and moderately difficult for 46%). The

second most complicated challenge for them was lack of awareness about dual careers (very difficult for 10.9% and moderately difficult for 31.3%). Finally, the third challenge was lack of opportunities (very difficult for 6.2% and moderately difficult for 30.8%).



Do you have knowledge about data analysis in football? Most respondents (43%) had both theoretical and practical knowledge about data analysis in football, while 22% had only theoretical knowledge about it. The 23% had heard of it but did not know what it was and 12% had no knowledge about the topic.

● Yes, both theoretical and pract...	90
● Only theoretical knowledge	47
● I've heard of it but don't know...	49
● No	25



Does your team conduct any kind of data analysis (videos, statistics, tactical reports, etc.)? The majority of the sample (49%) answered sometimes to this question, 21% yes answered yes, 18% very rarely and 12% never.

● Yes, regularly	44
● Sometimes	104
● Very rarely	37
● Never	26



Would you like to train in data analysis as a potential career path alongside your football career? Most participants (35%) would like very much to train in data analysis, while 32% answered yes, somewhat. 27% of participants were not sure and only 7% answered no.

● Yes, very much	74
● Yes, somewhat	67
● I'm not sure	56
● No	14



Do you think clubs or sports institutions provide enough support for non-professional footballers to develop a dual career? The response option most answered for this question was partially (39%), followed by no (26%), yes (22%) and I don't know (13%).

● Yes	46
● Partially	83
● No	55
● I don't know	27



4. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS FOR ORGANISATIONAL AND DECISION-MAKING MODELS

To ensure the successful integration of dual career systems in football, both at club and institutional levels, it is essential to adopt clear organisational frameworks and evidence-based decision-making processes. Based on the analysis of international models and success stories and considering the results of our survey, the following recommendations are proposed:

Strengthen cross-sector collaboration

- Establish partnerships between football clubs, educational institutions, public agencies, and private sponsors.
- Create formal agreements to support academic flexibility, tutoring, and professional guidance for players.

Implement dedicated dual career units

- Develop internal structures within clubs and federations to manage academic advising, mental health, and life skills training.
- Appoint dual career coordinators to oversee player development beyond the pitch.

Use data-driven decision making

- Integrate data analysis tools to monitor both athletic and academic progress.
- Use indicators such as academic engagement, injury risk, and psychological stress to inform personalized support strategies.

Promote policy at national and club level

- Encourage national football associations and leagues to include dual career standards in licensing and development criteria.

- Include dual career planning as a core component in youth development programs and club strategic planning.

Encourage athlete involvement in decision-making

- Involve current and former players in designing dual career initiatives to ensure relevance and effectiveness.
- Establish feedback systems to continuously improve support services based on athlete experience.

Conclusion

An effective organisational model for dual careers in football must be multi-layered, proactive, and athlete-centered. By embedding dual career principles into club operations and national policies, supported by collaboration and data, the football ecosystem can better prepare players for success both on and off the field.

5. REFERENCES

- Cruyff Institute. (2022, November 4). *A dual career for athletes offers only advantages*. <https://cruyffinstitute.nl/en/blog-en/a-dual-career-for-athletes-offers-only-advantages/>
- Ehnold, P., Gohritz, A., Lotzen, L., & Schlesinger, T. (2024). *Soccer above all? Analysis of academic and vocational education among female soccer players in the German Women's Bundesliga and 2nd Women's Bundesliga*. *Frontiers in Sports and Active Living*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fspor.2024.1294803>
- European Commission. (2012). *EU guidelines on dual careers of athletes: Recommended policy actions in support of dual careers in high-performance sport*. <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/3648359d-61c4-4132-b247-3438ee828450/language-en>
- FIFPRO. (2023, April 24). *Mind the gap: 67 percent of footballers unsure of second career path, FIFPRO survey finds*. <https://www.fifpro.org/en/supporting-players/development-beyond-football/project-mind-the-gap/mind-the-gap-67-percent-of-footballers-unsure-of-second-career-path-fifpro-survey-finds>
- FourFourTwo. (2024, January 15). *Gary Neville on how his own university is helping the next generation*. <https://www.fourfourtwo.com/features/its-the-greatest-thing-ive-ever-done-the-class-of-92-were-born-out-of-people-believing-in-teaching-and-mentoring-us-showing-us-the-right-standards-gary-neville-on-how-his-own-university-is-helping-the-next-generation>
- PFA (Professional Footballers' Association). (2024). *Education and training programmes*. <https://www.thepfa.com/education>
- Sæther, S. A., Feddersen, N., Andresen, E., & Bjørndal, C. T. (2022). Balancing sport and academic development: Perceptions of football players and coaches in two types of Norwegian school-based dual career development environments. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, 17(6), 1270-1282. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17479541221111462>
- SportEnt Platform. (2024). *European Survey - Second Career Path*. <https://www.sportent-platform.org/european-survey>



DAFNE



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

