FIFPRO FOOTBALL PLAYERS WORLDWIDE

RESEARCH REPORT

MIND THE GAP

RESEARCH REPORT 1

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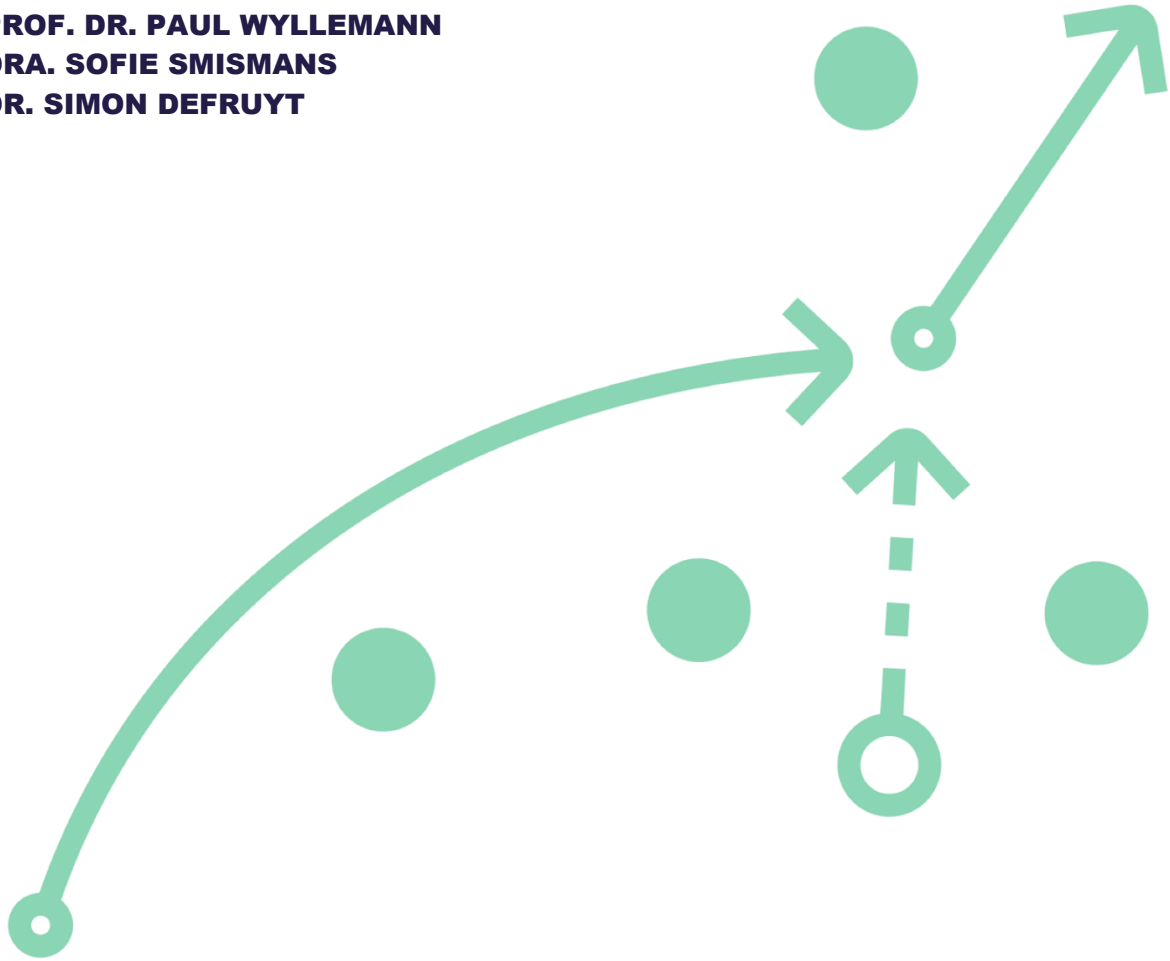

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MindTheGap STAY PRO

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1. INTRODUCTION AND AIMS

Active and former elite athletes face several challenges at different levels of development (i.e. athletic, psychological, psychosocial, academic/vocational, financial; Wylleman & Rosier, 2016). As such, the importance of competent and tailor-made support services has been emphasized by many researchers and practitioners (e.g., (Hong & Coffee, 2017). FIFPRO and its partner organisations aim at constantly improving this holistic support, provided via Player Development Managers (PDM). The main objective of this report is to provide evidence-based input and baseline qualitative measures to enhance the further development of the PDMs across Europe. More specifically, the specific objectives of this research report are to:

1. Provide a **literature review** specific to the population of professional players and the support provided to them in view of their dual career and/or preparation for a post-player career;

2. Get an overview of the **quality assessment methods** PDMs use to assess the quality of their support towards professional players;

3. Identify the main **roles PDMs should have and the competencies PDMs** require to fulfil these roles successfully;

4. Gain a clear overview of **good practices** used by PDMs and other experts in holistic career support.

To achieve objective one, a systematic review was conducted. To achieve objectives 2 to 4, a qualitative methodology (semi-structured interviews) was used with experts in the field of player development in the different participating EU Member States.

2. NOTE

The data gathered during the first research phase of the Mind the Gap project that can be found in this research report are purely **descriptive** and **should by no mean be interpreted as prescriptive.**

3. PARTICIPANTS

The semi-structured interviews were conducted by the VUB and were held with representatives of the expert, intermediary, novice, and affiliate partners of the Mind the Gap Project. Additionally, interviews with external experts regarding player development were conducted. Table 1 provides an overview of the partners and external experts that participated in the first research part of the Mind the Gap project by conducting interviews.

Table 1. *Participants' interviews*

EXPERT PARTNERS

ORGANISATION	INTERVIEWEE	FUNCTION
Spillerforeningen	Rasmus Haagensen	Managing Director 4Player
Rugby Players Ireland	Deirdre Lyons	Player Development Manager
Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme (TASS)	Guy Taylor Alison Brown	National Director Athlete Support and Governance

INTERMEDIARY PARTNERS

ORGANISATION	INTERVIEWEE	FUNCTION
Pancyprian Footballers Association (PASP Cyprus)	Celia Vasou (and team)	Office supervisor
JalkaPallon Pelaajayhistys Ry (JPY Finland)	Markus Juhola	Executive Manager
Spelarföringen Fotboll I Sverige (SFS Sweden)	Johan Skoglund	Players Manager

NOVICE PARTNERS

ORGANISATION	INTERVIEWEE	FUNCTION
Panhellenic Professional Football Players Association (PSAP Greece)	Giannis Braho	Manager of Players` Services & International Affairs
Professional Footballers' Association Ireland (PFA Ireland)	Ollie Cahill	Player Executive

PROJECT AFFILIATES

ORGANISATION	INTERVIEWEE	FUNCTION
Professional Footballers' Association Scotland (PFA Scotland)	Tony Higgins Michael Hart	Vice President Division Europe Player Development Manager
Union Nationale des Footballeurs Professionnels (UNFP)	Guillaume Stéphane	Project Manager
Norske Idrettsutoveres Sentralorganisasjon (NISO)	Joachim Walltin	President
Swiss Association of Football Players (SAFP)	Antonio Iacovazzo	Programme Manager
Professional Footballers' Association England (PFA England)	Oshor Williams Paul Raven	Assistant Director of Education Project coordinator manager

EXTERNAL PARTNERS

ORGANISATION	INTERVIEWEE	FUNCTION
Professional Footballers' Association Australia (PFA Australia)	Beau Busch	National Manager, Player Development
Professional Cricket Association UK (PCA UK)	Lynsey Williams	Player Development Manager

4. OBJECTIVE 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 RESEARCH QUESTION & AIM

The main aim of the current part was to gain a clear overview of the literature specific to (a) the population of semi-professional and professional team sport players and (b) the career support provided to them in view of their dual career (sport and education or sport and employment) and/or preparation for a post-player career.

4.2 METHOD

To generate the strongest overview of literature, the search strategy used both formal and informal strategies. The informal strategy was linked to the gathering of literature provided by partners and experts within the Mind the Gap project. This informal gathering of literature was followed by an extensive formal literature search including the use of five main databases: Sportdiscus, Web of Science, PsycINFO, ERIC and Business Source Premier. Using these databases, the systematic literature review covered the psychological (PsycINFO), educational (ERIC), vocational (Business Source Premier) and sports (Sportdiscus) domain in addition to the more general database Web of Science. Within the formal strategy literature meeting the following selection criteria were included in the overview:

- To be related to professional or semi-professional team-athletes;
- To address the topic of support/services for team-athletes in a dual career pathway sport and education or sport and employment or a post-athletic career;
- To be published between 1998 and 2018;
- To be peer-reviewed journal articles, books or book chapters;
- To be written in English because of the international nature of the project;
- To be accessible.

Taking into account those selection criteria, the following key words were selected to conduct the database search:

'(Player OR athlete OR sport) AND (Support OR assistance OR Consultant OR service OR counsellor OR provider) AND ('dual career' OR 'post-athletic career' OR 'post-player career' OR retirement OR transition OR employment OR job OR education OR academic')*

After selecting the literature based on title, the results were refined by reading the abstract and if needed the whole article. Finally, the results were cleaned by a removal of duplicates. A range of 29 articles was selected within the formal strategy.

4.3 MAIN RESULTS

Multiple studies emphasise the importance of supporting players in pursuing a dual career. Successful dual careers give players and athletes long-term solutions to their post-sport career transition, provide players with unique skills and experiences and enable them to develop transferable skills. Players are not only confronted with challenges at the athletic level, but also face concurrently requirements at the psychological level, psychosocial level, academic/vocational level and financial level. Therefore, it is important for career support services to take a holistic lifespan perspective or whole-career/whole-person approach (Park, Lavallee, & Tod, 2013; Pink, Saunders, & Stynes, 2015; Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004). Despite the importance of a holistic perspective, various support services still focus on supporting athletes with challenges within one single level of the holistic perspective, for example support programs concerning merely the combination of elite sport and study.

4.3.1 PSYCHOLOGICAL LEVEL

Figure 1. *The Holistic Athletic Career Model (Wylleman & Rosier, 2016)*

Within the range of 29 selected articles, 11 articles focused on the provision of psychological support towards athletes.

Table 2. *Overview of literature with regard to the provision of psychological support*

TITLE	AUTHOR	YEAR	REGION
(1) Evaluating the athlete's perception of the sport psychologist's effectiveness: What should we be assessing?	Anderson, Miles, Robinson & Mahoney	2004	Europe
(2) Career maturity and state anxiety of Taiwanese college student athletes given cognitive career-oriented group counselling.	Peng & Johanson	2006	Asia
(3) Counselling Athletes in Career Transitions: The Five-Step Career Planning Strategy	Stambulova	2010	Europe
(4) The Mobilization Model of Counselling Athletes in Crisis-Transitions: An Educational Intervention Tool.	Stambulova	2011	Europe
(5) Sport Psychology Consulting Effectiveness: The Sport Psychology Consultant's Perspective.	Sharp & Hodge	2011	New-Zealand
(6) Personal Qualities of Effective Sport Psychologists: A Sports Physician Perspective.	Chandler, Eubank, Nesti & Cable	2014	Europe
(7) Sport psychology consulting effectiveness: The athlete's perspective.	Sharp & Hodge	2014	New-Zealand
(8) Facilitating the coping self-efficacy and psychological well-being of student rugby players	Laureano, Grobbelaar & Nienaber	2014	Africa
(9) Personal qualities of effective Sport Psychologists: Coping with organisational demands in high performance sport.	Chandler, Eubank, Nesti, Tod & Cable	2016	Europe
(10) A three-stage adversity coping model for Chinese athletes	Zhang, Si, Chung & Bu	2017	Asia
(11) Facilitating dual careers by improving resistance to chronic stress: effects of an intervention programme for elite student athletes	Sallen, Hemming & Richartz	2018	Europe

Different ways of providing psychological support are highlighted in the literature mentioned above: (a) support offered by a sport psychologist/counsellor (1, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10), (b) support offered through a specific support programme (2, 8, 11) and (c) support offered with the help of specific tools/frameworks (3, 4).

SUPPORT OFFERED BY A SPORT PSYCHOLOGIST/COUNSELLOR

According to Zhang, Si, Chung & Bu (2017), sport psychologists or counsellors should approach athletes differently depending on the stage in which athletes are in terms of performance.

A first stage that can be distinguished is the enlightened stage in which athletes are ranked first to fourth in major national or international competitions. Services provided to athletes in this stage should focus on developing an appreciation of the meaning and value of a sporting career, as well as enhancing work-life balance (Zhang, Si, Chung, & Bu, 2017).

A second stage in which athletes may find themselves is the plateau stage in which athletes are ranked fifth to eight and have not yet advanced to the next level. Emotive behavioural therapy, acceptance and mindfulness skills are recommended to build an empowering climate for athletes within this stage (Zhang, Si, Chung, & Bu, 2017).

The third stage is the climb-stage where athletes have not yet do not yet have secured titles from major competitions. Support provided to athletes within this stage should focus on assisting the athlete with mental skills and achievement motivation. Above that, coaches should be helped to establish an empowering motivational climate (Zhang, Si, Chung, & Bu, 2017).

To provide adequate psychological support to athletes, counsellors or sport psychologists should understand the high-performance environment, work closely with the sporting staff, connect with the athlete in a friendly but professional way, clearly indicate boundaries, motivate the athlete to be an active participant during the consultation and be a good communicator (Anderson, Miles, Robinson, & Mahoney, 2004; Chandler, Eubank, Nesti, Tod, & Cable, 2016; Chandler, Eubank, Nesti, & Cable, 2014; Sharp & Hodge, 2011; Sharp & Hodge, 2014; Zhang, Si, Chung, & Bu, 2017).

SUPPORT OFFERED THROUGH A SPECIFIC SUPPORT PROGRAMME

Three programmes were described in the literature: (a) the cognitive career-based group counselling programme to promote maturity and decrease state or situation-specific anxiety, (b) the experiential-learning programme on the coping self-efficacy and psychological well-being, and (c) the educational-psychological intervention programme with regard to stress-resistance training.

The first programme focuses on strengthening rational career decision-making. Student-athletes that followed the programme showed an overall lower mean anxiety. However, no significant changes were detected in terms of career maturity (Peng & Robert, 2006).

The second programme relies on a conceptual framework whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. The programme focuses on activities related to the thoughts, feelings, perceptions and behavior of athletes. After following the programme, athletes showed significant improvements in their psychological wellbeing (Laureano, Grobbelaar, & Nienaber, 2014).

Finally, the third programme consists of ten units, each lasting 90 minutes. During the units, topics related to coping strategies, stress-related thoughts, personal goals, time management, et cetera are addressed. After following the programme, athletes showed an increased stress-related knowledge, self-efficacy and stress sensitivity. Additionally, chronic stress levels, stress symptoms and stress reactivity were reduced (Sallen, Hemming, & Richartz, 2018).

SUPPORT OFFERED WITH THE HELP OF SPECIFIC TOOLS/FRAMEWORKS

The tools/frameworks presented in the literature concern both counselling frameworks in order to analyse an athlete's career transition and find a solution through a constructive dialogue. The frameworks are based on three coping alternatives termed rejection, acceptance and fighting.

The first tool/framework, named 'the Mobilization Model' consists of six steps: (a) collecting and sorting out the athlete's information, (b) identifying, prioritizing, and articulating the problem issues, (c) analysing the athlete's coping resources and barriers, (d) discussing alternatives in coping and stimulating decision making, (e) goal setting and creating an action plan in regard to the coping alternative made and (f) concluding and providing follow-ups (Stambulova, 2011).

Within the second tool, 'the Five-Step Career Planning Strategy', the first four steps deal with mapping out the athlete's past experiences, current situation, and perceived future. The last step involves integrating their past, present and projected future into a career and life strategy (Stambulova, 2010).

4.3.2 PSYCHOSOCIAL LEVEL

Figure 2. *The Holistic Athletic Career Model (Wylleman & Rosier, 2016).*

Table 3. *Overview of literature with regard to the provision of psychosocial support.*

TITLE	AUTHOR	YEAR	REGION
Roles and influences of Olympic athletes' entourages in athletes' preparation for career transition out of sport	Park & Lavallee	2015	Europe

According to Park & Lavallee (2015), many athletes perceive their social support as an adequate support network to help them for their retirement or retirement preparation. This network consists of their spouses, current and former coaches, friends, siblings, and support programme providers. Generally, athletes cannot rely on broad social support networks and tend to show a discrepancy between expected and provided support. Therefore, it could be helpful if practitioners understand athletes' social support networks and use them as a part of support processes (Park & Lavallee, 2015).

4.3.3 ACADEMIC/VOCATIONAL LEVEL

Figure 3. *The Holistic Athletic Career Model (Wylleman & Rosier, 2016).*

Within the range of the 29 selected articles, 8 articles focused on the provision of academic and/or vocational support towards athletes.

Table 4. *Overview of literature with regard to the provision of academic and vocational support.*

TITLE	AUTHOR	YEAR	REGION
(1) An action research approach to supporting elite student-athletes in higher education.	McKenna & Dunstan-Lewis	2004	Europe
(2) Evaluation of a career assistance programme for elite athletes: satisfaction levels and exploration of career decision making and athletic identity	Mateos,Torregrosa & Cruz	2010	Europe
(3) The European Athlete as student network (EAS): prioritising dual career of European student-athletes	Capranica, Foerster, Keldorf, Leseur, Vandewalle,Topic Mojca, Abelkalns, Keskitalo, Kozsla, Figueiredo & Guidotti	2015	Europe
(4) Stressors, Coping and Support Mechanisms for Student-Athletes Combining Elite Sport and Tertiary Education: Implications for Practice	Cosh & Tully	2015	Australia
(5) European student-athletes' perceptions on dual career outcomes and services	Fuchs, Wagner, Hannola, Niemisalo, Pehme, Puhke, Marinsek, Strmecki, Svetec, Brown, Capranica & Guidotti	2016	Europe

TITLE	AUTHOR	YEAR	REGION
(6) Re-employment of retired athletes in China	Liu & Lu	2016	Asia
(7) Student-Athletes in My Classroom: Australian Teachers' Perspectives of the Problems Faced by Student-Athletes Balancing School and Sport	O'Neill, Calder & Hinz	2017	Australia
(8) The policy and practice of implementing a student-athlete support network: a case study	Ryan, Thorpe & Pope	2017	New-Zealand

Student-athletes recognize education as a key aspect of their personal development and for future employment at the end of their sporting career (Capranica et al., 2015; Fuchs et al., 2016). According to Capranica et al. (2015), Cosh & Tully (2015), Fuchs et al. (2016), and O'Neill, Calder & Hinz (2017), the following aspects would be beneficial for student-athletes in developing a successful dual career and are required in an effective career assistance programme regarding educational support:

- The provision of tutors/dedicated staff to assist the athletes;
- An individual approach with regard to skill development;
- Regular meetings to monitor the student-athlete;
- A reduced compulsory attendance for lectures and classes;
- Monitoring and educational (electronic) tools;
- The possibility to spread courses over more than one semester;
- The organisation of blocks of intensive learning with gaps for training/competition in between;
- The delivery of online learning and distance learning skills;
- Flexible exam schedules;
- Training of appropriate coping strategies;
- Assisting athletes in catching up from missed study periods;
- Positive coach-athlete relationships;
- 'Learning how to learn' programmes;
- Skill development training;
- Supportive career counselling towards emotional support;
- Motivational programmes;
- The establishment of inter-institutional agreements to allow student-athletes to have access to online examination under the supervision of local academic staff.

Within the found literature, three programmes with regard to educational support were highlighted: (1) Action Research Approach Programme, (2) the Athlete Friendly Tertiary Network (AFTN) and (3) Tutorsport (TS).

The first programme, implemented in the United Kingdom, tries to address the needs of student-athletes with the following implementations: (a) the staff of the higher institution is informed about the student-athlete by a detailed letter, (b) a liaison between the coordinator, student and tutor is foreseen, (c) the head of the department receives a report of the students' sporting progress twice a year, (d) skill development (time management, goal setting, planning, prioritizing) through one-to-one meetings, (e) supportive network of staff and fellow student-athletes, (f) time allocated to discuss concerns and/or celebrate achievements within the supportive network, (g) possibility to meet informally by a contact list provided to all members, (h) a newsletter and (i) a website (Mckenna & Dunstan-Lewis, 2004).

The AFTN-programme outlines minimum standards of support that (a) were necessary for an institution to be 'athlete-friendly' and (b) suggested a 'nationally consistent approach' to developing flexible pathways and expectations for high-performance athletes. Institutions which are part of the programme are asked to tailor academic workloads and study timetables to integrate sporting commitments, facilitate access to course materials missed due to sporting commitments, and amend attendance requirements where needed (Ryan, Thorpe, & Pope, 2017).

The third programme, TS, involves the allocation of a personal tutor to each athlete enrolled in the programme. The tasks of the tutors are (a) offering initial guidance in the selection and number of subjects to ensure that studying is compatible with training regimes and competitions, (b) providing support through regular tutorials during the academic year, (c) acting as mediators between lecturers and athletes, (d) informing the athlete about any relevant information such as deadlines or exam dates, (e) distributing any academic material from sessions athletes may have missed (f) assessing the degree of participation and interest of the student-athlete and (g) recommending whether or not the athlete should remain in the programme. The evaluation of the programme showed great satisfaction from the perspective of the athletes (Mateos, Torregrosa, & Cruz, 2010).

One government policy to support athletes on a vocational level was found in the literature. The Chinese government introduced four specific policies to support retired athletes on the vocational level: (a) retired elite athletes who won medals at important national and international sporting events could be directly employed or preferred on an equal footing by sport authorities, (b) sports facilities funded by public welfare funds shall provide jobs for retired athletes, (c) retired athletes with teaching qualifications could be directly employed or preferred on an equal footing by educational institutions as teachers or coaches and (d) sports and educational administrations at all levels shall facilitate opportunities for retired athletes to achieve teaching qualification if they are willing to become devoted to sports education after retirement (Liu & Lu, 2016).

4.3.4 FINANCIAL LEVEL

Figure 4. *The Holistic Athletic Career Model (Wylleman & Rosier, 2016)*

None of the 29 selected articles focused on the provision of financial support towards athletes.

4.3.5 HOLISTIC LEVEL

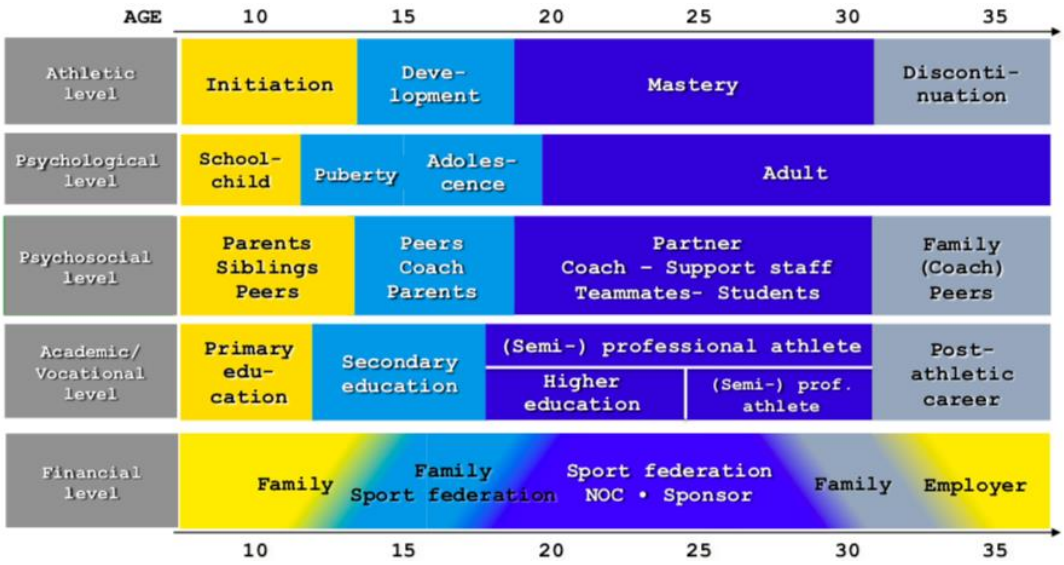

Figure 5. *The Holistic Athletic Career Model (Wylleman & Rosier, 2016).*

Table 5. *Overview of literature with regard to the provision of holistic support*

TITLE	AUTHOR	YEAR	REGION
(1) Perceptions of retired professional soccer players about the provision of support services before and after retirement	Drawer & Fuller	2001	Europe
(2) Evaluation of a career assistance programme for youth-aged cricketers	Bobridge, Gordon, Walker & Thompson	2003	Australia
(3) Empowering Professional Soccer Players in South Africa: Evaluation of Project Ithuseng	Draper, Forbes, Taylor & Lambert		Africa
(4) Reconciling the maintenance of on-field success with off-field player development: A casestudy of a club culture within the Australian Football League	Pink, Saunders & Stynes	2014	Australia
(5) Olympic Athletes' Experiences of a Post Games Career Transition Programme	McArdle, Moore & Lyons	2014	Europe
(6) Exploring the perceived effectiveness of a life skills development programme for high- performance athletes	Hardcastle, Tye, Glassey & Hagger	2015	Australia
(7) An exploration of career decision-making in the Australian Football League: Does playing experience matter?	Ryan & Chamber	2015	Australia
(8) Influence of organizational support on retirement planning and financial management of professional soccer players.	Surujlal	2016	Europe
(9) The challenges of the semi-professional footballer: A case study of the management of dual career development at a Victorian Football League (VFL) club	Pink, Lonie & Saunders	2018	Australia

Organisational culture might explain the relative success of dual career initiatives and might play an influential role in retirement planning and financial management within professional sporting clubs (Pink et al., 2015; Surujlal, 2016). The possible tension between dual career development and the focus on athletic performance can be solved through supporting players' dual careers as part of a holistic approach to athletic development and performance.

Therefore, it is important to encourage dual career activities via the PDM, which players deem to be a very valuable source of support regardless their playing experience and to develop long-term strategies with regard to managing the needs of the players (Draper, Forbes, Taylor, & Lambert, 2012; Pink et al., 2015; Ryan & Chambers, 2015). To support athletes adequately in the development of a successful dual career, support should focus on developing personal skills, developing an individual and player-driven approach, providing welfare initiatives, recognizing the challenges faced by professional players, assisting players with financial issues and using existing sources for mentorship (Pink et al., 2015; Pink, Lonie, & Saunders, 2018; Surujlal, 2016).

Different career assistance programmes with regard to holistic support towards athletes were highlighted in the found literature: (a) Project Ithuseng to empower professional soccer players in South Africa, (b) a life skills development programme, (c) a career assistance programme specific for young cricketers and (d) a post-Olympic career transition.

Project Ithuseng concerns a programme involving 24 contact hours to groups of professional players in order to improve professional (media training, getting a job), coping (coping, HIV/Aids, substance abuse), financial (budgeting, banking), nutrition (nutrition game plan, supplements), self-management (time management, problem solving, stress management) and social skills (etiquette at the dining table, behavior at the dining table). The evaluation of the programme showed that the programme has been much needed (Draper et al., 2012).

The life-skills development programme focuses on achieving balance, managing stress, time management, goal setting, confidence, control, information, overload and repetition, credible role-models, coach reinforcement and follow up. The programme appeared to be successful in helping athletes to achieve a balance between their academic, social and sporting demands and activities (Hardcastle, Tye, Glassey, & Hagger, 2015).

Via the career assistance programme, young cricketers received support with regard to the development of specific career skills including networking, career information, skill identification and résumé and interview preparation. Athletes who participated in the programme became better at balancing their own judgements, reported an increased awareness of a need for a career outside sport, became more open-minded towards a career outside of sport, reported increased confidence about their decision-making abilities and had the resources and skills to pursue career goals (Bobridge, Gordon, Walker, & Thompson, 2003).

The post-Olympic career transition programme consists of three tiers of support. The first level is the informal ‘mental cool down’ which consists of a 10-20 min check-up with the athlete to (a) stimulate the beginning of the account making process which represents the person’s understanding of his/her situation at a particular point in time, (b) clarify the athlete’s plans for the upcoming days, (c) normalise the athlete’s experience and (d) explore whether the athlete needed immediate, more intense support. The athlete is also provided with verbal and written information about the other components of the programme. The second level includes a formal debriefing with a sport psychologist and participation in group workshops.

This debrief aims at normalizing the post-games transition experience and refocusing the athlete on next steps moving forward. During this debrief, the sport psychologist documents clinical symptoms observed. If further support is required, the athlete comes into the third level with group sessions to share their experiences with others Athletes who participated in the programme perceived it as helpful (McArdle, Moore, & Lyons, 2014).

Within the found literature, different practical recommendations towards the future provision of career assistance programmes were provided:

- Creating sufficient awareness and engagement through multiple communication channels (e-mail, telephone, Skype, text, face-to-face, hard copy literature, website, social media);
- Minimising periods of peak concentration during workshop sessions;
- A facilitative approach to encourage independent decision making;
- Providing practical relevant information;
- Individual counselling and mentoring;
- Regular reviews throughout the programme.

(Bobridge et al., 2003; McArdle et al., 2014)

4.4 CONCLUSION

Elite athletes recognise a dual career as a key aspect of their personal development and for a successful post-sport career. Although several initiatives (e.g., study aid programmes, support programme, post-Olympic programmes …) are already in place, the lack of institutional consideration and support still seems to be a key negative issue. Players still face difficulties and suffer from a lack of support with regard to personal development, educational flexibilities, tutoring services, psychological guidance, financial aspects and employment services (Fuchs et al., 2016; Pink et al., 2015; Ryan et al., 2017).

As it concerned an exploratory literature review, search terms did not include specific job descriptions (e.g. player development manager, advisor), the literature review may be limited. Further research with a psychological scope is therefore recommended.

4.5 REFERENCES

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5. OBJECTIVE 2: QUALITY MEASURES

5.1 INTRODUCTION & AIM

The second objective of this report is to get an overview of the quality assessment methods PDMs use to assess the quality of the support provided towards professional players. There are several reasons why providing this overview is important:

- This will provide an overview of the current status of quality measures used by the PDMs and serve as a starting point for further implementations of quality assessment methods;
- This might provide ideas for the development of a general quality assessment method that could be used by all FIFPRO partners;
- For accountability reasons: hard numbers will help to prove the added value of the PDM work towards professional players and other stakeholders;
- This can be used for marketing reasons as decent quality measures can illustrate the quality of your support.

5.2 ATTENTION

The quality measures mentioned underneath reflect the interviews and therefore are purely descriptive. These quality measures are **not** intended as guidelines to be copied, they should inspire the Mind the Gap project and other organisations as successful methods that work within a specific context and time. The success of implementing similar practices within another context, will depend on an interplay of factors.

5.3 STRUCTURE

The different quality measures were classified into 3 different types, namely (1) Databases, (2) Surveys, questionnaires and interviews and (3) Success stories and responsiveness of players. Within every theme, each quality measure method will be presented using the following structure:

- **Type:** what kind of measurement is this?
- **Category**: the category does refer to the expertise of the organisation which mentioned the proper measure. Three categories can be distinguished:
  - Expert organisations are organisations which have a fixed value in the field of dual career and transition and who have a broad expertise, knowledge and experience.
  - Intermediate organisations are organisations which have already started working in the field of dual career and transition but need to develop their dual career services to better assist professional players.
  - Novice organisations are organisations that do not have (much) experience in the field of dual career and transition or have experience in the field of education but not yet in player development as a whole.
- **Tool/Method**: what tool/method is used to conduct this measurement?
- **Measurement**: what does the quality assessment method measure?
- **Organisations:** percentage of organisations involved that mentioned this as an effectiveness and efficiency measure.

5.4 MAIN RESULTS

Table 6. *Overview of quality measures mentioned by the different categories of interviewees*

TYPE AND CATEGORY	TOOLS/METHODS	MEASUREMENTS
Database (Expert, Intermediate, Novice)	Possible tools that can be used in the development of a database are: • Spreadsheet; • Excel-sheet; • Front- and back-end system; • Online tool; • Screening tool; • Curriculum.	The measurement aims of a database can be: • Tracking all the interactions with players; • Tracking the development of core skills; • Tracking if and how players' behaviour has changed; • Tracking the attendance of players on workshops; • Tracking regularly the wellbeing of players; • Tracking players' educational status; • Tracking players' vocational status; • Tracking whether players have a personal development plan or not; • Gathering an overview of contact details; • Generate CV-blueprints; • Tracking the work PDM's undertake.
Surveys, questionnaires and interviews (Expert, Intermediate)	Possible methods that can be used to conduct surveys and questionnaires are: • Evaluation forms; • Face-to-face interviews; • Interviews by telephone; • Online survey; • Hard copy survey; • Informal feedback	The measurement aims of a survey, questionnaire or interview can be: • Tracking the satisfaction levels of the players towards the received support; • Tracking the needs of the players; • Evaluating certain implementations such as events, conferences, workshops, courses; • Tracking needs for improvement of the provided support; • Appraising the work delivered by the PDM

TYPE AND CATEGORY	TOOLS/METHODS	MEASUREMENTS
Success stories / responsiveness of players (Expert, Intermediate, Novice)	Possible tools/methods that can be used to track responsiveness of players or success stories are: • Anecdotal stories; • Regularly contact; • Social media; • Participation rate	The measurement aims of tracking success stories or the responsiveness of players can be: • Tracking the progress of professional players; • Tracking the satisfaction levels of players towards the received support; • Raising the awareness of the importance of career support amongst players; • Tracking membership.

6. OBJECTIVE 3: ROLES AND COMPETENCIES PDMS

6.1 INTRODUCTION & AIM

PDMs try to provide holistic support towards professional players, meaning they are support figures of professional players on different levels of development (i.e. athletic, psychological, psychosocial, academic/vocational and financial level; see figure 1).

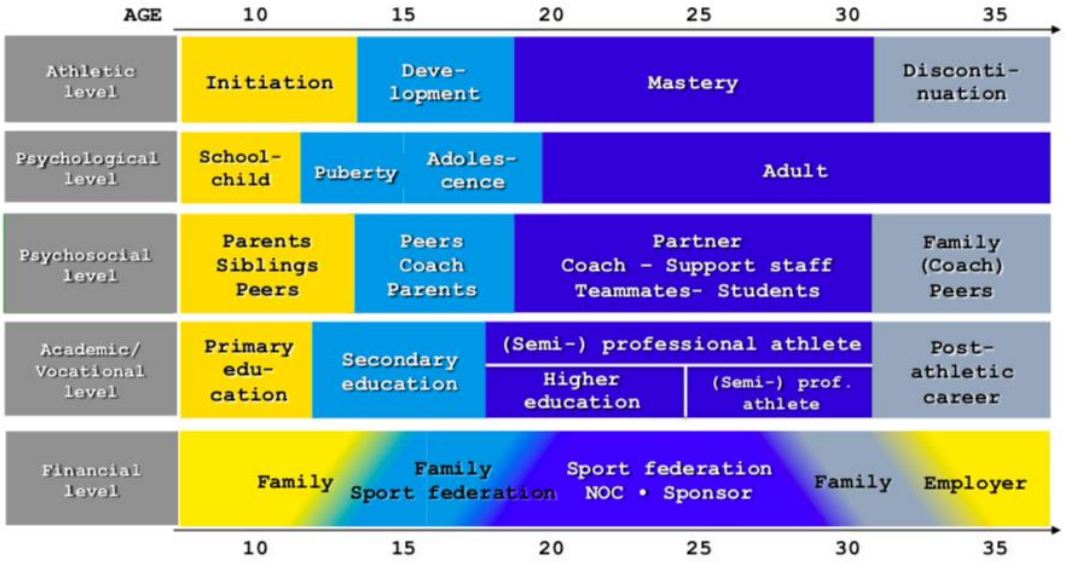

Figure 6. *The Holistic Athletic Career Model (Wylleman & Rosier, 2016)*

High-quality holistic support can provide professional players with health-related benefits, developmental benefits, social benefits, enhanced future employment prospects and benefits related to the adaptation to life after sport (EU Guidelines on Dual Careers of Athletes, 2012). Contrary, a lack of adequate holistic support might lead to professional players, among others, having self-identity issues, experiencing transition difficulties and mental health issues, and dropping out from elite sports (Wylleman & Reints, 2010). As high-quality holistic support for professional players is so crucial, it is important to delineate what specific roles PDMs have and which competencies are related to this. As such, the aim of this part of the project is to identify the main roles of PDMs and the competencies they require to fulfil these roles successfully.

These results can be used to:

- Develop a quantitative competency framework for PDMs;
- Structure the training, development, and evaluation of PDMs during and beyond the Mind the Gap project.

6.2 ATTENTION

The results are a reflection of the opinions of the participants and experts in this study. The listed opinions might not be shared universally by every interviewee. Above that, opinions may be weighted differently in each respondent's eyes. This is thus not a validated competency framework, but rather an overview of the roles and competencies that are perceived as important for PDMs by the interviewees.

6.3 ROLES AND TASKS OF A PDM

Table 7. *Main roles and tasks of a PDM*

KEY AREAS OF FOCUS	KEY ROLES AND TASKS
Career advice & guidance	• To inform players about the career support provided by the players 'association via conducting club visits, locker room visits, group presentations and one-to-one meetings. • To give players a sense of ownership over their life by supporting them in managing themselves as a person inside as well as outside football. • To empower players in their development of competences with regard to employment and employability (e.g., skills assessment, CV, job interview, job search). • To advice players to develop non-football interests in a structured and honest way in order to prepare them for and make them aware of life outside and after football. • To undertake a career development plan with players (e.g., players 'experiences, skills, knowledge, goals, motivations, challenges). • To create an awareness and to manage the expectations among players about the reality outside of football. • To provide as many opportunities as possible for players to explore other domains alongside football by (1) developing collaborations, workshops, events, campaigns and programmes and by (2) facilitating the access of players towards initiatives, programmes, campaigns and workshops. • To develop and/or use user-friendly, accessible tools to facilitate career advice and guidance. • To respect confidential information. • To track changes or new developments in the employment and transition market.
Education, training & skills	• To provide guidance, advice and assistance for players to gain educational qualifications. • To inform players about all possibilities and flexible arrangements with regard to education, training and skills. • To facilitate the access of players in education. • To track challenges or new developments in education.

KEY AREAS OF FOCUS	KEY ROLES AND TASKS
Wellbeing	• To recognise possible signs of mental health problems. • To signpost players to high-quality counselling organisations.
Networking and communication	• To develop successful collaborations with employment agencies. • To develop successful collaborations with educational institutions. • To develop successful collaborations with possible employers (e.g., sport organisations, football clubs, accountancy organisations,). • To develop adequate partnerships with counselling companies to ensure players' well-being. • To conduct meetings with internal and external partners. • To build relationships with the clubs and the clubs' staff. • To update communication channels with adequate information, upcoming events, workshops (e.g., social media, website).
Self-development	• To manage the expectations in terms of availability, competencies and provided support. • To be aware of your own limitations. • To regularly upskill yourself. • To regularly conduct a self-assessment (e.g., whether you are working, effectively, whether you could adopt different techniques to improve your work as a PDM,).

6.4 COMPETENCIES OF A PDM

To develop a broader understanding of how European career support providers may successfully support and guide professional football players in pursuing a holistic development, the researchers asked the interviewees what they perceive as required competencies for a PDM to have. To structure the questions around this topic, the competencies were categorised into the underlying attributes of a person (i.e. skills, attitudes, knowledge and experiences) (Roe, 2002). Every attribute was, based on the results of the interviews, divided into different categories (Table 8). Next, the different categories were broken down into specific skills, attitudes, experiences and knowledge required for PDMs.

Table 8. *Categories of skills, attitudes, experiences and knowledge required for PDMs*

UNDERLYING ATTRIBUTES OF A PERSON	CATEGORIES
Skills	• Psychological skills • Organisation skills • Technological skills • Networking & cooperation skills
Attitudes	• Authenticity • Flexibility and adaptable
Experience	• Life experience • Vocational experience • Athletic experience
Knowledge	• Technological knowledge • High-performance knowledge • Academic knowledge • Job market knowledge • Educational knowledge • Organisation knowledge

Table 9. *Skills, attitudes, experiences and knowledge required for PDMs*

CATEGORIES	SPECIFIC SKILLS, ATTITUDES, EXPERIENCES, KNOWLEDGE
Psychological skills	• Listen • Understand others • Teach • Empower • Motivate • Interact and communicate • Counsel • Recognize problems
Organisational skills	• Adapt to different situations • Goal-oriented • Take initiative • Independent • Give presentations • Hands-on • Solution-oriented • Business-minded • Professional • Administrative • Focused • Leadership & take control • Move on
Technological skills	• Work appropriate with tracking tools • Use MS Office devices appropriate
Networking & Cooperation skills	• Educate stakeholders • Be outgoing • Interact in a professional way
Authenticity	• Professional behaviour • Empathy • Not too eager in working with high-profile professional players • Truthful and realistic • Happy, enthusiast, positive, sympathetic, approachable • Respected • Credibility and integrity • Self confidence
Flexible and adaptable	• Shows resilience • Performance-oriented • Accessible, attainable and responsive • Hard-working, motivated, dedicated, driven • Open minded
Life experience	• Maturity

CATEGORIES	SPECIFIC SKILLS, ATTITUDES, EXPERIENCES, KNOWLEDGE
Vocational experience	• Career counselling, one-to-one coaching, career advice • Education setting • Finance • Mental health • CV writing, interview skills
Athletic experience	• Ex-professional player
Technological knowledge	• Tools, software • MS Office
High-performance knowledge	• Understanding of the challenges players face • Understanding of the football industry • Understanding of the transition process
Academic knowledge	• Qualifications in mental health recognition • Qualifications in career coaching, career advice or mentoring • Qualifications in psychometric profiling • Higher education degree
Job market knowledge	• Job providers, employers, employment agencies • Current situation of the job market
Educational knowledge	• Educational opportunities • Education system • Changes and developments in education
Organisation knowledge	• The whole of the organisation

7. OBJECTIVE 4: GOOD PRACTICES

7.1 INTRODUCTION & AIM

The last objective aimed at providing a clear overview of **good practices** used by PDMs and other experts within the context of a holistic career support. Good practices include working methods or sets of working methods that have been accepted as being very effective and efficient within a specific context. There are multiple reasons why investigating and providing these good practices is important:

- Providing and exchanging an overview of good practices has been proven to be very effective in optimising working methods of organisations;
- It can inspire current and future PDMs within and beyond the Mind the Gap project;
- Before implementing a variety of optimizations of working methods throughout the Mind the Gap project, it is important to have insight into the current status of the services, and thus, have an overview of the good practices that are already being applied by the partner organisations and external expert organisations.

7.2 ATTENTION

The good practices mentioned underneath are practices labelled as good by the interviewees within a specific context and time and are purely descriptive. The mentioned practices are by no mean prescriptive and are **not** intended as guidelines which should be copied. The aim of the presentation of the practices is to inspire the Mind the Gap project and other organisations. The success of implementing similar practices within another context is not guaranteed and will depend on an interplay of factors. Furthermore, the quotes included in the document to substantiate the research findings were all processed and analysed via NVIVO-software that supports qualitative method research. For certain sections, however, insufficiently substantiated quotes were found.

7.3 STRUCTURE

As the different interviewees operate in organisations with different expertise with regard to career support towards professional players, the good practices were divided into three different categories, namely (a) good practices indicated by expert organisations, (b) good practices indicated by intermediate organisations and (c) good practices indicated by novice organisations. Within every category the good practices were divided into different types. The categories ‘Expert’ and ‘Intermediate’ were divided into (1) Awareness & Information Provision, (2) Collaborations, (3) Resources, (4) Standardisation, (5) Support, (6) Tools and (7) Ways of Providing Support. The category ‘Novice’ was divided into the same types, with

the exception of Standardisation and Ways of Providing Support. Underneath, a summary overview of the good practices (Table 9) indicated by the interviewees can be found, divided in the above-mentioned categories and types. Within this overview, the reference to the page on which the good practice is described in detail can be found.

The detailed description of each good practice is presented in the following structure.

- **Category:** the specific category or categories (expert, intermediate, novice) of organisation in which the mentioned implementations/practices were identified as good practice;
- **Type:** the specific type of good practice;
- **Good practice:** specific definition/name of the good practice;
- **Specific content**: what is the good practice about specifically?
- **Influencing factors:** what factors could influence the success of implementing this method?
- **Quotes:** quotes from the interviews illustrating the specific content and/or influencing factors.

7.4 SUMMARY OVERVIEW OF GOOD PRACTICES

Table 10. *Summary overview of the good practices indicated by the different categories of interviewees*

TYPE	CATEGORIES	GOOD PRACTICE	PAGE
Awareness & information provision	Expert, Intermediate	Physical attendance & visibility	37
	Expert, Intermediate, Novice	Case studies	38
	Intermediate	Social media	39
	Expert, Intermediate, Novice	Website	40
	Expert, Intermediate	Magazine	41
	Intermediate	Newsletter	42
	Intermediate, Novice	TV show	43

TYPE	CATEGORIES	GOOD PRACTICE	PAGE
Collaborations	Expert, Intermediate, Novice	Athletic level	44
	Expert, Intermediate	Educational level	45
	Expert	Financial level	46
	Intermediate	Psychological level	47
	Intermediate	Vocational level	48
	Intermediate	Sharing experiences	49
Resources	Expert, Intermediate	Human resources	50
	Intermediate, Novice	Financial resources	51
Standardisation	Expert, Intermediate	Standardization	52
Support	Expert	Career guidance	53
	Expert, Intermediate	Education	54
	Expert, Intermediate	Financial	55
	Expert	Wellbeing	56
	Novice	Legal	57
Tools	Expert, Intermediate	CV Database	58
	Expert	PDM Tool	59
	Expert	Templates	60
	Expert, Intermediate, Novice	Track database	61
Way of providing support	Expert	Business approach	62
	Expert, Intermediate	Event-based approach	63
	Expert, Intermediate	Holistic approach	64
	Expert, Intermediate	Independent approach	65
	Expert, Intermediate	Individual approach	66
	Expert	Theory-based approach	67

7.5 DETAILED DESCRIPTION GOOD PRACTICES

7.5.1 AWARENESS & INFORMATION PROVISION

CATEGORY: EXPERT, INTERMEDIATE	
AWARENESS & INFORMATION PROVISION	
Physical attendance & visibility towards players	
SPECIFIC CONTENT	QUOTES
Regular club visits provide a higher awareness of the career support in place for players. Visibility and physical attendance can facilitate the cross-fertilisation between the different departments involved within a career support organisation as colleagues can draw attention to players. The main aims include: • Informing; • Raising awareness among members with regard to career support provision; • Raising awareness among the club staff with regard to the importance of career support provision; • Build up strong, interactive, informal relationships with the members; • Build up strong relationships with the club staff.	*"We go to clubs in our region every week. It's not more than once a week and what works well for us is being in and around the clubs so that we are very visible. It demonstrates that we are accepted by the players and the support staff."* *"It's very important that when they see you walk into the club, they do not go: 'Oh no, what are they here for?' We try to develop a relationship, where a PDM goes into a club they know he/she is the PDM, and he/she can says: 'Let the players know I'm here. I'll be here, if anyone wants to come and see me for anything, educationally or maybe another matter."* *"Because what we know is, visibility is in a sense credibility. So, the player development manager needs to be there a lot, needs to be available a lot, needs to work really hard to build trust with the players and if they are not there, or not allowed to be there, it really does not work very well at all."*
FACTORS OF INFLUENCE	QUOTES
For physical attendance and visibility to be able to reach its objectives, several factors might be important: • Resources need to be available (or need to be made available) to perform regular club visits; • Imbed the programme in the structure.	*"If you have a head coach and he believes in the programme, it might be great for three years but if that head coach leaves and a new coach comes in you could be back to square one. So, it is important to make sure that the programme is properly imbedded in the structure and at the same time does not compromise the independence of the programme."* *"But it is also a question of budget. I need support.."*

CATEGORY: EXPERT, INTERMEDIATE, NOVICE	
AWARENESS & INFORMATION PROVISION	
CASE STUDIES	
SPECIFIC CONTENT	QUOTES
Players' associations can rely on different case studies, biographies, success stories, and unsuccessful case studies to substantiate their career support with specific, applied examples to raise the awareness of the importance of support among the players. The main aims of case studies are: • Informing; • Providing relevant content; • Be closer to the world of players; • Provide understandable content; • Raise the awareness of the importance • of career support; • Motivate players; • Stimulate players' independence.	*"We have a rich history of case studies of players that we can talk about and use as examples of good and bad transition stories.* *"It's something very much that we believe the player has to take charge of themselves. We can't hold their hand during the whole process. The scale of what we deal with would be too big."* *"Trying to tell really good stories that has been really important for us."*
FACTORS OF INFLUENCE	QUOTES
For case studies to be able to reach their objectives, several factors can be important: • Tracking of recent case studies; • The content should be frequently updated; • Resources need to be available (or need to be made available) to update the pool of case studies; • To disseminate the case studies in an adequate way and via different channels.	*"We really work with clubs quite closely in relation to helping them, pushing out stuff related to education funding and doing joint stories, media stories about players undertaking interesting stuff away from football."*

CATEGORY: EXPERT, INTERMEDIATE, NOVICE	
AWARENESS & INFORMATION PROVISION	
Social Media	
SPECIFIC CONTENT	QUOTES
Social media can mainly be used to inform players of new initiatives, upcoming courses, events or workshops. The main aim of social media use is to update players frequently of activities that will take place.	*"Yes, we are active on social media, mostly on Facebook and Instagram."* *"If there are any particular courses, we send out tweets and emails to alert players."*
FACTORS OF INFLUENCE	QUOTES
For social media to be able to reach its objectives, several factors are of influence: • Regularly update the content of the social media pages; • Link with other communication channels (e.g., E-mail, website).	

CATEGORY: EXPERT, INTERMEDIATE, NOVICE	
AWARENESS & INFORMATION PROVISION	
Website	
SPECIFIC CONTENT	QUOTES
The content provided on the website of a player's association can be quite varied and diverse, but provides a good opportunity to disseminate information on: • The services that are on offer to members; • Links specific to different types of support (i.e. athletic, psychological, psychosocial, academic/vocational, financial/legal); • Interesting and relevant content (e.g., interviews, news articles); • Good practice cases of members; • Personal development plan. Creating a link between the website and an app can allow players to access their own personal page to view tailor-made offers, deals, messages and the portfolio of their personal development plan. Moreover, the implementation of an app can facilitate the contact with players with regard to personal development and feedback on the provided career support services. The main aims include: • Informing; • Providing relevant content; • Making sure members and non-members receive information on all opportunities; • Attracting non-members to become part of the association; • Move closer to the players; • Tracking players' development; • Tailor-made approaches.	*"And for example, if you look at our website, there are some links about the education side and the story of a former player who is now selling apartments. He told us how he studied on our courses."* *"We've actually now got an app for players that we are hoping that we can actually get even better quality and higher levels of response to surveys, because it will be almost touch screen when it comes to paper and pen, you return rates go down."* *"They have their own secure log-in to the website. We want to create a member-specific app where they can go in and view their own personal offers and deals."* *"We have our website, which is a rich pool of information that they can use."*
FACTORS OF INFLUENCE	QUOTES
For a website and app to be able to reach its objectives, several factors might be important: • The content of the website should be frequently updated; • Resources need to be available (or need to be made available) to make or maintain the website/app; • Link with other communication channels (e.g., Twitter, Facebook page, website…); • The website should be responsive, so it operates whatever device you use; • A tailor-made, personal customized approach is recommended.	*"It is a responsive website so it works on every device you use.*

CATEGORY: EXPERT, INTERMEDIATE	
AWARENESS & INFORMATION PROVISION	
Magazine	
SPECIFIC CONTENT	QUOTES
A magazine of the players' association is published yearly, bi-annually or quarterly for all members and non-members. The content of this magazine can be quite diverse, providing a good opportunity to disseminate information on: • The services that are on offer to members; • The updates with regard to career and education opportunities; • The upcoming events of the association; • An application form to become a member; • Interesting and relevant content (e.g., interviews, news articles); • Good practice cases of members. The main aims include: • Informing; • Providing relevant content; • Making sure members and non- members are informed about all opportunities; • Attracting non-members to become part of the association.	*"We have two annual magazines in which we share information about careers and education opportunities. We include two or three case studies about players."* *"We have a support magazine which is published quarterly. There is an education section, which keeps members updated about opportunities."*
FACTORS OF INFLUENCE	QUOTES
For a magazine to be able to reach its objectives, several factors are of influence: • The quality of the magazine needs to attract people, it must go deeper than just presenting your association; • Link with other communication channels (e.g., Twitter, Facebook page, website,…).	*"Hopefully they read the magazine and do not throw it away. We try to do all we can to inform them, but we can't help anybody that does not want to be helped."*

CATEGORY: INTERMEDIATE	
AWARENESS & INFORMATION PROVISION	
Newsletter	
SPECIFIC CONTENT	QUOTES
A newsletter can be used to provide adequate information of the services in place.	*We send out a newsletter."* *"A quarterly newsletter*
FACTORS OF INFLUENCE	QUOTES
No specific factors of influence could be distinguished with the help of the interviews	

CATEGORY: INTERMEDIATE	
AWARENESS & INFORMATION PROVISION	
TV Show	
SPECIFIC CONTENT	QUOTES
A TV show can mainly be used to make players aware of good case studies, to provide adequate information of the services in place and the importance of a dual career. The main aim of a TV show is to inform players in an original and effective way.	*"Another tool we have here is an online TV show. In each episode we have a footballer as a guest. Each season features a footballer who has studied."*
FACTORS OF INFLUENCE	QUOTES
For a TV show to be able to reach its objectives, the greatest factor of influence is that the content of the TV show should be suitable and practical.	

7.5.2 COLLABORATIONS

CATEGORY: EXPERT, INTERMEDIATE, NOVICE	
Collaborations	
Athletic level	
SPECIFIC CONTENT	QUOTES
Collaborations on the athletic level refer to close collaboration and cooperation with clubs and their (management) staff. Such collaborations are indispensable in providing adequate support services towards professional players as such collaborations can facilitate the integration of development services in athletic performance. Coaches and club staff can provide interesting insights on the needs of the athletes. Also, a good collaboration on athletic level can facilitate the access of support staff within the club and towards the players. The main aims include: • Facilitating the access of support staff towards players and clubs; • Raising awareness among the club staff with regard to the importance of career support provision; • Build up strong, interactive, informal relationships, with the members.	*"I think building consensus with clubs, and engaging clubs and high-performance staff and building relationships with head coaches and football directors is being really important in moving the programme forward and giving them opportunities to buy in and help shape some of the programmes."* *"We also collaborate with coaches and clubs in relation to induction and receive their feedback on some of their insights to the young players, what they think players need to succeed in the industry."* *"One of the things we are good at is access to our members, access to football clubs. If there was no appetite from football clubs to engage with us then we would struggle to get in and find these time slots to meet our members. A lot of coaches at football clubs, a lot of managers, and now increasingly people in administrative roles actually are our members who we supported to get qualifications to get those roles."*
FACTORS OF INFLUENCE	QUOTES
For collaborations at the athletic level to be able to reach its objectives, it might be important to imbed the programme in the structure.	*"So, making sure that the programme is properly imbedded in the structure."*

CATEGORY: EXPERT, INTERMEDIATE	
Collaborations	
Educational level	
SPECIFIC CONTENT	QUOTES
Collaborations on the educational level refer to close collaboration and cooperation with high school academies, colleges, universities and other organisations providing educational options like for example online courses. Such collaborations can help in providing flexible learning options for professional players, as well as getting a scholarship system in place for the players. Also, tailor-made courses towards professional players can be organised with the help of adequate collaborations. The main aims include: • Facilitating the access of professional players towards educational services; • Provide flexible opportunities towards professional athletes to facilitate the combination of sport and education; • Provide financial support and possibilities towards professional players to finance their educational service, courses.	*"The collaboration is mainly about the scholarships, but they help the athletes with the programme too. So, when we send a member of ours to study at a university we have an agreement with, he/she can go and speak directly with the university to try to fix the programme suitable for his/her needs."* *"Since last year, we have a new programme that is not actually a bachelor, it's a diploma for 2 years about fitness. It's not a science or sport management degree. So, this is another opportunity we have for those that do not want to study for 4 years."* *"For example, we have a relationship with a couple of providers who deliver a physiotherapist degree course specifically for our members and it's tailored around our members' time and commitment and training and playing schedule."* *"We work in partnership with a lot of universities. We also have some universities which offer online learning courses. And for former players we have a collaboration with an institute that gives us three scholarships every year for our past players. They tend to be professional or postgraduate diplomas."*
FACTORS OF INFLUENCE	QUOTES
For collaborations at the educational level to be able to reach its objectives, several factors might be important: • Imbed the programme in the structure; • Wide educational possibilities; • Individual approach; • Awareness of professional players towards the importance of a dual career; • Frequent contact to update the educational possibilities towards the needs of the professional players.	*"I would say the best cooperation we have is with the 'education programme X'. We know that it works, and that the players are interested in those programmes and that players like it. We also know that they recommend it to other players when they have finished*

CATEGORY: EXPERT	
Collaborations	
Financial level	
SPECIFIC CONTENT	QUOTES
Collaborations on the financial level refer to partnerships within the financial world to provide adequate information to professional players with regard to aspects with financial implications like car insurance, scholarships, mortgages. The main aim includes the development of financial key skills needed in daily life.	*"We are working with a number of partners on just developing key financial skills and developing a financial booklet for players to work through. So, simple things like how to get the best deal on car insurance, to how to save money, how to get the best type of mortgages, all that kind of information."*
FACTORS OF INFLUENCE	QUOTES
No specific factors of influence could be distinguished with the help of the interviews.	

CATEGORY: INTERMEDIATE	
Collaborations	
Psychological level	
SPECIFIC CONTENT	QUOTES
Collaborations on the psychological level refer to partnerships and cooperation with counselling institutions or services which make it possible to refer athletes to adequate psychological support services when certain problems are detected or reported. As a PDM does not always have a psychological background, those collaborations are important in providing correct psychological support. Such collaborations can help PDMs in contextualising their boundaries towards professional players. The main aim includes providing psychological support by referring professional players toward adequate psychological services instead of handling this kind of problems as career support provider.	*"We have a 24/7 mental health help-line. We gained funding to have this in place and it entitles our members free access and support to the best mental health advisors around."* *"We have a partnership with some counselling companies. One we have had for two years now, and the other for at least 5 years. So, if members need guidance, we can get them in touch with these companies and then we have to pay them the fees, which is not too high."*
For collaborations at the psychological level to be able to reach its objectives, several factors might be important: • The fee to be paid should be low or the service should be offered for free; • The professionalism of the company with which the collaboration is in place must be guaranteed; • Easy accessible; • Flexible hours in which professional players are able to contact the psychological services.	

CATEGORY: INTERMEDIATE	
Collaborations	
Vocational level	
SPECIFIC CONTENT	QUOTES
Collaborations on the vocational level refer to partnerships with work agencies to support players in finding specific jobs within different companies. The main aim includes helping players to find an accurate job.	*"We have a cooperation with a company in the job market. That's a global company so it is applicable for every type of job. At the same time, they can't provide all the jobs in the market so you need collaborations with other companies as well to make your job search more local."*
FACTORS OF INFLUENCE	QUOTES
For collaborations at the vocational level to be able to reach its objectives, it might be important to work as locally as possible.	

CATEGORY: INTERMEDIATE	
Collaborations	
Sharing experiences	
SPECIFIC CONTENT	QUOTES
Collaborations can help career support services to gain more information and share experiences and good or bad practices. This can be of great importance for those who are rather new in the support area. The main aim includes broaden the knowledge within career support services to improve the offered support towards professional players.	*"We are quite new in the area but cooperation with FIFPRO always works when we get together, work together and share experiences. It's a very good way to get ideas and to get the tools to work from. So, that's a key part: to meet other football unions and also unions with other sports as well."*
FACTORS OF INFLUENCE	QUOTES
For sharing information through collaborations to be able to reach its objectives, it might be important to meet regularly.	

7.5.3 RESOURCES

CATEGORY: EXPERT, INTERMEDIATE	
Resources	
Human resources	
SPECIFIC CONTENT	QUOTES
Human resources largely determine the professionalism and success of a career support service as competent staff might have accurate vocational experiences, educational back- grounds and appropriate training to support professional players in their personal and professional development. The main aim includes the optimisation of the service with the help of adequate personnel.	*"The strongest asset that we have are the staff. We are very fortunate to have former players in the roles of player development manager who understand the challenges and have a great deal of empathy.* *"We also have some that are not former players but are extensively qualified in the player development space."* *"And, the best practice is the support we give and the qualifications, and actually doing this properly, you train the people to do it."* *"I am a personal coach, I am also mental coach, I have experience, long time experience in the industry. I have been in the human resources area. So I can use my experience to advice players."*
FACTORS OF INFLUENCE	QUOTES
For human resources to be able to reach its objectives, several factors might be important: • Hiring staff with the necessary qualifications; • Having at least one ex-professional player within the support staff; • Upskill the staff regularly and where needed; • Having a broad range of specific knowledge within the support staff.	

CATEGORY: INTERMEDIATE, NOVICE	
Resources	
Financial resources	
SPECIFIC CONTENT	QUOTES
Financial resources facilitate the rolling out of the support services as financial resources can be used to employ more qualified staff members to provide tailor-made and holistic support towards professional players. Additionally, the resources can be used for example to finance educational courses, vocational workshops, membership fees, etcetera. which can reduce the personal cost of professional players. The main aim includes the optimisation of support services in place for professional players.	*"We have resources to support our members which is important, particularly for those in the lower leagues."*
FACTORS OF INFLUENCE	QUOTES
For financial resources to be able to reach its objectives, several factors might be important: • Growth of the professional sport; • Successful collaborations with stakeholders.	

CATEGORY: EXPERT, INTERMEDIATE	
Resources	
Standardisation	
SPECIFIC CONTENT	QUOTES
Standardisation is the process of setting basic standards of delivery and person criteria for who should be delivering what kind of support service. The use of standardisation processes creates a consistent means of the required knowledge and training within a specific role. In this way the whole organisation is sure about the expected deliverables and outcomes. The main aims include: • The protection of professional players; • Improving career support services; • Having clear role and task descriptions for career support providers; • Putting in place standard procedures in supporting professional players.	*"Setting basic standards of delivery and person criteria for who should be delivering the service for us is a good thing."* *"By ensuring that people have been through training, we know that they have the necessary knowledge and learning. They have the tools to know how to do their role."* *"Because of the strength of our organisation, we've been able to negotiate with all the stakeholders in football over many years. The strengths of the standard contract that all players sign is that it's related to education, wellbeing, everything really. The contract is secure and guards against anxiety."*
FACTORS OF INFLUENCE	QUOTES
For standardisation to be able to reach its objectives, several factors might be important: • The inclusion of standard procedures within player contracts; • Providing training opportunities to staff in order to reach the required standards.	

7.5.4 SUPPORT

CATEGORY: EXPERT	
Support	
Career guidance	
SPECIFIC CONTENT	QUOTES
Career guidance refers to guiding players in specific aspects about their development throughout their career and about the preparation on the career after professional sport. The main aim includes tailor-made and individual guidance towards players in order to ensure a successful dual and post-athletic career.	*"Career advice and support, it can be how they manage their career as well as how they start planning for that career post-sport."*
FACTORS OF INFLUENCE	QUOTES
For career guidance to be able to reach its objectives, several factors might be important: • Availability of human resources; • Availability of financial resources.	

CATEGORY: INTERMEDIATE	
Support	
Education	
SPECIFIC CONTENT	QUOTES
Educational support can refer to different initiatives, namely providing scholarships, tailor-made referrals, contacting educational institutions, and providing information on educational courses and initiatives. As the importance of a dual career was already highlighted in the literature, the evolution of raised awareness amongst professional players with regard to the importance of education is very positive. The main aims of providing educational support include: • Raising the awareness amongst professional players with regard to the importance of a holistic development; • Providing information towards professional players about educational possibilities; • Helping players to enrol in education that fits their needs and competencies; • Preparing players for the post-athletic career; • Guiding players in performing a successful dual career; • Providing intrinsic motivation to perform a dual career by cutting the costs of education; • Enabling the access of professional players towards education.	*"Educational support refers to courses but also experiential learning. We try to get players out to placements."* *"The numbers speak for themselves. We have had 150/160 players studying in university over the last 5 years. Seventy members, almost half of them, entered last year. That means that every year it's getting better- known to more and more members. "* *"It's co-financed with the federation and also the clubs' organisation. We pay one third each. It helps people to finance their studies and if they get a scholarship, they will probably stay members for a long time."*
FACTORS OF INFLUENCE	QUOTES
For educational support to be able to reach its objectives, several factors might be important: • Availability of human resources; • Availability of financial resources; • Collaborations, cooperation with educational stakeholders; • A working system in collaboration with the government which allows flexible study schemes; • Intrinsic motivation of professional players.	*"We already have a working system when it comes to education. The athletes are able to have a flexible study scheme. And that possibility is always there. So, that is the main strength: if you want to study, you can do it."*

CATEGORY: EXPERT, INTERMEDIATE	
Support	
Financial	
SPECIFIC CONTENT	QUOTES
Financial support can refer to providing support in developing key financial skills on the one hand and to providing players with monetary compensation (bursary, grant, scholarship) to fulfil educational or vocational courses on the other hand. The main aims of providing financial support include: • Raising the awareness amongst professional players with regard to the importance of a holistic development; • Providing information towards professional players about financial-related aspects; • Helping players in developing key- financial skills with regard to daily life outside of sport; • Preparing players for post-athletic career; • Guiding players performing a successful dual career; • Providing extrinsic motivation to perform a dual career by cutting the costs; • Enabling access of professional players towards educational and vocational courses.	*"We are working with a number of partners on developing key financial skills and developing a financial booklet for players to work through. So, simple things like how to get the best deal on car insurance, to how to save money, how to get the best type of mortgages, all that kind of information."* *"Most of the time if there was training or qualifications needed for a job role, they would have accessed funding from us and we have a record of that."* *"Through our grant and bursary support and the records that we require, we know that we have provided working career opportunities for thousands and thousands of our members."*
FACTORS OF INFLUENCE	QUOTES
For financial support to be able to reach its objectives, several factors might be important: • Availability of human resources; • Availability of financial resources; • Collaborations, cooperation with stakeholders.	

CATEGORY: EXPERT	
Support	
Wellbeing	
SPECIFIC CONTENT	QUOTES
Wellbeing support can be provided through signposting professional players to a network or through organising specific initiatives. The main aims of providing wellbeing support include: • Enabling players to talk about possible wellbeing-issues; • Enabling the access of professional players towards counselling services.	*"One of the best practices we've undertaken is our wellbeing network. We have found that to be hugely important."* *"The tackle your feelings programme has helped our members too. It, has given them a language to talk about issues that they have."*
FACTORS OF INFLUENCE	QUOTES
For wellbeing support to be able to reach its objectives, several factors might be important: • Building a wide network; • Collaborations, cooperation with stakeholders.	

CATEGORY: NOVICE	
Support	
Legal	
SPECIFIC CONTENT	QUOTES
A legal department can provide support towards professional players by helping them with economic or contractual problems. Such support can be of great importance in certain countries because some countries face economic problems. The main aim is to protect players against possible problems on an economic or contractual level.	*"We have a good legal department. Our players face these economic and contract problems. They are in need of the legal department so we are always next to them. Overall our relationships with them is very good."*
FACTORS OF INFLUENCE	QUOTES
No specific factors of influence could be distinguished with the help of the interviews.	

7.5.5 TOOLS

CATEGORY: EXPERT, INTERMEDIATE	
Tools	
CV database	
SPECIFIC CONTENT	QUOTES
A CV database is an easy-access database where professional players are able to generate a standardised CV which includes not only professional competencies but also highlights possible transferable competencies gathered during the sport career. Companies are able to Connect with that CV database to find appropriate candidates to fulfil an open position within their company. The main aims are: • To support players in writing a professional and adequate CV in order to successful pursue a dual career or post-athletic career; • Empowering professional players.	*"It's a unique CV form that highlights competencies from sport but it also means the players can find us too, they can just fill in the CV and then we have them on the hook.."* *"A good practice is the CV database and the empowerment that it gives the players as well as the PDM and the union to set up cooperation with companies. That's a good practice that has worked out very well for us."* *"We are launching a 2.0 database, where firms have access to the profiles in this database."* *"Players do not get the payment of the scholarships until they finalize a CV. It grows the CV database. I would say that is a best practice that worked very well for us."*
FACTORS OF INFLUENCE	QUOTES
For a CV Database to be able to reach its objectives, several factors might be important: • Cooperation with vocational stakeholders; • Standardised CV form; • Possibility to highlight competencies from sport in CV; • Connection between the CV database and scholarships.	

CATEGORY: EXPERT	
Tools	
PDM tool & Career plan	
SPECIFIC CONTENT	QUOTES
The PDM tool and the Career Plan are two connected tools consisting of (a) a front-end career plan, where players are asked to log in and fill in their necessary, personal information and (b) a back-end where the PDM is able to monitor closely every player in the tool based on the provided information. The main aim of the tool is to monitor professional players throughout their development on different levels.	*"If, one of the guys in my team guided a player, let's say about applying for a specific programme within a deadline. The PDM could then set a reminder to contact the player 5 days before that deadline expires and make sure that he actually gets it done and if he's still on track or else ask him:' What changed? Why are you not interested? Oh, you are still interested? Okay, you want to go through with it? Do you need any help? Do you need any guiding? Not just send them away and hope that they'll get things done."* *"The career plan, the front-end tool is built like a coaching tool, so you start up with interests, and then narrow down into some actions. The athletes can fill in parts themselves but obviously you will have to guide them still and help them to get everything in place."*
FACTORS OF INFLUENCE	QUOTES
No specific factors of influence could be distinguished with the help of the interviews.	

CATEGORY: EXPERT	
Tools	
Templates	
SPECIFIC CONTENT	QUOTES
Templates are standardised forms which enables support staff to work in a systematic and comparable way. The main aim of the tool is to provide consistent ways of working in providing holistic career support and guidance.	*"Providing screening tools or templates to help with the questioning and the way PDMs approach athletes to get information out of them."* *"Doing athlete profiling, understand where there is going to be potential transition points, or potentially areas of concern in the future. All those kinds of tools that we developed are essential as well, and handy and certainly rolling that out underpinned that consistency but also just helps the advisor to be equipped."* *"It's very much a working document between advisor and athlete to help both parties understand were there might be requirements for potential support, or areas to celebrates,. We have used various tools in the past"*
FACTORS OF INFLUENCE	QUOTES
For templates to be able to reach its objectives, it might be important to train staff members in using the templates appropriate.	*"You do this properly, you train the people to do it."*

CATEGORY: EXPERT, INTERMEDIATE, NOVICE	
Tools	
Track Database	
SPECIFIC CONTENT	QUOTES
A track database is used to monitor professional players throughout their development inside, as well as outside of sport. Such databases highlight and record all the interactions or conversations with players and also keep the PDM up to date (for example when the PDM has not seen a player for a while). The main aim of the tool is to monitor optimally the professional players throughout their pursuing of a dual career or their preparation for a post-athletic career.	*"We also have quite a good tool in our database for tracking players. It highlights when you have not seen a player for a while and can help you to keep up to date."* *"We have access to a database both in the office and remotely. So, all our interactions, all our conversations, we have to record."*
FACTORS OF INFLUENCE	QUOTES
No specific factors of influence could be distinguished with the help of the interviews	

7.5.6 WAY OF PROVIDING SUPPORT

CATEGORY: EXPERT	
Way of providing support	
Business approach	
SPECIFIC CONTENT	QUOTES
A business approach can be important in ensuring appropriate collaborations to broaden and improve the delivered career support to professional players. The main aim of a business approach is to exude professionalism with regard to adequate collaborations which can improve the available career support to professional players.	*"Even though our main job is to help players, we can take a kind of business approach' and say to companies: 'Yes well, we help you, you help us, there is something in it for both of us'."*
FACTORS OF INFLUENCE	QUOTES
For a business approach to be able to reach its objectives, it might be important to have good collaborations in place.	

CATEGORY: EXPERT, INTERMEDIATE	
Way of providing support	
Event-based approach	
SPECIFIC CONTENT	QUOTES
An event-based approach refers to the use of short initiatives or programmes to sensitise players about the importance of a successful dual career and/or post-athletic career. Such initiatives are mostly intensive events where players are able to gather a wide range of information and follow multiple workshops on different topics of their interest. The main aims of an event-based approach include: • Giving players the chance to exchange their experiences; • Raising the awareness of the importance of a holistic development; • Providing a wide range of information in a relatively short time; • Reaching a large group at once; • Providing adequate workshops on topics of interest outside of the football season.	*"The 'tackle your feelings' programme is an initiative that has helped give our members a language to talk about issues that they have."* *"We ran off our first transition conference, so that was a two-day event where we had former players coming back in to share their experiences two, three years on."* *"We do a rookie induction programmes. So, when you need to sign your first professional contract you're invited, or newly contracted players are invited together, before the start of the season. We run through what the union is about, all the support that is available for them and we conduct education sessions."* *"At the end of every year, we have a transition event."* *"We run a showcase event or exit strategy event that takes the players who get released from their football clubs and we provided football training for a week and give them educational talks in the afternoon."*
FACTORS OF INFLUENCE	QUOTES
For an event-based approach to be able to reach its objectives, several factors might be important: • Events should be focusing on topics of interest; • The timing of the event should be adapted to the training and match schedules; • Short period; • Large group of players; • Sufficient variety between workshops, information sessions and activities; • Different audiences/target groups.	*"It was initially aimed at out of-contract players but we've kind of expanded that to include those who are under contract who want an insight into some of the steps you can take to prepare for the future."*

CATEGORY: EXPERT, INTERMEDIATE	
Way of providing support	
Holistic approach	
SPECIFIC CONTENT	QUOTES
A holistic approach refers to the fact that players are not only supported in educational and vocational aspects during their dual career or post-athletic career, but also on the athletic, psychological, psychosocial, and financial level. The main aims of a holistic approach are: • Raising the awareness of the importance of a holistic development; • Developing all aspects of the professional players; • Helping professional players in getting the most out of their career; • Allowing players to have a sense of control over their lives, during as well as after their football career; • Providing information on a wide range of topics; • Signposting professional players towards other areas of support if needed.	*"We develop all aspects of the person, it does not centre only on transition. This is about people. Helping them to get the very most out of their career, but also allowing them to have a sense of control over their lives."* *"We have spent a lot of time marketing our programme to players. And the message is that you can come to us about anything, whether it's a better deal for your car insurance, help settling in for foreign players or career advice. We try to let them know that it's not just about the education."* *"So, it isn't just education in isolation, we look at the whole person and the person's circumstances. That's why other departments are absolutely crucial in case we need to signpost them to other areas of support."*
FACTORS OF INFLUENCE	QUOTES
For a holistic approach to be able to reach its objectives, several factors might be important: • Having good collaborations in place in order to be able to signpost if needed; • Marketing to entail all support possibilities; • Close relationship with other departments of the support organisation; • Including the presence of partners or close family during the support services.	

CATEGORY: EXPERT, INTERMEDIATE	
Way of providing support	
Independent approach	
SPECIFIC CONTENT	QUOTES
An independent approach refers to the fact that the career support services operate independently from the clubs in order to guarantee the preservation of confidence. The main aim of an independent approach is providing a space which professional players interpret as safe to come to and in which they can talk about any issues that they want.	*"The other thing that's quite strong is our independence from the team. So, players know they can come to us in confidence, we won't go back to the management of the team with any issues that they bring."* *"They have a safe space where that they can come and talk about any issues that they want."*
FACTORS OF INFLUENCE	QUOTES
No specific factors of influence could be distinguished with the help of the interviews.	

CATEGORY: EXPERT	
Way of providing support	
Individual approach	
SPECIFIC CONTENT	QUOTES
As professional players are hugely diverse, a one-size-fits-all approach does not work. Career support services should therefore focus on the needs of an individual player with the help of extensive one-to-one meetings and frequent monitoring of the individual. The main aims of an individual approach include: • Providing tailor-made support; • Empower professional players.	*"We undertake individual assessments with all new players that come into the league and also with players who are leaving their clubs. We also undertake extensive interviews. And there is a systematic process to carry on that support."* *"I think trying to do one size fits all approach does not work. The players are so diverse."* *"The strongest points will probably be the one-to- ones. So just tailoring the support to the person."* *"Individualized support is getting bigger and bigger and with that individualized support comes more satisfaction from players with the programme, because they feel it's tailored towards them.* *"It is specialized or tailor-made for each athlete. Because some have more experiences than other. Some are wondering what kind of education they are going to do, some are already done with their education, some have work experience but most of them have no work experience. The coaching is based on the needs of each athlete."* *"I think the best way to do it is individually if it's possible."*
FACTORS OF INFLUENCE	QUOTES
For an individual approach to be able to reach its objectives, several factors might be important: • Empower the players so that they can take charge of themselves; • Human resources; • Financial resources.	

CATEGORY: EXPERT, INTERMEDIATE	
Way of providing support	
Theory-based approach	
SPECIFIC CONTENT	QUOTES
A theory-based approach refers to the use of theoretical models to strengthen the given support towards professional players and to help players visualise their career development. Such models appear by pursuing research. The main aims of a theory-based approach include: • Raising the awareness of professional players with regard to a holistic career development; • Reshape the support services when needed; • Keeping the delivered services up to date; • Using visual ways to support the players; • Helping professional players to understand what they are about to go through; • Proving the importance of a successful dual career or preparation towards the post-athletic career.	*"We also have what we call a lifestyle wheel, which is similar in nature in terms of looking at the different areas of life, and it's literally just like a wheel broken down into different segments. You shade in how you feel. The athlete does this as a self-reflection model, just to understand how comfortable he or she is in one particular area."* *"We have a real commitment to research and insight. We are often very much at the edge of where player development is going, we can move pretty quickly."* *"Some of the models and theoretical elements that we use when speaking to the players like transition model and identity model helps them understand what they are about to go through or are already going through if they have finished."*
FACTORS OF INFLUENCE	QUOTES
For a theory-based approach to be able to reach its objectives, several factors might be important: • Visual representation of theories via models; • Regularly update the theoretic information.	