

Research Report

ERASMUS+ Project Time Out 2.0

Compatibility of sporting and vocational career in European basketball from the athletes' perspective

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Executive Summary

Only a few professional basketball players manage to earn a sufficient income from the sport until the end of their lives. Therefore, sports organisations like FIBA Europe see it as their responsibility to improve the framework conditions for a better compatibility of sport and vocational career. Through the TIME-OUT 2.0 project, FIBA Europe and its project partners aims to promote education in and through sport with a special focus on skills development, as well as support the implementation of the EU Guidelines on Dual Careers of Athletes. The main focus of the project is the development of transferable skills by athletes, federation employees and other stakeholders and the creation of various new sporting and academic programs.

Due to different educational structures and systems in the European countries as well as different levels of development a size fit all approach is not promising. Therefore, one important aspect of the Time Out 2.0 project was to develop a FIBA Master Key for Basketball Players, which will be a comprehensive guide for basketball players (age 13 to 30) combining education and sport and planning the smooth transition to life after sport. The development of this master key is based on a two-step approach. The first step considers qualitative in-depth interviews with professional basketball players to identify key challenges for mastering a dual career and to gain best practice experience. In a second step, a standardised survey was conducted in order to understand the challenges of managing a dual career in different groups of athletes and to identify gaps.

Nine basketball players from seven different European countries were interviewed. The analysis revealed the following six main results: **(1) Lack of institutional support** from various stakeholders; **(2) Awareness for pursuing a dual career** is low; **(3) Sport organisations should understand the topic of dual career as their social responsibility**; **(4) Mind-set of key individuals** needs to be changed; **(5) Need for cooperation and strong networks and relationships**; and **(6) Athletes missed concrete and specific guidance and mentorship**.

The analysis of the standardised survey revealed the following main results across countries, which requires further actions: (1) players do **neither see the current nor the prospective compatibility of their sporting and vocational career as good**; (2) students perceived **US colleges and universities with better terms and conditions for a dual career** than in their own country; (3) **athletes hardly perceived national basketball federations as helpful** for their vocational career; (4) **risk of basketball burnout** is significantly higher in the Czech Republic than in Germany; and (5) **compatibility of a dual career with their own family** was perceived rather low.

1 Introduction

The course of a sporting career in professional basketball is uncertain and associated with a number of risks, such as a serious injury that means the sudden end of one's career. There are also many challenges to overcome on the way to becoming a professional basketball player. Not every talent makes the leap into professional basketball. The sacrifices are great and many young talents are faced with decisions in favour of their sporting career and to the detriment of their schooling or vocational career, or vice versa.

Only a few professional basketball players manage to earn a sufficient income from the sport until the end of their lives. Therefore, sports organisations like FIBA Europe see it as their responsibility to improve the framework conditions for a better compatibility of sport and vocational career. Through the TIME-OUT 2.0 project, FIBA Europe and its project partners aims to promote education in and through sport with a special focus on skills development, as well as support the implementation of the EU Guidelines on Dual Careers of Athletes. The main focus of the project is the development of transferable skills by athletes, federation employees and other stakeholders and the creation of various new sporting and academic programs.

This unique FIBA-led centralized educational program will benefit the basketball family through engagement of partners and stakeholders at various stages. The importance of incorporating flexible educational and training programs into the daily routine of active athletes and professional employees is paramount when building a sustainable and modern structure for the sport.

Due to different educational structures and systems in the European countries as well as different levels of development “one size fit all” approach is not promising. Therefore, one important aspect of the Time Out 2.0 project was to develop a FIBA Master Key for Basketball Players, which will be a comprehensive guide for basketball players (age 13 to 30) combining education and sport and planning the smooth transition to life after sport.

2 Methodology

For achieving the intended objectives of this working packages as an integral part of the entire project, we opted for a multi method approach. Starting with a qualitative study to explore the field of research and get a better understanding of the specific challenges in pursuing a dual career in European basketball. The results of this explorative study built the fundament for a follow-up quantitative study in several European countries. The aim of the quantitative survey was to have valid data available from different European countries and from different groups of athletes, which allow drawing conclusions and recommendations for individual countries (see Figure 1).



Figure 1: Overview of the methodological approach for this study

2.1 Qualitative Study

For the qualitative study of this research, we interviewed nine current or former professional basketball players from various European countries in consultation with FIBA Europe, namely (in alphabetical order of the family name): Kieron Achara (Great Britain), Svenja Brunckhorst (Germany), Andreas Glyniadakis (Greece), Alexandar Gruev (Bulgaria), Danielle Hamilton Carter (Sweden), Maria Lucila Pascua Suarez (Spain), Sonja Petrovic (Serbia), Giorgia Sottana (Italy) and Jiri Welsch (Czech Republic). The interviews were recorded and transcribed for the analysis. Quotes from interviewees have been anonymised and do not correspond to the above-mentioned order of persons mentioned by name. Figure 2 provides an overview of the descriptive characteristics of the sample.

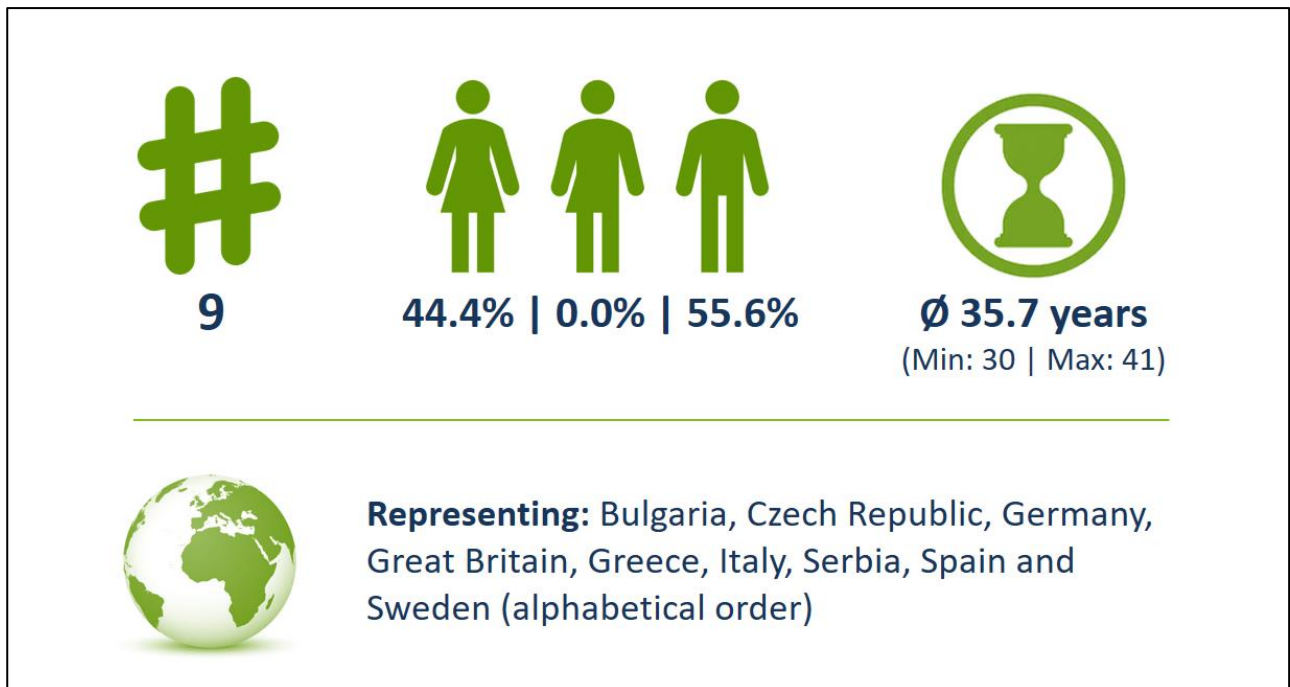


Figure 2: Descriptive characteristics of the interviewees

The twelve questions for the in-depth interviews were divided into four major topics: (1) individual perspective on her/his dual career, (2) Specific challenges in managing a dual career, (3) Broader perspective on dual career in sport/basketball, and (4) Review of the Time Out programme.

Individual perspective on the dual career

1. From your personal retrospective, how would you generally assess the compatibility of your sporting and your vocational career?
2. With respect to your dual career - how would you evaluate your overall support? So from your personal point of view which institution has supported you the most or from which institutions would you have expected more support?
3. From your personal experience, what could be done better in order to support dual career athletes more effectively?

Specific challenges in managing dual career

4. During your dual career did you have enough time for your sport and for your vocational career or would you have invested more time into one of these? And how does this differentiate between the different stages of your career (for example during school vs. university or job or being a junior vs. being a professional athlete)?
5. How did you solve temporal conflicts and stressful moments related to your sporting and vocational career? Could you give us one or two examples?
6. Did you have some crucial moments in your dual career, which you would cope differently with your current knowledge and experience?

Broader perspective on dual career in sport/basketball

7. How would you evaluate the opportunities and conditions regarding the compatibility of your sporting and vocational career in your home country in comparison to the opportunities of athletes from other European countries?
8. Assuming that you could change one thing immediately with respect to your dual career and the given structures in your home country - what would you change?
9. What is your advice for young basketball athletes at the beginning of their professional sporting and vocational career?

Time Out

10. What were your main motives and considerations to become part of FIBA Europe's TIME-OUT program?
11. How helpful has the TIME-OUT program with all its workshops, seminars and networking been for your personal vocational development in the future?
12. What do you think could be improved for the upcoming FIBA Europe TIME-OUT program?

2.2 Quantitative Study

For the quantitative study we considered predominantly standardised and validated scales from previous research. The survey was developed in English and some pre-tests were run with student athletes to check the understanding and the flow of the survey. In consultation with FIBA Europe we considered all seven European countries, which were considered in the qualitative study. Therefore, the questionnaire was translated by professional translators in Bulgarian, Czech, Greek, Spanish and Swedish. The translation into German language was done by the researchers. For each country and language we run pre-test with student athletes and made some minor amendments. The questionnaire was prepared in an online format and the link for the survey was shared via the national federations to the basketball players in the different age groups. Due to the additional work load and COVID-19 pandemic, not all data for the seven countries were gathered or analysed at the time of this report has been released.

3 Descriptive results and data analysis

In the following section, the results are presented, first the findings of the qualitative in-depth interviews followed by the results of the standardised survey.

3.1 Qualitative in depth interviews with current and former players

The twelve considered questions for the in-depth interviews are linked to four main themes. For each theme the results are presented individually one by one.

3.1.1 Individual, retrospective view on athletes individual careers in basketball

The retrospective evaluation of the dual career varies greatly among the athletes interviewed. Those who studied and played in North America are clearly more satisfied with their dual career and rated the compatibility of sporting and vocational career as good or very good. While the athletes who played in Europe came to different conclusions and evaluated the opportunities for a dual career as difficult, in some cases even very difficult. The compatibility of a professional sporting and vocational career is possible, however

only under certain conditions. While in North America “everything is completely adapted being a student athlete” (IP3), “it was very hard [to pursue a dual career in Europe]” (IP4). One of the interviewee even concluded, “[a sporting and vocational career] was not compatible at all. [...] When I was 20 years old, I had to make the decision. I made the decision to go after my professional [basketball] career. [...] it was risky [...] and] challenging” (IP5). Another interviewee confirmed this perspective: “For me, it was so hard because I never had help from the university and from the team to combine and to make a good [dual] career” (IP7). However, there is one exception, which need to be mentioned in this context: “I think I am like one of the rare examples that I was able during my career to finish [...] my Bachelor. [...] it was hard and obviously it took much longer” (IP 8).

“It was very hard [to pursue a dual career in Europe].”

With respect to the advanced online learning opportunities, the interviewees see a change in enhancing a dual career for professional basketball players in the last decade. Studying online with high flexibility in terms of the study load and exams offers more opportunities for progressing a dual career. However, this gap in the higher education landscape is predominantly occupied by private universities. Most of the state funded and well established universities with an outstanding reputation do not offer such opportunities for professional athletes in Europe. While for some athletes the extra fee for tuition at private universities is not an issue, some female interviewees identified this as a challenge, because of an existing gender pay gap in basketball. One female interviewee reported: “I spent like for my whole university degree, bachelor and master, around thirty five thousand euros” (IP9). Without additional financial support, she could hardly bear these costs.

In most cases considered for this qualitative study, athletes reported about a **lack of institutional support**, from the sport clubs, the federations, from the politicians and even from the universities. “I expected more support [...] from the federation and maybe the Ministry of Sport and the university. [...] So I was expecting more flexibility from them [Ministry of Sport and university]” (IP2). Another interviewee said: “Well, to be honest, I think FIBA and FIBA TIME OUT is the only support I have got in my entire career about my dual career” (IP4). While some athletes also reported about good support during their studies in Serbia, Sweden and the US, it is worth to be mentioned that this has changed in some countries over the last two decades. “20 years ago, [...] when I was at the [...] university [...], I received no support [...] I do not remember getting any institutional support [...] none from the club and from the federation and maybe a little bit from the university itself. [...] Now, 20 years later it is a completely different story.” (IP5)

“Athlete's career is great, but it's also unpredictable”

... said (IP5). The **awareness for pursuing a dual career** is still unsatisfying and requests more attention. “I don't think [...] we preach enough how important it [education] is” (IP8). Especially young athletes need to be aware of the fact that a heavy injury can stop their sporting career at a very early stage. “I think, for federations and any other associations, it is important to teach the young players that this life we do is limited” (IP4). It is fundamental that sport organisations **understand the topic of dual career as their social responsibility** and furthermore to raise the awareness for pursuing a dual career. Former players could be a good starting point for raising the awareness for this important topic because they have the experience and reliability. Young players will listen and follow them more likely than if anyone else is praising this topic, as some of the interviewees pointed out (IP5 & IP6).

“I think, for federations and any other associations, it is important to teach the young players that this life we do is limited”

Another aspect, which has been revealed by the interviews, was the **mind-set of key individuals**, such as coaches, managers and lecturers at universities, which needs to be changed. Some athletes reported about that their coaches enable them to follow a dual career while some others did not. Some coaches and managers expect their athletes to focus 100% on their sporting career (“the club did not allow me to miss any practice” (IP7). One athlete also missed the support from the lecturers at the university: “not all the teachers were, like, able to help” (IP7). There is clear need to change the mind-sets of these individuals. Instead of seeing the dual career as a burden and disadvantage for the sporting performance of an athlete, especially coaches and managers of sport organisations should start rethinking their view.

“Actually, I think a lot of studies now show that having a dual career can actually enhance your [sporting] performance.”

In order to pursue a dual career, there is a need for the involvement and support of many stakeholders. These includes the financial support by the state and sponsors, the willingness to adapt study programmes by universities, the institutional support by the sport clubs and federations and so on. They **need to cooperate and to develop strong networks and relationships**, otherwise it will be hard to improve the dual career opportunities for professional athletes, which is emphasised by the following quotes: “I think they have to cooperate better” (IP2). “I think they have to work together [...], they have to coordinate” (IP7).

A few athletes missed concrete and specific **guidance and mentorship** in order to pursue their dual career. “I do not feel like they [sport federation] have had a lot of proper guidance and career choices when it comes to being a professional athlete playing for the national team [...]. I do not think that our federation does a good job of taking care of their athletes” (IP3). In addition the interviews revealed the level of customisation

to the athlete's individual needs. The conditions and environment of each athlete are very different to other ones, therefore a customised approach is necessary. Furthermore, it was mentioned in the interviews that "many athletes do not know where they can find this support" (IP9). Basketball clubs and federations should invest more resources on this front to provide guidance and mentorship to the professional athletes.

**"I do not think that our federation does a good job
of taking care of their athletes."**

The interviews revealed some interesting views, how athletes perceive their dual career retrospective. While some athletes were able to combine the sporting and vocational career, some players could not do so or without much support. All interviewees praise the importance of pursuing a dual career because of the immanent risk of a professional sporting career. They all share the view that "the athletes should not have to choose between the study and the sport" (IP7). The interviewed players see a change in the last two decades which results in more support and better conditions for pursuing a dual career in contrast to 20 years ago. However, there is still a lot to do on this front.

Based on the individual reflections of the interviewed players, four aspects were identified which requires further actions:

- (1) Understand the dual career as a social responsibility of the sport organisations and raising the awareness for it,**
- (2) Change the mind-set of key individuals when it comes to dual career,**
- (3) All stakeholders in sport should cooperate more intensively to enable dual careers, and**
- (4) Provide more guidance and mentorship for professional athletes.**

3.1.3 Specific challenges in managing dual career as basketball player

As it turned out in the interviews, pursuing a dual career is not a constant, continuous process where sporting and vocational career are equally balanced. After finishing school education and starting the professional career as basketball player, athletes focus more on the sporting and less on the vocational career. "So at my first year, I was getting most of the time to sport. Then during my last years, I think I made it like 50/50." (IP2) Over the years, the focus shifted more to the vocational career, the more the players coming to the end of their sporting career, as the following statements demonstrate: "Towards the end [of my sporting career], I kind of focused more on studying" (IP8). "I definitely invested more time in my master's thesis and everything because I knew I was at the end of my career. [...] So the priorities changed." (IP9) For one interviewed player, it was even impossible to follow up with the classes. He continued studying 20 years later.

Without any doubt, a professional career as basketball player is **mentally and physically demanding**. "If professional athletes do not get enough rest there is a bigger chance to get injured" (IP2), which can harm or even stop a promising professional sporting career. For some of the interviewed athletes, pursuing a dual career meant increased demands. "It was very hard physically and mentally" (IP4) to focus on the sporting and vocational career; while others also see major benefits in pursuing a dual career, e.g. it helps to "focus not just on the court" (IP6). "When you get more mature and you figure out that sometimes too much is not good, I realized that studying [...] helped me ventilate and kind of gave me the satisfaction that afterwards helped my basketball." (IP8)

"Time management is the biggest problem."

A key aspect and success factor for pursuing a dual career are **time management** skills, as several interviewees pointed out. "Time management is the biggest problem" (IP2). The daily and weekly schedule of basketball players is very much determined by the competition calendars on national and international level and varies from week to week. In addition players spent a lot of time on travelling to matches, training camps and tournaments. All these aspects do not allow regular attendance at classes or fixed time slots per day or week for studying and establishing any kind of studying routine. Therefore, "from a time management perspective, it took a bit of practice, but I got used to that" (IP6). However, it is "important for young players to understand, [...] there is basketball but then you have a lot of time during your day that you can invest in something" (IP4), which can help the athletes to distract their thoughts from basketball, to develop as an individual and to make some progress for the second career after the sporting one.

Despite good time management skills, flexibility is another important aspect for successfully pursuing a dual career. The training and competition calendar varies tremendously from week to week due to home and away matches, tournaments and peak and off-season phases. Consequently, athletes need to be very flexible and adapt their studies to the current sporting situation. However, it would help tremendously, if the study programmes in terms of exams, study load, deadlines for assignments and so on offer a **high degree of flexibility** and customisation to the athletes' individual situations and needs. As several interviewees pointed out "[...] online learning [...] makes it much more realistic. [...] We did not have this when I was 18, 19, 20" (IP7). Online study programmes offer the flexibility professional athletes need to pursue a dual career and allow them to adapt the study load depending on the athletes' individual situation.

"The pressure for time management increased drastically" when family duties raised.

Asked about stressful moments and crucial experiences in pursuing a dual career, most of the athletes mentioned they had several stressful moments. One interviewee asked for support by a mental coach. "This was extremely important because there were moments where I did not even know if I love to play basketball anymore" (IP4). Two athletes reported about the additional challenges which comes along with **being parent**. Combining the sporting career with studying and the requirements as mother or father was extremely challenging. "The pressure for time management increased drastically" (IP5) when family duties raised.

One athlete reported about being **treated unfairly by their lecturers at the university**. "Some professors thought that it was unfair, that I am capable of earning money and living good and also trying to have the education that have the other students who just study" (IP8). There seems to be a lack of understanding what it means to pursue a dual career as an athlete from the university lecturers' perspective.

Another stressful moment and crucial experience is the case of an **injury** or even a series of injuries as one athlete reported. "I had really a lot of injuries when I was young and that kind of changed my mental thinking completely because it made me to kind of push myself a lot" (IP8). Depending on the current situation, this can be stressful in two ways: (1) The pressure for pursuing a dual career can increase because the athlete realises that the professional sporting career can stop very quickly. (2) The injury can have an influence on the mental health and motivation to study.

"I think we as athletes are so competitive [that] we want to do all at the same time" (IP7). "Sports is always like [...] you are under pressure the whole time" (IP9). Ambition and pressure are extremely important aspects for delivering sporting performance but also performing in their studies but only up to a certain degree. Consistent pressure and a high degree of stress over a longer period is disadvantageous. Therefore rests are important and need to be carefully considered in the dual career management, this includes sufficient rest from the mental and physical demands as a player and as a student. **Relaxation and loosening-up exercises** should be scheduled and implemented on a regular basis. These can help on the long term perspective to perform and to prevent from mental misbalances.

**"When you are a player, there will never be a better moment for you
to combine this [sporting and vocational career]"**

One learning from the retrospective review of the athlete's careers is that young professional players should **continue with their dual career immediately** after graduating from school. "When you are a player, there will never be a better moment for you to combine this [sporting and vocational career]" (IP5). "A lot of time in the past I was wasting and now I am investing in something that is good for me" (IP4). Some athletes would change this if they were able to do so. "I [would] take more classes and try to finish my college earlier" (IP1).

"I think that I would not have waited to the very end to do my masters" (IP6). "I would try to push myself to kind of finish my university faster at that time" (IP8).

3.1.4 Broader perspective on dual career in basketball and sport

The conditions for pursuing a dual career in Europe are very heterogeneous from country to country. While some interviewed athletes were overall satisfied with their dual career, others had a tough time to manage both or even had to decide for one or the other career path. "In the sport of basketball and any other sport like volleyball, etc. we do not have anything, absolutely anything" (IP1). "I think [country] has to do a better job for athletes" (IP9). In contrast to the previous perspective, "we do have a good system now with some universities that have support for dual careers" (IP3). Obviously the interviewed athletes chose for the sporting career but the question arises how many young talented athletes gave up their professional sporting career in favour of their vocational career at an early stage? A significant part of the young talented players – without knowing how many of them – decide to move to the North America because among other things the dual career conditions.

"I know a lot of kids from here that usually if they want to do a dual career, they either go to the States or they have to choose." (IP8)

"I know a lot of kids from here that usually if they want to do a dual career, they either go to the States or they have to choose."

However, the dual career conditions have been improved in the last years. There is "a lot of progress in Europe, but this is thankful to the online courses. [...] A lot of young players are playing and also studying at the same time, which was definitely something that was not like this when I was 20" (IP4). One athlete reported that online study programmes are predominantly offered by private and less prestigious universities. "They have much more understanding [for the professional athlete's needs] and obviously because you are paying" (IP8).

Although the conditions for pursuing a dual career have been improved in Europe, there is still a huge gap to the opportunities in the North America. "It's not like a package like the American [one] you buy into" (IP6). This is a unique situation in basketball, while other major team sports in Europe do not have to compete with the dual career opportunities in North America. This situation has several consequences: (1) many of the most talented basketball players in Europe move to North America due to better dual career opportunities and the outlook for a professional career in the most prestigious basketball league, the NBA. These talents might not playing for the junior national teams anymore, which further impacts the quality and the development of other players in the national team negatively.

The interviewed athletes proposed the following recommendations for improving the dual career of professional basketball players and athletes in general:

- (1) First and foremost, the awareness of the dual career topic needs to be raised.
- (2) Second, there is a need to change the mind-set. "If the coaches and the leaders do not believe in it, then it will never work" (IP6).
- (3) Third, an "overall approach from the national federations" (IP5) is necessary to improve the status quo. This includes members of staff, who especially "take care of the athletes who are in this transitional period" (IP3) and provide guidance to the athletes. Furthermore, this also implies the implementation of structures and networks in a similar way "like that is in America, like the kids that can go to college and play basketball for their college" (IP4). Cooperations and communication between the different parties involved (e.g. club, federations, universities, corporations) is the key for success.
- (4) Fourth, it is strongly recommended to "improve the support for the athletes" (IP7). This includes a wide range of individual and customised support service for the athletes, such as mental coaching, mentorship, internship opportunities and so on.

Finally, the interviewed athletes were asked for advice to young basketball players:

- "I would advise them to do it 100 percent [...]. Start early, get your education flexible, but get your degree." (IP1)
- "After some time, you definitely need to pay attention to what you are going to do after your [basketball] career." (IP2)
- "Dare to ask for help." (IP3)
- "Go for both [career paths], do not choose one or the other one, go for both and make it work and you can make it work." (IP5)
- "Start thinking about you as a person, not just as a basketball player." (IP6)

3.1.5 Review of the Time Out Project

The interviews revealed that the participants of the Time Out project highly appreciate FIBA Europe's approach to **give something back to the athletes**. During their sporting career, basketball players have to do without many things in order to develop optimal sporting performance. These include, among others, foregoing formal educational opportunities. Many athletes place themselves completely at the service of their clubs and national teams, and these in turn profit to a considerable extent from their sporting achievements through sponsorship and media revenues, among other things, as does FIBA Europe. With social responsibility lens of sports organisations, federations such as FIBA Europe certainly have a responsibility to take care of the further professional development of players and Time Out shows that this

is highly appreciated by players. Two interviewees explicitly mentioned this in their answers and IP2 pointed out:

“The opportunity that FIBA gives is great for athletes that sacrificed a lot for their national teams, for basketball and for the sport in their country.”

The motives for participating in the Time Out Programme are very heterogeneous and reflect the different starting conditions of the athletes interviewed. They have recently ended their sporting career or are about to do so. Based on the interviews, five categories of motives for participating in Time Out could be identified:

(1) Attaining a formal educational degree and gaining knowledge (4/9)

- *“[...] a great opportunity for me and so many athletes from different countries to get a degree.” (IP9)*
- *“It was a nice way to get into education.” (IP6)*
- *“Obviously, you get so much amount of knowledge, which is amazing.” (IP8)*

(2) Learning about the basketball business (5/9)

- *“It was so interesting because you work like in all kind of things around FIBA, like law, marketing and everything.” (IP7)*
- *“I wanted just to make sure that I know how the world of basketball functions, what are all the options, what is everything that is happening behind [...]. We have no idea what is happening behind us [...]. Everything we studied it is really kind of eye-opening to players, because I do not think a lot of us knew all the behind the scenes moments.” (IP8)*
- *“As a player, I saw all the tournaments, all the competitions, but I got to understand and know the people and the processes behind all this, that was helpful.” (IP5)*

(3) Expanding one's own network (8/9)

- *“When you are not a player anymore, you need to connect with different people and create a different network.” (IP5)*
- *“I would say that is probably been the biggest reward from the TIME OUT program, the friends and acquaintances I have made from all different parts of Europe. [...] I know that there are people I can talk to and get support from.” (IP6)*
- *“[...] a lot of connections with other good players in other countries, their federations, a very good network. The FIBA TIME OUT provides a very good network.” (IP2)*
- *“[...] became a big family now where everybody is supporting each other which is great. [...] I have seen some people from the TIME OUT program who are working now for the Federation or for FIBA. So the networking and the support to make the transfer from sport into life after basketball was very helpful (IP9)*

- *“For me, networking is the biggest part, you know, like getting to know all that people and now you have contact with so many different like countries and, you know, you get ideas from like different people and you have more real picture of different federations and how things are functioning there. So for me, like the community that FIBA TIME OUT, like makes you part of that is the biggest plus you get.” (IP8)*

(4) Applying existing knowledge to basketball and preparing oneself for a professional career in basketball or sports (5/9)

- *“I already learned in my Masters for Project Management, but my Masters was not connected with sports.” (IP2)*
- *“The sports world is something that interests me for my future.” (IP4)*
- *“I have my bachelor degree. I really wanted to pursue my master degree. And I really want to have more professional certificates almost to prove that I am capable of pursuing different lines of work, because I think that's one thing we as athletes miss. We know that we have the skills, the transferable skills what you learn as an athlete, but we do not necessarily have the accreditations, you know, like the certificates, the degrees and all that kind of stuff.” (IP3)*
- *“It is so important, also to know where you want to work.” (IP7)*
- *“I was already in my masters so I did it also a little bit for the sports management side and for being a part of this great opportunity and network.” (IP9)*

(5) Getting to know one's own personality and further developing as an individual (5/9)

- *“It was important for me to learn new things, to put myself in a different experience and a different environment and learn something that interests me and maybe in the future can be something that gives me a job or any way gives me a little bit of knowledge to deal with this.” (IP4)*
- *“It was a chance to step outside of the players bubble and start to see the sport from a much wider perspective.” (IP5)*
- *“[...] help you to discover who you are and how can you do the things depending on your personality [...] it's so important to know who we are or what kind of leader we are, what kind of personality you have, your character.” (IP7)*
- *“It was more like maybe I would not find out what I want to do, but I will find out what I don't want to do.” (IP8)*
- *“I think definitely the educational programs have been a tremendous help. I really like the leadership and management group that we did with the Northumbria University because that had the whole process of self-knowledge and self-awareness, I think it's really important to be able to reflect on yourself and how that applies to leadership styles and learning styles [...] for me, that is very, very interesting.” (IP3)*

(6) Giving guidance, access and orientation (5/9)

- *“There are another 50 people in your situation who quit the game and trying to find their path after sports. [...] the idea and the concept of educating former high level athletes, so they have more opportunities to develop the sports and not to fail when they get a job after sports. [...] My plan is to get a master degree. [...] It opened my way and I am thinking ahead.” (IP1)*
- *“I think it is, again, just talking to other athletes from different countries, both from the men's side and on the women's side, just really shows that we all go through the same things [...]. I think that is really helpful just to know that it is common what you go through as an athlete through these different periods. So for sure, it has been a great experience.” (IP3)*
- *“It opened a door for me to attend a university. [...] from an educational standpoint it was great to participate because I got to get my university degree with 40 years old.” (IP5)*
- *“[...] that gave me the confidence to say, oh, wow, I can actually do something after [my sporting career]. [...] I could achieve other things and the fact that I was able to meet some really great people within that program.” (IP6)*

The interviewed athletes provided some ideas to further improve the Time-Out programme. Due to the pandemic situation, the majority of the classes were delivered in an online format and obviously “meeting in person is the best way to do” (IP2) such learning programmes. One athlete would like to see more former players involved in the programme, “because this makes the players feel better and feel more connected to the program” (IP1). Two interviewees recommend to increase the involvement of the participants, for example by working “in groups for the whole time, [...] this will grow some relationships” (IP1). “I remember many times we ended up just sitting in class and listening to the people. [...] find a different way where you learn about the topics with more involvement, maybe practical things, split people into groups, do some little tasks, something practical, which gets people aware and involved” (IP5). The involvement could be enhanced in the way that “[...] if there was a World Cup qualifier or whatever [...] participants are able to volunteer and actually work at those events” (IP6). One interviewee would like to see an increase in the requirement level concerning the assignments. They “were quite easy and sometimes even not very helpful” (IP5). In order to give other basketball players to benefit from such programmes like Time Out, one athlete recommended to introduce “‘mini’ FIBA TIME OUT's in [the national] federations, so they pass their knowledge to another 10, 20 or 30 guys in their country” (IP1).

Overall, the interviewees were very grateful for having the opportunity to participate in Time Out and feel honoured. “The tutors and the teachers and the people who are running it, they are doing an amazing job.” (IP1) “I am pretty satisfied with all the things I learnt.” (IP7) “It was really well organised to kind of allow us to have everything available, even if you have to miss it or something during the practice or games or traveling.” (IP8)

3.2 Quantitative Study

Due to the partially heterogeneous results of the qualitative interviews as well as the different framework conditions and levels of development in the individual European countries, we voluntarily decided to conduct an additional quantitative survey. The aim of the additional survey was to shed more light on individual problem areas and thus develop better recommendations for action for the national basketball associations based on facts and figures. Furthermore, comparisons between the countries can be made on the basis of the quantitative data.

The time required for the additional data collection in seven European countries exceeded the calculated time required for the work package within the ERASMUS+ project. However, the expected added value from the additional results justifies the procedure. Unfortunately - also due to the COVID-19 pandemic - not all results could be evaluated by the deadline of the project report. However, these will be made available to FIBA and the respective national associations involved at no additional cost.

At the time of completion of the project report (09th July 2022), the data from the Czech Republic and Germany were available for data evaluation. The data collection and evaluation for Bulgaria, Greece, Great Britain, Sweden and Spain had not yet been completed at that time and are therefore not part of the project report.

Current and prospective compatibility of sporting and vocational career

The current and prospective compatibility of sporting and vocational careers is rated neither good/positive nor bad/negative by the different groups of athletes, with a slight tendency towards good. It is striking that the higher education students in the Czech Republic and in Germany rated the current (MV: 4.0/4.6) and the prospective compatibility (MV: 4.2/3.7) worst among all athlete groups.

Current compatibility of sporting and vocational career

	Students at school	HE students	FT employees	Pro athletes
Czech Republic	5.0	4.0	4.9	4.6
Germany	4.8	4.6	*	*

Prospective compatibility sporting and vocational career

Czech Republic	4.5	4.2	4.7	4.4
Germany	4.3	3.7		4.2

Satisfaction with compatibility sporting and vocational career

Czech Republic	4.5	4.0	4.6	3.5
Germany	4.2	4.2	*	4.2

*The sample size was below 10 respondents. In these cases sub-samples were not analysed.

Attractiveness and motives for moving to a US college or university

In the qualitative interviews, the better framework conditions for combining a sporting and vocational career were mentioned several times by the interviewees. Therefore, the students at school and higher education students were asked about their attitude towards continuing their sports career in the USA. Across all countries, 52% of the students at school surveyed and 31% of the higher education students surveyed had already thought about moving to a US college or university. The proportion among higher education students has decreased significantly compared to students at school in both countries, with strong differences between countries (see Table below).

	Students at school who are considering or have considered continuing their career in the USA	HE students who are considering or have considered continuing their career in the USA
Czech Republic	215 (49.5%)	16 (26.7%)
Germany	34 (80.9%)	6 (54.5%)

In addition, we were interested in the motives of the students at school and of the higher education students for considering their US colleges or universities for themselves. The respondents were asked to rate three statements based on a seven point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). The results reveal that across both groups of athletes and across the countries that the study conditions in the US are not better perceived as in the home country, but the **terms and conditions for combining sporting and vocational career are evaluated as good**. While students at school see a move to an **US College also as an opportunity to enhance the sporting career**, this is less the case for higher education students in all countries.

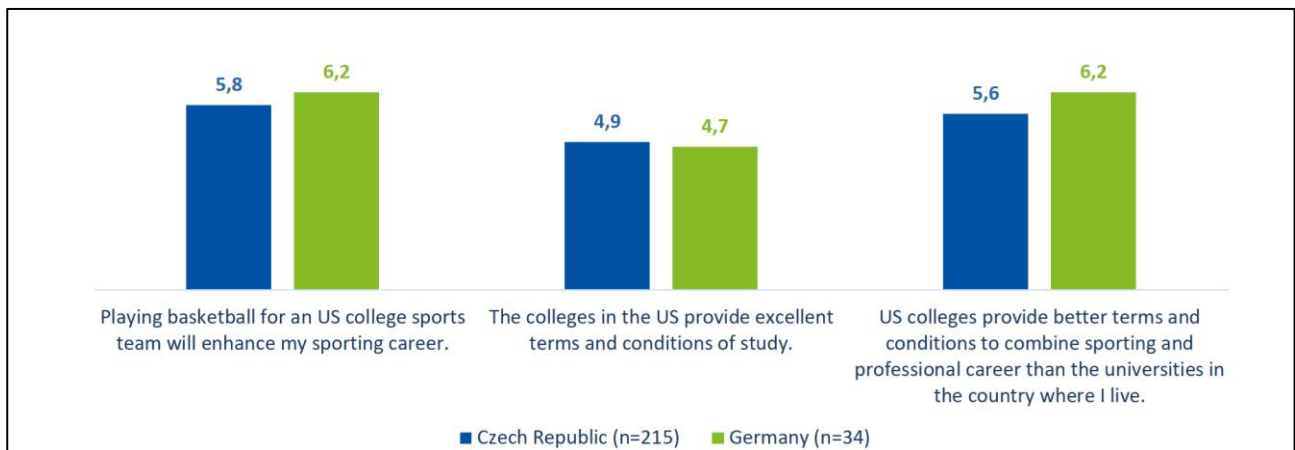


Figure 3: Motives of students at school for considering US colleges or universities for continuing their career

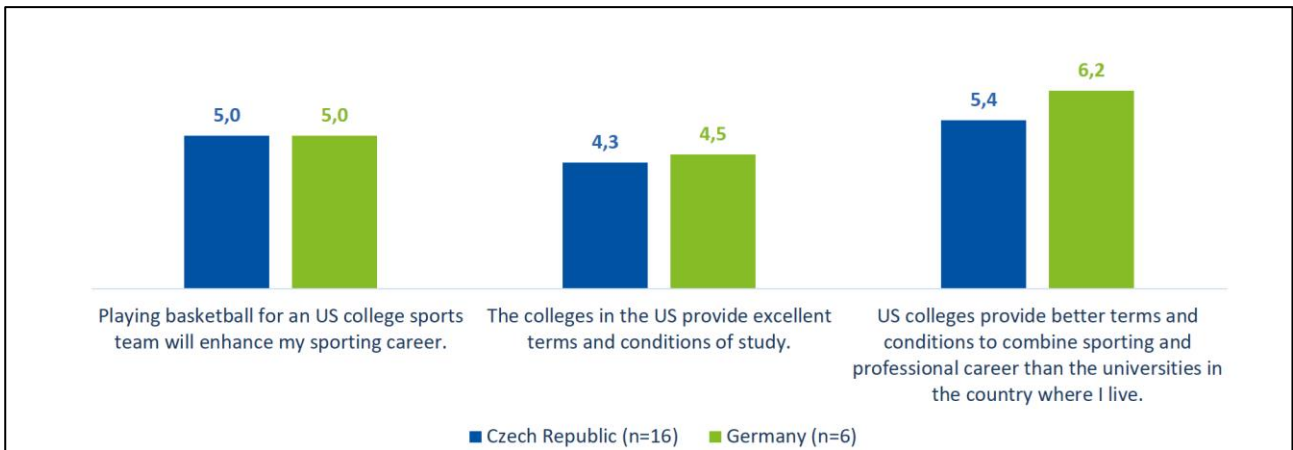


Figure 4: Motives of higher education students for considering US universities for continuing their career

Across all groups of athletes and countries, the results of the survey revealed that the respondents are neither satisfied with the support services for their sporting and vocational career nor dissatisfied with the exception of the professional athletes in the Czech Republic (see Table 1 below). They indicated that they are rather dissatisfied with provided support for their sporting and vocational career.

Table 1: Satisfaction with support services among various groups of athletes

	Students at school	HE students	FT employees	Pro athletes
Czech Republic	3.9	3.6	4.1	2.8
Germany	4.0	3.9		3.7

For students at school, parent(s) and coach(es) are the persons, who are considered as the most helpful individuals, when it comes to support for the basketball career in Czech. While the parents (MV: 5.1) are the most helpful individuals in Germany, coaches are not perceived as such (MV: 3.6). In terms of the vocational career, parents in both countries are by far the most helpful individuals. While the sport clubs are assessed as the most helpful institutions for the basketball career in both countries, the schools are the dominant institution for the vocational career with major differences (see Figure 5 below).

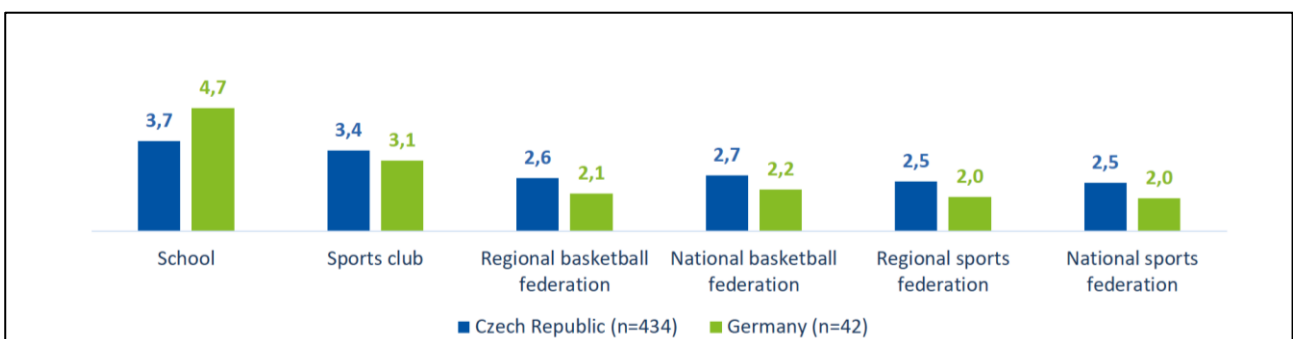


Figure 5: Perceived institutional support for the vocational career by students at school

German higher education students indicated that peers (MV: 5.7), parent(s) (MV: 5.8) and coach(es) (MV: 5.5) are the most helpful individuals when it comes to the sporting career. Similar results were revealed for the Czech Republic (friends (MV: 5.0), parent(s) (MV: 5.2) and coach(es) (MV: 4.7)). When it comes to the

vocational career, parent(s) are by far (MV: 6.0) the most helpful individuals for the higher education student athletes in Germany, followed by the lecturer(s) (MV: 4.6) and friend(s) (MV: 4.6). In the Czech Republic, we see a different picture. Teacher(s) at school (MV: 5.3) are the individuals who are considered as most helpful ones for the vocational career, followed by good friend(s) (MV: 4.9), peer(s) (MV: 4.1) and coach(es) (MV: 4.0). For the supportive institutions in terms of the sporting career, major differences appeared. In Germany, higher education students evaluated their sports club (MV: 5.6) as the institution, which is most helpful for the sporting career, followed by the national basketball federation (MV: 4.7). For the Czech respondents the order was the same, but with different scores (sports club (MV: 4.6), national basketball federation (MV: 3.1). In terms of the vocational career, the university was the most helpful institution in both countries (MV: 4.4/3.8) when it comes to the vocational career (see Figure 6).

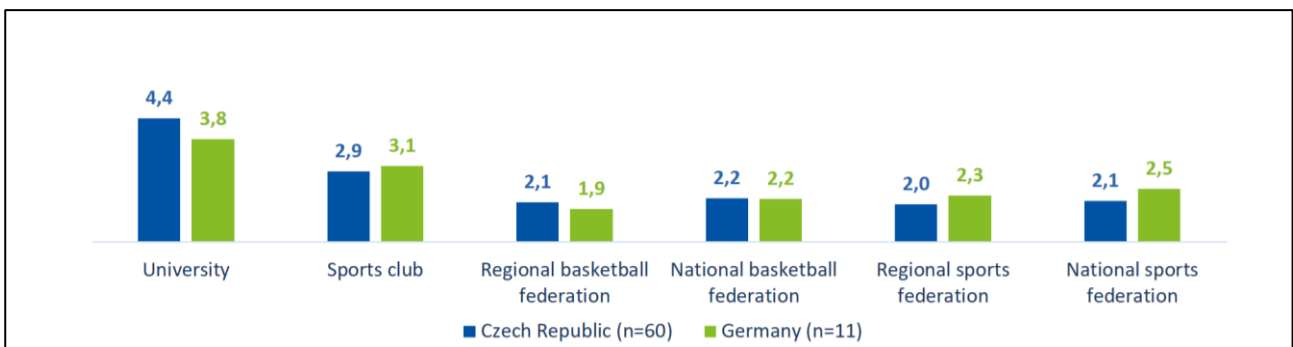


Figure 6: Perceived institutional support for the vocational career by higher education students

German professional basketball players considered peer(s) (MV: 6.0), parent(s) (MV: 5.6), friend(s) (MV: 5.2) and coach(es) (MV: 5.0) as the most helpful individuals when it comes to their basketball career, while in the Czech Republic the order is slightly different with different scores: friend(s) (MV: 4.6), parent(s) (MV: 4.3) and coach(es) (MV: 4.0). In terms of the vocational career, German professional basketball players see parent(s) (MV: 5.5) and friend(s) (MV: 4.5) as the most helpful individuals. A different order came me out for the Czech Republic: friend(s) (MV: 4.9), peer(s) (MV: 4.1) and parent(s) (MV: 4.0). For the sporting career, sports club are the most helpful institution in both countries (MV: 4.1/4.7), while the institutional support for the vocational career was evaluated on a low level in both countries.

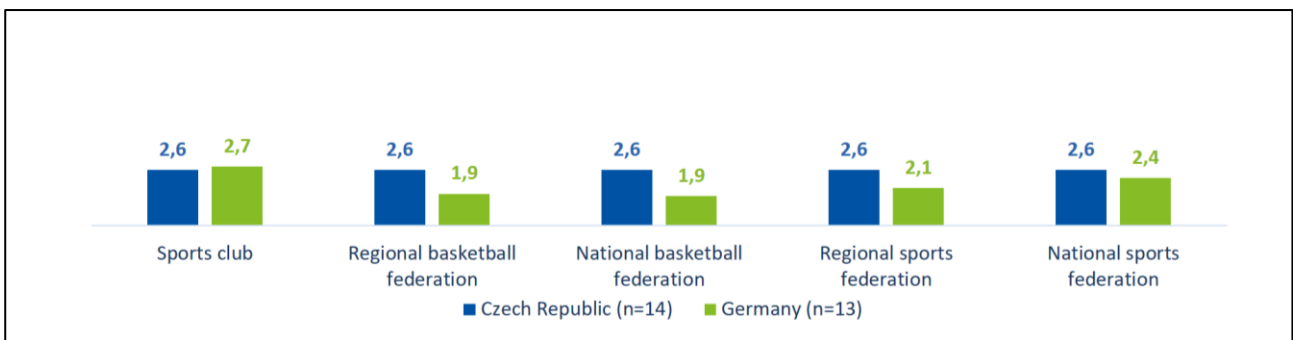


Figure 7: Perceived institutional support for the vocational career by professional basketball players

Potential burnout risks

The average values for the risk of burnout in the sporting or vocational careers of the athletes surveyed do not show any abnormalities. This does not mean that there are not individual cases of burnout risk. Among the students at school, the values of school burnout are at somewhat the same level in all countries (MV: 3.6-3.9). However, it is striking that among the German students at school the risk of burnout in basketball (MV: 2.9) is lower compared to the same group of athletes in the Czech Republic (MV: 3.8). This picture also emerges among the higher education students surveyed (see Figure 8). The values for university burnout are the same in both countries (MV: 3.7), but differ strongly for basketball burnout in the Czech Republic (MV: 3.8) and Germany (MV: 2.7). Also among professional athletes (see Figure 9), the respondents in Germany have a significantly lower value (MV: 2.8) than in the Czech Republic (MV: 3.8) for basketball burnout.

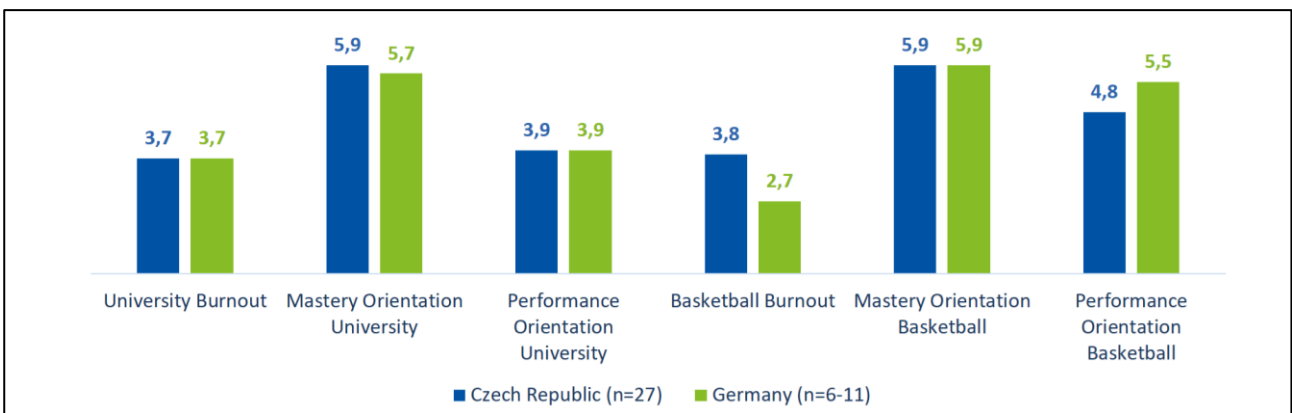


Figure 8: Burnout and achievements goals related to university and basketball by higher education students

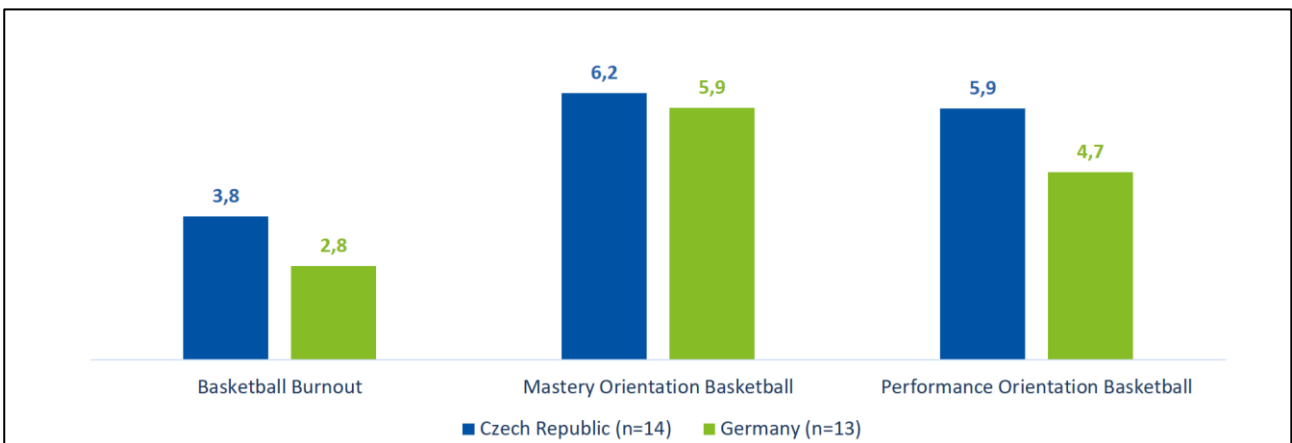


Figure 9: Burnout and achievements goals related to basketball by professional basketball player

Compatibility sporting and vocational career with family (planning)

Another important topic that emerged from the in-depth interviews was the compatibility of the dual career with having one's own family. In order to get better sense on this theme, two questions were added to the questionnaire for all groups of athletes: (1) How important is it for you to have your own family? (2) How do you assess the compatibility of a sporting and vocational career with your own family (planning)?

While the importance of having their own family is rather high among all athlete groups and in all countries, ranging from 5.8 among the students at school to 6.7 for professional basketball players in the Czech Republic on a seven point Likert scale (7 = very important), **the compatibility scores tremendously differ in contrast to these**. Among the higher education students the perceived compatibility of sporting and vocational career and own family scored lowest with 3.6 in both countries. Only the German professional basketball player in Germany rated this theme worse with a mean value of 3.4 (see Figure 10). For the remaining athlete groups the athletes evaluated this item between 4.2 and 4.6.

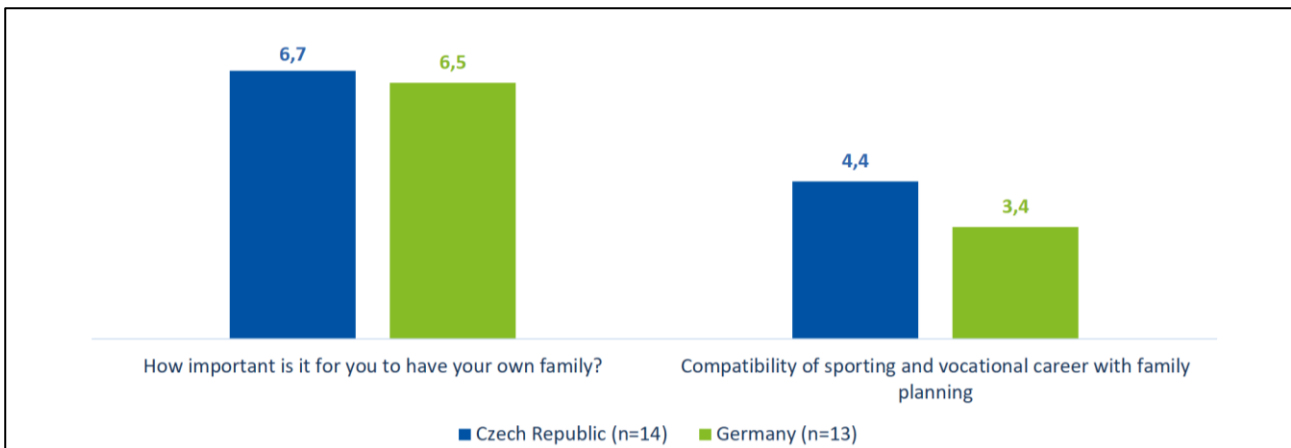


Figure 10: Importance of having an own family and the compatibility with the sporting and vocational career among professional basketball players

The analysis of the standardised survey revealed the following main results across countries, which requires further actions:

- (1) Across all groups of athletes, the basketball players do neither see the current nor the prospective compatibility of their sporting and vocational career as good.
- (2) About half of the students at school and at the university consider US colleges or universities as an option for their career, because they perceived that these institutions provide better terms and conditions for a dual career than in the country where they live.
- (3) Students at school, higher education students and professional athletes hardly perceived national basketball federations as helpful when it comes to their vocational career.
- (4) The risk of basketball burnout is significantly higher in the Czech Republic than in Germany.

- (5) The compatibility of the sporting and vocational career with having their own family was perceived rather low across all groups of athletes and countries.

4 Conclusions

Based on the results from the qualitative and quantitative study, we draw five main conclusions, which can serve as guidelines for improving the dual career of basketball players in the future:

- (1) Integrate the topic of dual career and the responsibility towards athletes in the national basketball association's strategic priorities.**
- (2) National basketball federations should develop a concept, how they want to raise the awareness for dual career, what resource they want allocate for implementing this topic and who is responsible and accountable for this topic.**
- (3) It is strongly recommended that national basketball federations establish networks and cooperation with basketball clubs, policy makers, schools, universities, enterprises and other relevant stakeholders which help to improve the dual career opportunities for basketball players.**
- (4) Former athletes who successfully managed a dual career could serve as mentors and can provide guidance for individual athletes.**
- (5) The terms and conditions – especially for female athletes – should be evaluated in terms of combining a dual career with having their own family and additional support services offered.**

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