

ENDURANCE: Entrepreneurial Capacity-building for Sport

Commonalities between Sport and Entrepreneurship

(ENDURANCE IO2T1 Output)

Country Notes BULGARIA

Introduction

This Country Note on Commonalities between Sport and Entrepreneurship in “Bulgaria” has been prepared by “Bulgarian sports development association” as an initial output within the ENDURANCE Intellectual Output 2, Task 1 “Identify common traits and links between sports and entrepreneurship”. Its aim is to provide an informed insight within the area under investigation for the next stages of the project. In addition, its purpose is to inform project stakeholders and broader audience in sports and entrepreneurship communities about first advances of the ENDURANCE project.

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Commonalities between Sports and Entrepreneurship: ENDURANCE conceptual framework



Topic 1: Individual personality traits common for sports and entrepreneurship

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

- Persistence
- Discipline
- Sports play a major role when it comes to teaching you how to overcome difficulties and to take risks
- Bravery
- Confidence to take a risk
- Team work
- Consistency

Practicing sports and entrepreneurship are not that different when the necessary personality traits are broken down. We see that there are characteristics which are common for both spheres. Most athletes, when they first start practicing a particular sport, quickly learn that if you want to be on a team and excel, discipline and team work are needed immediately. As time goes on and if they are able to develop in the particular sport, other traits are developed – consistency, confidence and the willingness to take more risks. Things go hand in hand. You cannot reach a certain level without adapting and developing these traits. All those characteristics are polished and learned through sports. Then, they are transferred to other aspects of the individual's life whether it is school work or business endeavours. Risk taking, persistence and overcoming major difficulties, especially in the beginning, are key factors in the entrepreneurial process. Of course, the higher level you are able to reach in sports, as a professional athlete, means that a person has been able to adapt and develop these traits the better. Being even more disciplined, even more persistent, confident and willing to take a risk. Then again, those people who didn't reach a higher level in sport, if intelligent enough, will be able to learn from their mistakes as athletes and apply the needed traits into their business. Or, they have learned that sport is not their main passion but are willing to understand how can practicing the sports will bring them discipline and consistency. In any way, these characteristics are shared between sports and entrepreneurship and having a sports background is always a plus when a person decides to pursue a career as an entrepreneur.

Topic 2: Other individual-level fostering factors

The review of resources in Bulgaria yielded the following list of fostering factors strengthening the link between sports and entrepreneurship from among the other individual-level aspects:

- The background of the family navigates the child towards a sport or something else
- The family and the positive influence that it has on the sport participation.
- The positive impact of sport on education.
- Both ensure great career opportunities.
- Attitude of winning and losing.
- Planning and strategic.

It is very interesting to see how much the family or the educational background influence the desires to participate in sports or try and become an entrepreneur. From our observations and research, a person is definitely a product of the environment. In most cases, if the family has athletic background, it is passed down to the children. Same goes with entrepreneurship. In Bulgaria, there is lack of entrepreneurial programs in most universities. This affects one's decision to try and pursue a career

even though Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria, is considered a highly recommended city for start-ups. Nevertheless, the skills obtained during sports can be applied into finding and searching for proper information because, even if they are not as much, there are still entrepreneurial initiatives for the development of the sector. Sports again contributes to this because the networks formed help the connection with other people with similar interests outside the field. The winning attitude will be transferred into business and all the other traits applied.

Topic 3: External supporting & triggering factors

The review of resources in Bulgaria yielded the following list of external supporting and triggering factors that enhance the commonalities and foster pathways between sports and entrepreneurship:

- Uneven regional development when it comes to infrastructure (including sports infrastructure).
- Sport as a leisure activity is not popular amongst Bulgarian children.
- Alarming statistic when it comes to sport participation.
- Lack of environment and resources for each different stage of the "life" of a startup.
- We build successfully but sell hard.
- Need for more external practices and human resources.

In a report on the youth trends in the country in 2008, sport was the fifth most common free-time activity after listening to music and surfing on the internet or going out with friends. In terms of the conditions for and access to mass sport, only 9% of the population claimed that there was a coherent national policy on the development of sport, and the majority (89%) said that the state should help the development of mass sport. Those who are participating in sport and physical exercises daily make up 6% of the population; around 19% play sport several days a week. In terms of once-a-week participation, it has been found that 21% do some physical exercises at home, 12% do cycling, 9% do team sports. Efforts to cater for the mass sport participation have been made but the successful outcomes of those have been rather sporadic and largely overshadowed by the supremacy granted to top-level sport. Nevertheless, when it comes to the business environment, Bulgaria has made impressive progress in the last 10 years. As mentioned above, Bulgaria is a desirable destination with good entrepreneurial environment. There are some things which are missing and tackling them will help us close the gap between the global start-up leaders and us like - lack of environment and resources for each different stage of the "life" of a startup, we build successfully but sell hard and the need for more foreign talent

With the "NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR LIFELONG LEARNING FOR THE PERIOD 2014 – 2020", the Bulgarian government has noticed the rapid development of the I.T sector in the country and the excellent environment for start-ups, and strives for adding educational goals during this period in order to promote entrepreneurial initiatives. Combined with the fact that, initially, most young adults practice a sport in Bulgaria, maybe the traits above will be obtained even more and a higher number of athletes will notice their potential as entrepreneurs.

Topic 4: Pedagogical approaches and education

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

- Several ongoing initiatives which contributes to the entrepreneurial education in Bulgaria.
- The Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan.
- Lifelong Learning Strategy 2014-2020 (The educational goals that are set.
- Specific sport education (incl. sports management) in National sports academy “Vasil Levski”.
- Implementation of the EU guidelines of dual career of athletes on national level.
- Great possibility for improvement of the educational link between sport and education.

“Manager for a day” for example is one of the more popular initiatives of Junior Achievement Bulgaria. It is held annually in more than 100 countries around the world. It always includes both senior government officials and well-established managers from all spheres of business and public life. These leaders initiate the professional orientation or realization of thousands of students around the world, while in return they are pleased with the experience and collaboration, as well as inspiration from the innovative and fresh ideas of motivated young people. “Virtual Enterprise” is an online “business ideas” competition for 15 to 19 year olds. The competition is officially recognised by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science of Bulgaria and it is implemented by Junior Achievement-Young Enterprise Europe (JA-YE Europe). The competition entrants have the opportunity to develop an innovative product called “hologenerator”, which they place on the market. “Innovation Camp” and the “Impulse Center for Training on Entrepreneurship” are also initiatives which aim at motivating people of all ages to pursue a career in this sphere.

Even though there is not yet a specific national strategy for entrepreneurship education, there is the “Lifelong Learning Strategy 2014-2020” which supports programs that strengthen learners' competitiveness and innovative spirit. This is particularly emphasized through support to national and international competitions, including entrepreneurship competitions. Local, national and international enterprises are encouraged to engage with education providers in Bulgaria to develop more efficient and effective outcomes through promoting on-the-job learning and hands-on experiences during school education. Bulgaria has also launched a pilot teacher training program to foster entrepreneurship education. There is an effort to Enhance the quality of school education and training towards attainment of the key competences, improving the learners’ achievements and personality development. Also, on November 1st 2015, the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria accepted the Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan with strategic objectives such as to Increase the share of the children covered by preschool education and training from age 4 until first grade enrolment age from 87.8% in 2012 to 90% in 2020. To reduce the share of early leavers from the educational system aged 18-24 from 12.5% in 2012 to less than 11% in 2020. To reduce the share of 15-year olds with poor achievements in reading – from 39.4% in 2012 to 30% in 2020, mathematics – from 43.8% in 2012 to 35% in 2020, natural sciences – from 36.9% in 2012 to 30.0% in 2020;

Topic 5: Connecting sports and entrepreneurship to create social impact

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

- Increased satisfaction with quality of life, feelings of happiness and wellbeing.
- Greater social awareness.
- Opportunities to bring communities together.
- Local need of development/supply social needs through positive change in the local landscape.

- Wide range of skills developed through sport that can be implicated in entrepreneurship field.
- Possibility of adoption and transfer of good practices as athletes had the chance to observe various environment in the world and to bring the best practices in the national environment they live in.
- Possible dual career path of athletes, that ensures social impact.

It is a proven fact that sports and participation in sporting activities improves pro-social behaviour, reduces crime and anti-social behaviour. Particularly for men the sport is a type of 'social glue', i.e. contributing 'bonding' capital by increasing social connectedness and a sense of belonging. Positive outcomes in studies include reduced social and ethnic tensions, and more collective action and community involvement through sport, particularly volunteering. The evidence doesn't just point to positive social capital impacts from sport - for example, two studies identify cases of sports clubs reinforcing social exclusion. Several national associations, including BSDA, aims precisely at the social impact that sports and volunteering in sporting activities have. Even though the sporting sector in Bulgaria is not at the highest level at the moment, the business environment is seductive and with the entrepreneurship initiatives that are taken, a person has the opportunity to generate significant change. Especially if it stays aside from politics as it should be.

List of references

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