



## **Dual careers for mental health: the bi-directional relationship between student-athletes' dual career experiences and mental health**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In recent years, there has been a sharp increase in research on dual careers (Stambulova & Wylleman, 2019) and mental health of athletes (Kuettel & Larsen, 2019), and their importance have been increasingly emphasized in light of the COVID-19 crisis and the postponement of the Olympic and Paralympic games. However, the bi-directional relationship between athletes' dual career experiences and their mental health has received only limited attention. In response, the Erasmus+Sport project "Dual Careers for Mental Health" (DC4MH, 2021-22) was initiated by 28 experts on dual career and/or mental health from ten organizations in six EU Member States (Belgium, Denmark, Italy, Spain, Slovenia, Sweden) with the objective to optimize mental health services within European dual career 'elite sports and education' organizations. More specifically, DC4MH aims to develop, implement, and evaluate research-based mental health promotion recommendations and tools, centered around (a) mental health structures in DC organizations, (b) mental health monitoring, (c) mental health literacy, and (d) psychological resilience-building strategies. This presentation will discuss the results of the first work package of the DC4MH project (Jan – Sep 2021). An online survey was developed by the consortium (Jan – May 2021) with the aim to identify student-athletes' dual career experiences, mental health, mental health literacy, resilience and life satisfaction. We drew on validated scales for mental health (MHC-SF, GHQ-12, GAD-7, PHQ-9) and resilience (CD-RISC-10), and developed new scales for DC experiences, mental health literacy and life satisfaction. The questionnaire will be sent to more than 9.000 dual career athletes across the six participating countries. First results are expected in June 2021 and will be presented during the conference. During the presentation, specific attention will be paid to the bi-directional relationship between different types of dual career experiences (i.e. protective vs. risk) and the mental health continuum (i.e. from languishing to flourishing).

### **KEYWORDS**

Student-athletes; well-being; Covid-19; mental health literacy; resilience