

**EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

**DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR RESEARCH**

Working Paper

**Combining sports and education:  
Support for athletes  
in the EU Member States**

Education and Culture Series

EDUC 114 EN

This study was requested by the European Parliament's Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport within the annual research programme.

This paper is published in ES, EN (original), FR

Authors: Joan Flanagan, Stagiaire; Pernille Winther

Responsible official: Pernille Winther  
Directorate-General for Research  
Legal and Social Affairs Division  
Tel: (352) 4300-22568  
Fax: (352) 4300-27720  
E-mail: DG4-sociale@europarl.eu.int

Manuscript completed in November 2003.

Further information  
on DG IV publications can be accessed through  
[www.europarl.ep.ec./studies](http://www.europarl.ep.ec./studies)

Luxembourg, European Parliament, 2003

The opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position of the European Parliament.

Reproduction and translation for non-commercial purposes are authorized, provided the source is acknowledged and the publisher is given prior notice and sent a copy.

**EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

**DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR RESEARCH**

Working Paper

**Combining sports and education:  
Support for athletes  
in the EU Member States**

Education and Culture Series

EDUC 114 EN

01-2004



## CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	7
SUMMARY .....	9
QUESTIONNAIRE .....	15
BELGIUM .....	17
French Community .....	17
Provisions for the promotion of young athletes .....	17
Quotas for the admission of athletes to university .....	17
Grants for retired professionals to study at university .....	18
Flexibility within the university system .....	18
Public sector .....	18
Private sector .....	18
BELGIUM .....	19
Flemish Community .....	19
Provisions for the promotion of young athletes .....	19
Quotas for the admission of athletes to university .....	19
Grants for retired professionals to study at university .....	19
Flexibility within the university system .....	19
Public sector .....	20
Private sector .....	20
Pension scheme .....	20
DENMARK .....	21
Provisions for the promotion of young athletes .....	21
Quotas for the admission of athletes to university .....	21
Grants for retired professionals to study at university .....	22
Flexibility within the university system .....	22
Public sector .....	22
Private sector .....	22
Pension scheme .....	22
GERMANY .....	23
Provisions for the promotion of young athletes .....	23
Quotas for the admission of athletes to university .....	24
Grants for retired professionals to study at university .....	24
Flexibility within the university system .....	24
Public sector .....	24
Private sector .....	25
Pension scheme .....	25
GREECE .....	27
Provisions for the promotion of young athletes .....	27
Quotas for the admission of athletes to university .....	27
Grants for retired professionals to study at university .....	27
Flexibility within the university system .....	28
Public sector .....	28
Private sector .....	28
Pension scheme .....	28

SPAIN.....	29
Provisions for the promotion of young athletes .....	29
Quotas for the admission of athletes to university .....	29
Grants for retired professionals to study at university .....	29
Flexibility within the university system .....	29
Public sector .....	30
Private sector .....	30
Pension scheme .....	32
FRANCE.....	33
Provisions for the promotion of young athletes .....	33
Quotas for the admission of athletes to university .....	34
Grants for retired professionals to study at university .....	34
Flexibility within the university system .....	34
Public sector .....	35
Private sector .....	36
Pension scheme .....	37
IRELAND.....	39
Provisions for the promotion of young athletes .....	39
Quotas for the admission of athletes to university .....	39
Grants for retired professionals to study at university .....	40
Flexibility within the university system .....	40
Public sector .....	40
Private sector .....	40
Pension scheme .....	40
ITALY.....	41
Provisions for the promotion of young athletes .....	41
Quotas for the admission of athletes to university .....	41
Grants for retired professionals to study at university .....	41
Flexibility within the university system .....	41
Public sector .....	41
Private sector .....	42
Pension scheme .....	42
LUXEMBOURG .....	43
Provisions for the promotion of young athletes .....	43
Quotas for the admission of athletes to university .....	43
Grants for retired professionals to study at university .....	43
Flexibility within the university system .....	43
Public sector .....	43
Private sector .....	44
Pension scheme .....	44
THE NETHERLANDS.....	45
Provisions for the promotion of young athletes .....	45
Quotas for the admission of athletes to university .....	45
Grants for retired professionals to study at university .....	45
Flexibility within the university system .....	45

Public sector .....	45
Private sector .....	46
Pension scheme .....	46
AUSTRIA .....	47
Provisions for the promotion of young athletes .....	47
Quotas for the admission of athletes to university .....	47
Grants for retired professionals to study at university .....	47
Flexibility within the university system .....	47
Public sector .....	48
Private sector .....	48
Pension scheme .....	48
FINLAND .....	49
Provisions for the promotion of young athletes .....	49
Quotas for the admission of athletes to university .....	49
Grants for retired professionals to study at university .....	49
Flexibility within the university system .....	49
Public sector .....	50
Private sector .....	50
Pension scheme .....	50
SWEDEN .....	51
Provisions for the promotion of young athletes .....	51
Quotas for the admission of athletes to university .....	52
Grants for retired professionals to study at university .....	52
Flexibility within the university system .....	52
Public sector .....	52
Private sector .....	52
Pension scheme .....	52
UNITED KINGDOM .....	53
The Athlete Career and Education programme (ACE) .....	53
England .....	54
Provisions for the promotion of young athletes .....	54
Quotas for the admission of athletes to university .....	55
Grants for retired professionals to study at university .....	55
Flexibility within the university system .....	55
Public sector .....	56
Private sector .....	56
Pension scheme .....	56
Northern Ireland .....	56
Provisions for the promotion of young athletes .....	56
Quotas for the admission of athletes to university .....	57
Grants for retired professionals to study at university .....	58
Flexibility within the university system .....	58
Public sector .....	58
Private sector .....	59
Pension scheme .....	59
Scotland .....	59

Provisions for the promotion of young athletes .....	59
Quotas for the admission of athletes to university .....	59
Grants for retired professionals to study at university .....	59
Flexibility within the university system .....	60
Public sector .....	60
Private sector .....	60
Pension scheme .....	61
Wales .....	61
Provisions for the promotion of young athletes .....	61
Quotas for the admission of athletes to university .....	61
Grants for retired professionals to study at university .....	61
Flexibility within the university system .....	61
Public sector .....	62
Private sector .....	62
Pension scheme .....	62
COMPARATIVE TABLE OF THE SITUATION IN THE MEMBER STATES.....	63
ACTIVITIES AT EU LEVEL .....	65

## INTRODUCTION

In June 2003 the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport of the European Parliament asked the Directorate-General for Research to draft a report on the educational opportunities and long-term career prospects open to professional and semi-professional athletes who have ended their sports careers.

In recent years sport has become more and more commercialised and the number of professional and semi-professional athletes has grown significantly. To be successful today, athletes are obliged, from a young age, to dedicate their time and energy almost exclusively to training and competition, often at the expense of education. There has been a tendency to focus on short-term goals in the pursuit of sporting success which means that the question of life after sport has been overlooked. As a result, many athletes reach the end of their professional sports careers only to find themselves without the necessary academic or other vocational qualifications to gain employment in other sectors.

The aim of this study is to explore how the different EU Member States deal with this growing problem.

The study will look at the provisions in place in the different Member States for the promotion and assistance of athletes within the context of secondary and third-level education. This encompasses –

- Provisions for talented young athletes at secondary school level;
- Quotas for the number of athletes admitted to universities;
- Flexibility within the university system (i.e. regarding lecture timetables, assignment deadlines, exam schedules etc.);
- Grants for former professional athletes who decide to begin or resume their third level education after a sports career;
- General support (financial and otherwise) for athletes who wish to combine professional sports careers with study;

This study also deals with athletes' long-term career prospects in both the public and private sector. Within the context of employment, the study discusses whether or not current or retired athletes are given preference over other candidates for recruitment in the public sector (e.g. in the police force, army) and what incentives (if any) exist for private companies to employ athletes who have retired from sport. Finally the study looks at the question of special pension schemes for athletes.

In order to determine exactly what provisions are in place, it was decided to send a **questionnaire** on the subject to the ministry of sport and to a non-governmental sports organisation, often the national Olympic association, in each of the EU Member States.

This report summarises the responses received as well as information gathered from other sources, such as the European Commission and the Internet.

Please note that where information has not been included (for example, on the existence of pension schemes), this does not necessarily indicate a lack of policy but rather that the relevant data has not been provided.

## SUMMARY

### I. EDUCATION

#### *1. School education*

All Member States promote young athletes within the context of education, although the systems vary somewhat from one country to the next.

A number of Member States - **Belgium (Flemish Community)**, **Denmark**, **Germany**, **the Netherlands**, **Austria**, **Finland** and **Sweden** - have specialised secondary schools which cater for young athletes and offer flexible study arrangements (a reduced curriculum or an extra year to complete secondary school) and specialised coaching and training facilities.

#### *2. Financial support for active athletes*

Many EU Member States, such as **Denmark**, **Germany**, **Spain**, **Ireland**, **Luxembourg**, **the Netherlands** and the **UK** provide financial support to top-level athletes to cover training and competition expenses. The type of support available varies from country to country. In **Germany** financial assistance is offered to secondary-level students enrolled in Elite Sports Schools. The **Spanish** Olympic Committee provides bursaries to cover training courses. **The Netherlands** has a grant scheme for top-level athletes which provides the equivalent of 70% of the standard social welfare benefit for a single person.

#### *3. Grants for retired professionals to study at university*

**Germany**, **France**, **Finland** and **Wales** offer education grants specifically for retired professional athletes who wish to begin or resume third-level study. In France financial assistance is offered to former professional athletes for only two years after retirement from competitive sport. In Wales former athletes must apply for study grants immediately after retirement.

Other countries such as **Denmark**, **Greece** and **Spain** offer financial support to current professional athletes who wish to combine a full-time sports career with a university course.

#### *4. Quotas for the entry of athletes to university*

**Spain** and **Greece** both have set quotas for the number of athletes admitted to university.

In **Spain** the quota is 5% for courses in Physical Activity and Sports Sciences and 3% for regular courses.

In **Greece** there is a quota of 30% for admission to athletics and sports education faculties and 1% to all other faculties. These quotas are above the normal numbers admitted each year.

Some universities in the **UK** and **Ireland** offer sports scholarships and in the **UK** a number of universities have lower academic entrance requirements for athletes.

In **Denmark** and **Italy** the status of sports professional counts as relevant criteria in applications to certain educational establishments or certain faculties – for example, those which specialise in sports science or physical education. In **Germany** squad athletes can get bonus points for exam marks and so have a higher chance than other students for entry to university courses. In **Finland** there are two polytechnics which run special degree programmes for athletes.

#### *5. Flexibility within the university system*

In the majority of EU Member States, universities offer some flexibility to athletes who wish to combine third-level study with a full-time sports career. This can include flexible exam timetables, permission to miss lectures, personal tutoring etc. In some cases the negotiation of special arrangements is left up to the individual athlete (e.g. **Ireland**) whereas in other cases, the sports association will negotiate with the university on the athlete's behalf (e.g. **Denmark, UK**). Certain Member States have legislation in place which provides for flexibility for sportspeople studying at university (e.g. **Belgium (French-speaking Community), Spain**).

#### *6. Special athlete support programmes*

Some EU Member States run support programmes for elite-level athletes. These programmes offer financial support, advice on education, training and career planning, as well as services such as medical support.

Team Denmark is the institution in **Denmark** which negotiates flexible conditions for young athletes within the education system (at both secondary and post-secondary level) and helps athletes with their long-term career goals.

In **Germany**, Olympic Support Centres provide support to athletes and coaches in matters relating to sports medicine, physiotherapy, scientific training and careers. The centres can also help athletes who need to take time off (from third-level study or from a full-time job) for sporting activities, and can negotiate problems with military service and help with accommodation problems.

In **Spain** and **Italy** the national Olympic committees work in association with the Adecco recruitment agency to assist former athletes to secure employment after they have retired from full-time sport.

The **Irish** Sports Council administers the International Carding Scheme which offers both financial and non-financial support to athletes. Through the scheme, athletes can avail of specialist advice on physiology, nutrition as well as medical support.

The National Olympic Committee of **Finland** employs a Study and Career Counsellor who helps athletes with study and career matters.

In the **UK** the Athlete Career and Education (ACE) programme aims to assist athletes in integrating career, education, lifestyle and sporting demands. The programme includes educational guidance for athletes who wish to combine a professional sports career with third-level study.

The national sports agency UK Sport is currently in the process of setting up a meeting with all of its European counterparts i.e. agencies who run education, career and lifestyle support programmes similar to ACE. The meeting is due to take place in April or May 2004 possibly at the British Olympic Association base in Lofer, Austria. The aims of the meeting will be:

- To share ideas of best practice among the athlete support programmes which exist throughout Europe
- To build Europe-wide networks which could provide help with athlete issues
- To promote the area of athlete support as a European group
- To outline some of the research that is being done in this area

## **II. EMPLOYMENT IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR**

No EU Member State has a clearly defined policy for the recruitment of retired professional athletes in the public sector.

Some Member States, however, allocate a number of vacancies within the public sector specifically to athletes but these positions are for current rather than retired professionals:

In the **Flemish Community in Belgium**, top athletes can work for the government and for Flemish public institutions.

In **Germany** there are positions available for top athletes with the military, the border police and the customs service.

In **Greece**, according to law, athletes who obtain at least one distinction (either in an individual or a team sport) can occupy positions in public administration. 10 places are allocated to athletes in training academies for the police, the fire brigade and the coast guard. There are positions reserved for athletes in the military. Athletes who ranked first to sixth in their sport at the Olympic Games have the right to work as consultants in the Ministry of Sport or as technical consultants in the sports federation for their sport.

In **Spain** the status of high-level athlete is to be considered as a relevant qualification for recruitment by State Law Enforcement Agencies and Security Forces.

In **France** a high number of public sector jobs are allocated specifically to high-level athletes. These positions are available in government ministries, in regional and local authorities and in other structures such as the postal service, the national railways, the national gas company, etc.

The **Luxembourgish** military has a sports section for talented young athletes which facilitates entry into low-level positions in the State's administrative service.

In the **Netherlands** the army offers contracts to professional athletes giving them the opportunity to combine a military career with a professional sports career.

### **III. EMPLOYMENT IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR**

Very few EU Member States offer direct incentives (e.g. tax incentives) to private companies to employ former athletes.

In **Germany** a national pool of companies offer traineeships and employment which is compatible with full-time competitive sport. The Sports Aid Foundation provides financial compensation for loss of earnings to companies which employ athletes.

In June 2001, the Ministry for Budgetary Affairs and the Ministry for Sport in **France** launched a joint initiative which offers tax incentives to those companies who enter into agreements to employ high-level athletes.

Certain countries, although not offering actual incentives to private companies to recruit athletes, have structures in place to provide advice and support to athletes in their career planning. Team Denmark, the institution responsible for the promotion of elite sport in **Denmark**, has links with an employment agency which aims to provide training and employment opportunities to former athletes.

One of the most important aspects of the **UK**-wide Athlete and Career Education programme is OPEN, the Olympic and Paralympic Employment Network which helps athletes secure flexible employment during the active competitive careers and to facilitate the transition from sport to other sectors after retirement. In **Scotland** the Scottish Institute for Sports works with companies in the private sector in order to help current professional athletes to gain flexible employment. For example, the Royal Bank of Scotland currently employs six athletes who are attached to the Institute network in the Glasgow area. This type of employment allows athletes to gain experience and opens up a potential long-term career.

In other Member States, sports bodies run support services for athletes providing advice and assistance on long-term career prospects and training opportunities and try to encourage private companies to offer flexible employment to professional athletes.

In **Spain** and **Italy**, the national Olympic committees operate an initiative with the ADECCO recruitment agency to help professional athletes to find employment once their sports careers have ended. In **Spain** there is a legal provision for agreements between the Higher Sports Council and private companies to offer flexible employment arrangements to athletes but as of yet no formal agreements have been entered into. An initiative known as Banco del Deporte (Sports Bank) is an employment bureau specifically for retired elite athletes. In **Italy** the “Sport to Job” programme provides training for retired athletes entering the job market.

#### **IV. PENSION SCHEMES FOR ATHLETES**

**Spain, Italy, the Netherlands and Finland** all have pension schemes which are designed especially for athletes. In **Denmark** a scheme is being introduced next year.

In **the Netherlands**, schemes are only in place for professional soccer players and professional cyclists although a general pension fund for all elite athletes is being considered by the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport.

In other Member States - **Germany** and **Austria** - the introduction of pension schemes for sportspeople has been discussed.

## **QUESTIONNAIRE**

### **1. Education**

- 1.1. Are there specific provisions to promote the development of promising young athletes in their sports fields? If so, do such provisions exist within the context of secondary education? University education? Are grants available?
- 1.2. Are there quotas for athletes' entry into Universities? Either when athletes are pre-professional, current professionals, or after their professional sports career.
- 1.3. Are there grants available for former professional athletes to study at University?
- 1.4. Are there special efforts to facilitate professional athletes simultaneously pursuing their sport and academic careers? I.e. changing exam dates, recovery classes OR personal tutors/coaches.

### **2. Public sector**

- 2.1. Are there any provisions for former or current professional athletes to enter into government services, i.e. military, police, fire brigade OR job positions in municipal sports facilities as monitors, directors etc.?

### **3. Private sector**

- 3.1. In the private sector, are companies offered any incentive to employ athletes once they have finished their sporting career?

### **4. Pension schemes**

- 4.1. Are there any pension schemes which are especially designed for athletes? For example, savings schemes which would allow a professional athlete who has come to the end of his or her career to begin or resume third-level education, or to set up his or her own business? If so, please provide some details - when it was established, etc.

### **5. Additional information**

- 5.1. If you have any additional information that you feel would be pertinent to this study, this supplemental information would also be greatly appreciated.



## **BELGIUM<sup>1</sup>**

### French Community

#### **Provisions for the promotion of young athletes<sup>2</sup>**

The French-speaking community of Belgium has 16 ADEPS (Administration of Physical Education and Sports) sports centres which provide three different types of activities for schools.

The first of these is a part-time educational programme which caters for children in primary school and the first years of secondary school. Accompanied by a teacher, children stay at a sports centre on a boarding basis. The day is divided between study, discovery of the environment and sport. The sports component is agreed upon in advance between the school and the sports centre, and generally lasts three to four hours per day, under the supervision of specialised ADEPS monitors. The geographic distribution of the sports centres in the French-speaking community and the specialisation of each in a different sport means that almost all sports disciplines are catered for. Some centres are geared more towards water sports, others more towards open-air sports and others towards indoor sports. Most centres offer at least two types of activities.

The second activity provided to schools by ADEPS is a type of sports camp similar to the part-time educational programme but designed for secondary school students. In this programme students stay at a sport centre on a boarding basis and do six hours of sports per day – three hours in the morning and three in the afternoon. One of the aims of the programme is to develop the interest of the students in a given sports discipline. As with the part-time educational programme the active participation of the schoolteacher is indispensable to the success of the stay at the sports centre and means that sports activities practised there can be continued at school. Other aims of the programme are to raise students' awareness of the environment – the sports centres are mostly located in natural settings – and to teach them how to live together as a group.

The third of ADEPS' school-related activities is a sports day where school children from nursery school through to secondary school level visit one of the sports centres where they do five or six hours of sports activities.

#### **Quotas for the admission of athletes to university**

There are no quotas for the admission of athletes to university.

---

<sup>1</sup> Based on information provided by Georges Guillaume, Inspector in the Ministry of Sport of the French Speaking Community of Belgium, September 2003. Additional information from the websites of the Administration of Physical Education and Sports, <http://www2.adepts.cfwb.be/index.asp> and the website of the French-speaking Community of Belgium <http://www.cfwb.be/regsup/pg031.htm>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www2.adepts.cfwb.be/index.asp>

### **Grants for retired professionals to study at university**

There are no grants for former professional athletes to study at university.

### **Flexibility within the university system**

According to Article 31 of the Decree of 5<sup>th</sup> August 1995, students who, according to the definitions outlined in Chapter 3 of the Decree of 26<sup>th</sup> April 1999, have the status of high level athletes or promising athletes can, upon request, spread the work of one academic year over an unlimited period (two, three, four years or longer). The request to do so must be made upon registration at university.<sup>3</sup>

Athletes who are enrolled in university are given flexibility as far as their exam timetables are concerned.

### **Public sector**

Each year the government of the French speaking community provides financial support to 15 top-level athletes so that they can concentrate fully on training and are relieved of other work commitments.

### **Private sector**

There are no incentives offered to companies in the private sector to employ athletes.

---

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.cfwb.be/regsup/pg031.htm>

## **BELGIUM<sup>4</sup>**

Flemish Community

### **Provisions for the promotion of young athletes**

Promising young Flemish athletes can attend one of eight sports academies at secondary school level. Specialisation in a given sport at these academies is determined by an agreement between the sports federation, the academy concerned and the Flemish Minister for Education. So far 17 sports federations have signed such agreements. In the 2002/2003 academic year, a total of 454 students were enrolled in sports academies.

In order to be eligible for admission to a sports academy, a student must be awarded sporting excellence status by an independent selection board. Admission requirements are different for each sporting discipline. Selection is based on objective criteria and expert technical and medical assessment.

Students follow either a 'sports sciences' (ASO) course or a 'sporting excellence' (TSO) course. They have a 32-hour weekly curriculum, with 20 hours for lessons and 12 hours for coaching in their individual sports.

At the moment there are no grants available either at secondary school level or at university level.

### **Quotas for the admission of athletes to university**

As there are no limits on the overall number of students admitted to universities in Flanders, there are no quotas for the admission of athletes.

### **Grants for retired professionals to study at university**

There are no grants for former professional athletes to study at university.

### **Flexibility within the university system**

Higher educational institutions have their own standards on the basis of which they award sporting excellence status to athletes who study full-time. These athletes enjoy certain privileges within the university system such as permission to miss classes and flexible exam schedules. The degree of flexibility allowed is something which is decided on by the individual educational institutions.

A proposal for a 'higher education sporting excellence agreement' has been drawn up by Professor Paul De Knop, chairman of the Flemish Sporting Excellence Consultation

---

<sup>4</sup> Based on information provided by Frederik Serruys of the Flemish Ministry for Housing, Media and Sport, July 2003.

Body. The proposal was discussed by the consultation body on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2003 but as of yet no decision has been taken.

### **Public sector**

Through the Bloso Sporting Excellence Employment Project, top athletes are paid to train and compete. This means that they can concentrate fully on their sports careers as they don't need to look for any additional form of income. In 2003, 33 athletes were employed through the project.

Top athletes and coaches can work for the Flemish government and Flemish public institutions with 90 days paid leave per year for preparation for important international competitions.

There are no special provisions for the employment of athletes in the army, police force, fire service or with the sports departments of local authorities.

### **Private sector**

Companies within the private sector are not offered any incentives to employ athletes who have finished their sporting careers.

### **Pension scheme<sup>5</sup>**

There are no pension schemes designed specifically for athletes. However, a study is currently underway in Flanders to see if the Flemish government could establish a scheme whereby athletes who reach the end of their sports careers could receive assistance in finding an alternative career. To date no concrete initiative exists.

---

<sup>5</sup> Based on information provided by Frederik Serruys of the Flemish Ministry for Housing, Media and Sport, October 2003.

## **DENMARK<sup>6</sup>**

### **Provisions for the promotion of young athletes**

Team Denmark was established by law in 1985 in order to develop elite sport. The institution has two main aims: firstly to enhance the achievements of Danish athletes and to secure athletes' social and ethical rights. There were two main reasons for the Danish state to become involved in the area of elite sport: to acknowledge and show respect for the cultural value of sport and also to attempt to eliminate the negative aspects of elite sports – i.e. increasing commercialisation, the lack of real educational opportunities available to full-time sportspeople.

Team Denmark is responsible for the promotion of promising young athletes, training elite coaches, organising talent centres in cooperation with different sports federations and awarding grants to talented athletes.

Team Denmark also provides guidance on educational and job opportunities and coordinates with the Ministry of Education and individual educational institutions to negotiate flexible arrangements and special conditions for athletes in the education system.

Young athletes in Denmark can take four years to complete **secondary school** instead of the usual three. This allows them extra time to focus on sport. Education at these so-called “Team Denmark high schools” is not intended to enhance achievements in specific sports but to gather talented young athletes together in the same classes, provide general education in training and exercise and to allow them to attend more specialised training at their individual sports clubs or talent-centres.

At **university** level, Team Denmark awards grants to students but usually for specific sports-related purposes – e.g. training, international assemblies. Team Denmark can also provide a type of grant to athletes who prolong their university studies because they are simultaneously pursuing a full-time sports career.

### **Quotas for the admission of athletes to university**

There are no specific quotas for the admission of athletes to Danish universities. However, some universities consider a sports career as relevant experience for courses. Therefore entry to certain types of courses is easier for athletes although the decision on entry qualifications depends on the educational institution. For example the Institute for Physical Education might be more likely than other third-level institutions to regard a sports career as equivalent to academic merit or work experience.

---

<sup>6</sup> Based on information provided by Søren Willeberg of the Danish Ministry of Culture, September 2003.

## **Grants for retired professionals to study at university**

There are no specific grants for former professional athletes to study at university. All Danish university students receive financial support from the State. Team Denmark provides grants to students who decide to prolong their studies in order to accommodate a career in sports, as financial support from the State only lasts as long as the prescribed duration of the course. The value of grants from Team Denmark is usually the same as those provided by the State.

## **Flexibility within the university system**

A division of Team Denmark is responsible for educational guidance for athletes. This division negotiates with individual universities to arrange flexibility regarding exam dates etc. Team Denmark aims to provide guidance to athletes for the duration of their academic careers, helping to solve any problems which might make it difficult to combine a sports career with study.

## **Public sector**

At the moment there are no provisions in place for the employment of athletes in the public sector. However, the 1985 legislation relating to elite sport (which was responsible for the creation of Team Denmark) is currently being considered for revision, and the question of the employment of athletes in the public sector has been mentioned as potential area of focus.

## **Private sector**

There are no direct incentives for the recruitment of former professional athletes in the private sector. However, one of the responsibilities of Team Denmark is to provide assistance to athletes with long-term career goals and, in this context, one of its main sponsors, a temporary employment agency, runs a programme to provide training and job opportunities to former athletes, with the aim of providing long-term employment.

## **Pension scheme<sup>7</sup>**

In October 2003 the Danish People's Party put forward a proposal for a parliamentary decision to establish a pension scheme specifically for athletes. Through the scheme, professional athletes could put a certain percentage of their salary towards a savings fund which they could use at the end of their career either for further education or to set up their own business. The proposed scheme would involve special tax rules for savings. During the negotiations between the Danish People's Party and the government on the budget for 2004, it was agreed to establish such a scheme.

---

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.fm.dk/visNyhed.asp?artikeIID=6062>

## **GERMANY<sup>8</sup>**

### **Provisions for the promotion of young athletes**

Germany has 38 Elite Sports Schools which are recognised by the German Sports Confederation (DSB). These schools aim to reconcile the requirements of competitive sport and school education and cooperate closely with sports clubs, sports confederations and performance centres. At the moment, approximately 11,000 talented athletes are enrolled in these schools, 5,000 of whom are in federation juvenile squads<sup>9</sup>.

Squads consist of athletes who are selected by sports federations to participate in international competitions and/or for special support programmes. In Olympic sports there are currently about 23,000 D-squad athletes, 2,200 DC squad athletes, 1,800 C-squad athletes, 1,200 B-squad athletes and 800 A-squad athletes. D-squads are selected by the regional federations, and all others, by the national federations. D to C squads are junior squads whereas B and A-squads are for high-level performance athletes.

Elite Sports Schools are often on a full or half-boarding basis. In special cases the German Sports Aid Foundation provides financial assistance to students at these schools. A further 30 similar institutions exist which take a similar approach to the Elite Sports Schools but which have not been recognised by the DSB.

The German Sports Confederation (DSB) operates 20 Olympic Support Centres which prepare athletes for performance at the Olympic Games, World Championships and European Championships. Finance for the Support Centres comes from the German government and from the 16 German states and local communities. The Olympic Support Centres aim to provide support to Germany's top athletes and coaches in matters relating to sports medicine, physiotherapy, scientific training and careers advice. The centres employ 31 career advisers who assist athletes in combining high performance sport with their education or profession. Areas of concern in careers advice include:

- Individual support during and after a sports career
- Advice on and help with school, third-level education and finding employment
- Third-level education and employment for elite athletes who need time off for training and competition
- Problems with military service
- Accommodation problems

In the context of third level education, the “universities in partnership with sport” initiative provides study bursaries to deserving applicants. This initiative is funded by the German Sports Aid Foundation.

---

<sup>8</sup> Based on information provided by Dr. Georg Anders of the Federal Institute for Sports Science, July and October 2003; Dr. Arne Güllich, Head of the Department of Talent Promotion of the German Sports Federation, July and October 2003; Peter Kreutzer, Head of the Department of High Performance Sport of the German Sports Federation, August 2003.

<sup>9</sup> “Squads” refer to athletes who are selected by sports federations to participate in international competitions and/or for special support programmes.

### **Quotas for the admission of athletes to university**

There are no quotas for the admission of athletes to university. However, where the demand for a certain university course or a certain university exceeds the number of places available, quotas are regulated according to the average A-level marks. Therefore the better the marks, the higher the chances for admission. The marking scale is from 1 (best) to 6 (worst), with the average for most students between 1.8 and 2.5. Athletes who are members of DC, C, B or A-squads can receive a bonus of 0.3 marks on their A-level average and therefore have a better chance for admission to university. This measure is in place in order to compensate young athletes for the time and energy invested in sporting activities. In order to avail of the bonus points, students must submit an application in which they give evidence that they have been unable to invest more time on their education and study because of the high demands of training and competition activities.

### **Grants for retired professionals to study at university**

The German Sports Aid Foundation (Stiftung Deutsche Sportshilfe) offers bursaries to professional athletes who are enrolled in a university programme and decide to retire from a competitive sports career. These temporary bursaries are designed to allow such athletes to complete their university studies and are awarded for up to three years. This programme is requested by a maximum of 3 to 5 athletes each year.

### **Flexibility within the university system**

According to research carried out in September 2003, at the moment there are 45 German universities which have “cooperation agreements” with Olympic Support Centres, German University Sports Federations and/or National Sports Federations in order to accommodate students who wish to pursue a professional sports career while in full-time third-level education. These universities offer reduced entry criteria for athletes. Special efforts are made to promote athletes within the university system – these include flexibility in timetables, exam scheduling, excursions and practical courses. Athletes can also extend the duration of their courses – i.e. more than the normal number of semesters permitted. Students are also offered personal tutors and study counselling. At the moment, 850 national squad members (C, B and A-squads) are enrolled at these universities. However the total number of athletes enrolled is much higher.

### **Public sector**

The German government has employment opportunities for top athletes in a number of areas. The military has 704 positions; the federal border police has 38 positions for Summer sports athletes and 75 for Winter sports athletes; the customs service has 40 positions. These positions are for current rather than retired professional athletes. Employment is for a limited duration depending on international competition results. The

customs service offers athletes the opportunity to develop a long-term career once they have retired from sport.

However, as a rule, employment in the public sector requires certain qualifications. Recruitment is by competition and is based on a set of criteria. Current or former professional athletes can only be recruited into the public sector if they obtain the necessary qualifications.

### **Private sector**

The German Sports Aid Foundation has begun an initiative to promote the career prospects of current top athletes by helping them to find traineeships or employment. A national pool of companies (22 in 2002) offer traineeships and employment which is compatible with full-time competitive sport. The German Sports Aid Foundation aims to help athletes to find employment in small or medium-sized companies. The foundation provides financial compensation for loss of earnings to companies which employ athletes. Careers advice seminars are organised and careers advisers are employed at Olympic Support Centres.

The Federal Institute for Sports Science has been focused for some time on the question of career prospects for athletes who have finished their professional sports career. The institute has held symposia and funded research on the subject<sup>10</sup>.

### **Pension scheme**

In Germany there are no state pension schemes which cater specifically for athletes although there have been some informal discussions by scientists and members of sports federations. Any schemes for athletes would be on a private basis (for example, through sportsclubs).

---

<sup>10</sup> There have been a number of publications on the subject:  
R. Seiler/G. Anders/P. Irlingen (Ed.): Das Leben nach dem Spitzensport. Schriftenreihe des Bundesamtes für Sport Nr. 77, Magglingen 2000  
A. Richartz/W.D. Brettschneider: Weltmeister werden und die Schule Schaffen. Schriftenreihe des Bundesinstituts für Sport, Schorndorf 1996  
D. Hackfort/E. Emrich/v. Papathanassiou: Nachsportliche Karriereverläufe. Schriftenreihe des Bundesinstituts für Sport, Schorndorf 1997



## **GREECE<sup>11</sup>**

### **Provisions for the promotion of young athletes**

In addition to measures taken in this area by national athletic federations, the two following provisions also exist:

- Since 1988 a special department has existed within the context of secondary school education develop the skills and abilities of students in different sports disciplines.
- The General Secretariat of Sport of the Greek Ministry of Culture runs a “talent search” programme for children aged 8-10 who display promise as potential future athletes. Evaluation tests are held in 4<sup>th</sup> class of primary school.

### **Quotas for the admission of athletes to university**

According to Article 34 of Law 2725/99, there are quotas for athletes who have achieved special distinctions in sport who decide to enter university. For athletes who wish to enter faculties of athletics and sports education there is a quota of 30% above the normal number of candidates admitted each year. Therefore if, for example, 400 students pass the state exams and are admitted to a faculty of Physical Education and Sport, then an additional 120 places are allocated to athletes. For other faculties, the quota is 1%, again in addition to the normal number of students admitted.

In order to qualify for these quotas athletes must obtain results in the state exams which are the equivalent of the lowest results of a regular applicant to the same faculty. However they get a 10% bonus on their exam results.

Another condition for inclusion in the quota is that special distinctions in sport must have been achieved by these athletes no more than four years before the year for which they are applying to begin their university course. There is an exception for distinctions achieved at the Olympic Games or at the European Championships.

### **Grants for retired professionals to study at university**

There are no grants which cater specifically for retired athletes who wish to study at university. However there are scholarships available for athletes at both secondary school level and at university level. These scholarships are awarded to athletes who achieve excellent academic and sports results. These are provided for in Article 35 of Law 2725/99. The amount awarded depends on the level of study and the distinctions achieved by athletes. Scholarships are also available for post-graduate study, either in Greece or abroad.

---

<sup>11</sup> Based on information provided by Nikos Exarchos, Secretary General of Sports of the Greek Ministry of Culture and Lambis Nikolaou, President of the Hellenic Olympic Committee, September and October 2003.

### **Flexibility within the university system**

The State tries to ensure that athletes who have achieved competitive distinctions at Greek or international level can pursue their sports training at the same time as their academic studies. Athletes have the right to take up to two months leave per academic year. This leave includes absence from compulsory seminars, lectures, lab sessions etc. If an athlete's leave happens to coincide with an examination period, his or her exam dates are postponed until after the period of leave. The time and venue for postponed exams, as with additional arrangements, are decided on by the individual university faculty or department.

University students who are members of national teams have the right to switch from one faculty to another.

### **Public sector**

According to Paragraph 8, Article 34, Law 2725, athletes who obtain one special distinction in their sport -

- can occupy positions in public administration.
- are allocated ten places at training academies for the police, the fire brigade and the coast guard. This allocation is in addition to the normal numbers of trainees accepted by these academies with each intake.
- have the right to enter the military as a reserve officer on a 5-year contract. There is a 2% quota for athletes above the normal number of applicants accepted as professional soldiers.

According to Paragraphs 16 and 17, Article 34, Law 2725/99, athletes who ranked between first and sixth place in their sport at the Olympic Games may work as consultants in the Ministry of Sport or as technical consultants in their own sports federation, on the condition that it has been no more than five years since they retired from a professional sports career.

Also according to Paragraph 18, Article 34 of the same law, athletes who ranked between first and eight place in their sport at the Olympic Games can receive a licence to open a shop selling sports and national lottery tickets.

### **Private sector**

There are no specific incentives offered to private companies to employ athletes.

### **Pension scheme**

There are no special pension schemes for athletes in Greece. According to Greek law, professional and paid athletes come under the National Social Security Institution's pension programme.

## **SPAIN<sup>12</sup>**

### **Provisions for the promotion of young athletes**

Within the context of secondary education in Spain, the trend is to incorporate secondary schools into High Performance Centres, to adapt timetables to allow for training sessions and to make greater use of tutoring. High Performance Centres (CARD) are sports facilities owned by the State or by an Autonomous Community which aim to provide athletes with the best conditions for training.

### **Quotas for the admission of athletes to university**

According to Spanish law, a maximum of 3% of all places on regular university degree courses and 5% of places on bachelor's degree courses in Physical Activity and Sports Sciences are assigned to high-level athletes. Athletes must meet the academic requirements for entry to these courses<sup>13</sup>.

### **Grants for retired professionals to study at university**

There are no grants specifically for retired professional athletes to study at university. However the Spanish Olympic Committee provides bursaries for training courses to elite athletes and coaches. The types of training financed by these bursaries include training activities organised by the Spanish Olympic Committee, whether directly or in cooperation with other institutions (Olympic Centre for Post-Secondary Studies, Olympic University Institute for Sports Sciences, etc). This type of training is open to people involved with a sports federation or other institutions related to the Olympic Committee who also belong to groups for athletes, coaches, referees/judges and administrative staff of the sports federations, at all levels. Bursaries also cover regulated training activities not organised by the Spanish Olympic Committee, whether or not they comprise sports-related studies.

### **Flexibility within the university system**

There are specific legal provisions in place to facilitate athletes who wish to combine a university education with a professional sports career. According to Article 53(2)(d) of the Sports Act implemented under Article 11(4) of Royal Decree No. 1467/1997, educational institutions which provide education under the standard and special systems and universities have to be flexible enough to adapt to the needs of athletes, for example, with respect to requests for changes to timetables and examinations scheduled for the same time as sports activities, and attendance requirements. This legislation also states that the limit to the number of years taken for a single university course or to the number of times an exam can be taken may be changed for athletes.

---

<sup>12</sup> Based on a report written in Spanish by Carolina Marco Bellver, trainee in the Directorate General for Research of the European Parliament, 14<sup>th</sup> July 2003.

<sup>13</sup> The principal legislation in this area is Royal Decree No. 69/2000 which regulates selection procedures for the admission to university of students who satisfy the necessary legal requirements for admission.

According to Article 11(6) of Royal Decree No.1467/1997, the Higher Sports Council may sign agreements with the Autonomous Communities, universities outside the public sector, and private educational institutions which grant special conditions in relation to admission and attendance to third-level institutions to high-level athletes who fulfil the general academic entrance requirements.

The Autonomous University of Barcelona, the University of Salamanca, the University of Oviedo and the National Physical Education Institute for Catalonia (INEFC) all have special programmes for tutoring high-level athletes.

According to Article 53(2)(b) of the Sports Act<sup>14</sup>, elite athletes who wish to train as sports coaches are exempt from academic requirements necessary for access to training courses.

In addition, Article 11(5) of Royal Decree No. 1467/1997 stipulates that where certain studies at Vocational Training Institutes require physical tests, high-level athletes are exempt from these tests.

Many universities who offer bachelor's degree courses in Physical Activity and Sports Sciences run mandatory entrance tests to assess applicants' personal aptitude. Supplementary Provision One of Royal Decree No. 69/2000 stipulates that where a candidate for such a degree course has been classified as a high-level athlete by the Higher Sports Council, he or she is exempt from these tests.

In order to obtain the status of high-level sportsman or sportswoman, an athlete must be listed in the annual reports of the Higher Sports Council in cooperation with Spanish Sports Federations and, where appropriate, with the autonomous communities.

### **Public sector**

Article 53(5) of the Sports Act stipulates that all government services must consider the status of high-level athlete as a merit both in selection tests for posts related to the sporting activity in question and in competitions to fill posts related to that activity provided that in both cases assessment of specific skills is provided for.

Under Article 13(1) and (2) of Royal Decree No.1467/1997, the State Law Enforcement Agencies and Security Forces are to consider the status of high-level athlete as a relevant merit for consideration in recruitment.

### **Private sector**

Article 12(2) of Royal Decree No.1467/1997 allows for the possibility of the Higher Sports Council entering into agreements with employers, whether public or private, in

---

<sup>14</sup> Sports Act No. 10/1990 of 15 October 1990, implemented by Royal Decree No. 1467/1997 of 19 September 1997

order to provide high-level athletes with flexible work arrangements which would allow them to combine work with technical sports training. To date no formal agreement has been made, although verbal agreements do exist between the Higher Sports Council and the odd private company such as IBanesto.

The Spanish Olympic Committee (COE) has made provisions for the employment of athletes within the private sector. The first of these measures is the allocation of COE bursaries. The Spanish Olympic Committee grants bursaries to elite athletes and coaches which are used towards training. The aims of the COE bursaries are firstly, to facilitate the integration of high-performing athletes into the world of work (whether in a sport-related area or not) by means of appropriate training, and secondly, to provide refresher training for coaches and administrative staff.

The second measure for the assistance of athletes in the private sector is the provision of financial assistance to athletes who are in difficult socioeconomic circumstances or who because of illness, operations or some other health-related problem are unable to work. The recently established Association of Spanish Olympic Athletes (ADO) will in future be managing this type of financial assistance.

The third provision made by the Spanish Olympic Committee for the promotion of athletes within the private sector is a vocational assistance programme which consists of a joint initiative between the Olympic Committee and the ADECCO Job Placement Foundation<sup>15</sup>. The purpose of this programme - known as the Master Programme - is to help professional athletes to find employment after their sports careers have ended. The ADECCO Foundation gives advice through a Human Resources expert and provides the necessary training to ensure full entry into the labour market.

The Master Programme provides a free service for nine months during which the job-seeker is accompanied by a 'work coach' who guides the job-seeker in finding employment or work placement, and shows him or her how to use his or her skills in a work environment. Furthermore, during those nine months of monitoring, the athlete's CV is placed in all ADECCO offices in the area and is forwarded to companies for consideration.

In order to have access to those services the job-seeker must have high-performance athlete status, which means that he or she must have represented Spain at international level in junior or senior category.

The vocational assistance includes a programme outside the scope of the Olympic Committee known as the Relay Programme, which is the result of an agreement signed by the ADECCO Job Placement Foundation and athletes' associations in football, handball, basketball, athletics, five-a-side football, golf and cycling. The aim of the programme, which has been in operation since 1999, is the same as that of the Master Programme, and the methods used are similar: the ADECCO Foundation assumes

---

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.fundacionadecco.es/exdeportistas.htm>

responsibility for all costs, and the job-seeker is monitored and counselled in his or her search for employment and trained in the most modern job-search techniques.

An initiative known as the Banco del Deporte<sup>16</sup> (Sports Bank) is an employment bureau for elite athletes who are seeking employment after their sporting careers have come to an end.

A 1997/1998 study carried out by the Spanish Olympic Committee concluded that the banking and savings sector presents the greatest opportunities for recruitment and is most receptive to the problems of job placement faced by former athletes.

### **Pension scheme<sup>17</sup>**

December 2000 saw the introduction of a special pension scheme for professional athletes in Spain. The scheme, which was made possible by a change in personal income tax legislation, was set up and is administered by a group of sports organisations including associations for football, handball, basketball and cycling. There are currently 606 athletes who benefit from the pension scheme of which 424 are football players. In 2001 the scheme was ranked among the fifteen most profitable pension plans of its kind in Spain – i.e. mixed plans with a maximum variable interest rate of 25%.

---

<sup>16</sup> [www.bancodeldeporte.com](http://www.bancodeldeporte.com)

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.abp.es/secciones\\_fijas/index.asp?secc=mutualidad](http://www.abp.es/secciones_fijas/index.asp?secc=mutualidad)

## **FRANCE<sup>18</sup>**

### **Provisions for the promotion of young athletes**

The system of access routes to high-level sport in France has structures in place which create conditions for high-level athletes that are favourable to both their academic progress and their progress in sport.

Within the context of secondary school education, this system is used in a number of ways: athletes can receive dispensations on their school report cards, regional educational authorities can allocate extra hours to schools, occasionally one academic year can be extended, the weekly school timetable is adapted to suit an athlete's sports schedule.

Decree No. 2002-1010 of 18<sup>th</sup> July 2002 states that access routes to high-level sport include structures which allow high-level and promising athletes to reach the highest level in their sports discipline and to benefit from training which will prepare them for a professional sports career. These structures consist primarily of two groups – one for promising talented athletes and one for established professionals (“pôles Espoirs” and “pôles France”). These are organised as a network within each sports discipline and are intended to provide training to athletes and to act as resource centres offering athletes a range of support services, notably careers and medical support.

The groups must meet specific requirements in order to guarantee athletes optimum conditions for training and support in other aspects of their lives. These requirements are drawn up according to the proposal of a national technical director in coordination with the individual sports federation and contains stipulations which have decided on by the Minister for Sport, the Minister for Youth, the Minister for National Education and Research and the Minister for Agriculture.

This decree also introduces guarantees which are indispensable as far as the protection of underage athletes are concerned and sets 12 as the lower age limit for registration in a sports group (“pôle”).

Approval for training centres and professional clubs is issued or withdrawn according to specific terms set out in a decree from 15<sup>th</sup> May 2001 which implements Article 15-4 of Law No. 84-610 of 16<sup>th</sup> July 1984. A training centre can only receive approval after a certain specific information has been verified:

- the total number of athletes that can be catered for
- the type of training and athlete assistance and support to be provided, the maximum duration of weekly training and competition, as well as the periods needed for rest and recuperation necessary for athletes' health
- the type of medical support

---

<sup>18</sup> Based on information provided by Andrzej Rogulski, Head of the Bureau of International Relations and Major Sporting Events of the French Ministry of Sport, September 2003 and Eric Srecki of the French Ministry of Sport, October 2003.

- the type of sports facilities and equipment, accommodation and catering facilities, work and leisure facilities provided for young members
- the total number and individual qualifications of all personnel responsible for sports training, and for medical and social support

As well as the approval which is issued by the Minister for Sport, the Article 15-4 also allows for an agreement, to be approved by the Ministry for Sport, between the individual young athlete and the sports association or society which the training centre or club comes under. The lower age limit for an athlete to sign such an agreement is 14.

### **Quotas for the admission of athletes to university**

There is no quota system in place for the admission of high-level athletes to university.

### **Grants for retired professionals to study at university**

National technical directors of sports federations can help high-level athletes through so-called “personalised assistance” which is allocated to each sports federation at meetings held to decide on annual objectives. Directors of sports federations can also gain financial support for education from regional services provided by the Ministry of Sport.

A high-level athlete who has ended his or her professional career can, upon request and after the examination of a proposal by the national technical director, be added to the national list of high-level athletes in the category of “redeployment” which means that he or she can maintain the benefits enjoyed by a high-level athlete for an additional two years.

### **Flexibility within the university system**

Decisions concerning third-level education are the responsibility of the Ministry of Youth, National Education and Research.

Provisions concerning the admission of high-level athletes to institutions of higher education are outlined in Circular No. 1455 of 6<sup>th</sup> October 1987. This circular invites university deans, school directors and regional directors of education to undertake all necessary efforts to accommodate high-level athletes who wish to combine sports activities with study.

As the management of universities is decentralised, some university deans may, under certain conditions, make special arrangements for high-level athletes. These arrangements usually amount to extending the duration of courses, allowing reduced attendance of lectures and postponing exams.

For example, each year the Ministry of Health awards 20 high-level athletes exemption from entrance exams to the first year of courses at institutes for physiotherapy and chiropody.

## **Public sector**

The Ministry of Sport allows high-level athletes to participate in a recruitment competition, reserved exclusively for high-level athletes, to work as Category A civil servants. These athletes must undergo 18 months of preparation for the competitions. This takes place at the National Institute for Sport and Physical Education (INSEP) and is administered by sports federations.

Once they have been admitted to the civil service, athletes who are still professional, can benefit from special arrangements and flexible work schedules in order to maintain training and competition commitments.

Financial assistance towards preparation for civil service competitions is available to high-level athletes through the “personalised assistance” allocated to sports federations (see above).

French law stipulates that high-level sportspeople who work in the public sector be granted flexibility in their work schedules in order to accommodate training and competition<sup>19</sup>.

Within the context of the modernisation of the army, the Ministry of Defence allocates 80 positions to the Ministry of Sport, which are distributed among the army, the marines, the air force and the military police. 10 positions are also provided in civil personnel.

The Ministry of the Interior, Domestic Security and Local Governance allocates 60 full-time positions with the national police force to high-level athletes.

The Ministry of the Economy, Finance and Budgetary Affairs allocates 30 positions in the customs service to high-level athletes. 29 of these 30 places are reserved specifically for members of the French Ski Federation.

In 2003 the Ministry of Youth, National Education and Research employed 75 athletes as temporary secondary school teachers in sports academies specialising in their sports. Of these, 6 were able to work part-time and 11 worked with the National Union for School Sports (UNSS).

The Ministry of Sport provides 23 positions as sports teachers at the National Institute for Sport and Physical Education (INSEP).

Regional and local authorities, especially those which deal with sport, are an attractive source of employment for high-level athletes. There are currently 70 athletes working in local and regional authorities, mainly in districts, where their schedules are adapted to suit their sports activities.

---

<sup>19</sup> Specifically Article 31 Paragraph 1 of the Law of 16<sup>th</sup> July 1984 (Revised).

## **Private sector**

According to French law, high-level athletes can be employed in private and public companies. Article 32 of the Law of 16<sup>th</sup> July 1984 states that the Minister for Sport can draw up agreements with companies in order to facilitate employment for active professional athletes which would be compatible with training and competition.

The general principle behind these agreements is that the athlete is paid as a full-time employee for part-time (or often less than part-time) work. In exchange the Ministry of Sport compensates the company a set amount.

On 6<sup>th</sup> June 2001 the Ministry for Budgetary Affairs and the Ministry for Sport launched a joint initiative which offers tax incentives to those companies who enter into agreements to employ high-level athletes.

Below is an overview of the number of flexible jobs allocated to professional high-level athletes in France in both the public and private sector<sup>20</sup>:

<b>Within government ministries</b>	<b>266</b>
Ministry of Defence	68
Ministry of the Interior, Domestic Security and Local Governance – national police force	60
The Ministry of the Economy, Finance and Industry – customs	40
The Ministry of Youth, National Education and Research	75
The Ministry of Sport	23
<b>With regional and local authorities</b>	<b>95</b>
Paris city	5
Marseille city	15
Val de Marne general council	15
Other agreements with regional and local authorities	60
<b>With businesses</b>	<b>160</b>
French Railways	21
French National Electricity Company	22
The Postal Service	20
France Telecom	13
French National Gas Company	7
Paris Transport Authority	2
Other agreements with private businesses	75
<b>Total</b>	<b>521</b>

<sup>20</sup> Source: The Office of the Life of the Athlete, Directorate of Sport, Ministry of Sport, 1st September 2003. These quotas are permanent rather than annual. For positions with government ministries and with regional and local authorities, quotas are set and cannot be exceeded. However the number of positions available with businesses (public and private) is limited only by the budget of the Ministry of Sport.

Loans of up to €24,000 are available from the French government to high-level athletes who wish to set up or to develop his or her own business. These loans are paid back over four years at an interest rate of 1%. An agreement is drawn up between the Ministry of Sport and the athlete's sports federation. Loan applications are addressed to the national technical director of the sports federation and should include a cover letter, detailed description of the business plan and a three-year budget forecast<sup>21</sup>.

### **Pension scheme**

France has no pension scheme which caters specifically for high-level athletes. Therefore it is in the interest of all high-level athletes to gain employment at the earliest possible stage of their career - either as regular salaried employees or self-employed workers - in a sector other than sport in order to benefit from pension contributions which would allow for a "normal" retirement. In this context, the contribution of the Ministry of Sport is to facilitate the combination of full-time employment with sports commitments.

A professional athlete can acquire either the status of a salaried employee (of a club, a team etc.) or the status of a self-employed worker (tennis player, golf player etc.) and therefore benefit from a pension scheme through his or her professional status.

---

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.sports.gouv.fr/sport/shn7.asp#financières>



## **IRELAND<sup>22</sup>**

### **Provisions for the promotion of young athletes**

The Irish Sports Council is a statutory body which was set up in 1999 and which is responsible for the development and promotion of sport in Ireland, with funding provided from the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism.

The council oversees the International Carding Scheme for High Performance Players and Athletes, which offers financial assistance to Irish athletes at four levels - junior, developmental, international and world class.

The objective of the scheme is 'to nurture emerging talent and to assist a higher percentage of international class Irish players/athletes to become world class and to reach more European, world and Olympic finals, thereby increasing the chances of success in such events'<sup>23</sup>. The Irish Sports Council works in partnership with the National Governing Bodies of sport in Ireland (NGBs) in order to provide athletes with the necessary opportunities to advance from junior to international and then on to world class performance.

Grants range from €1,600 per annum for junior-level athletes to €30,500 per annum for World Class-level athletes. Eligibility for the scheme is based on a specific set of criteria for each sports discipline (performance, national/international ranking etc.) and allocation of grant aid to individual athletes is assessed on a case-by-case basis.

The International Carding Scheme caters for athletes who are over 16 years of age although, in exceptional circumstances, younger athletes are considered.

As well as financial support, the Carding Scheme also offers Irish athletes specialist advice on physiology, nutrition etc. and medical support.

### **Quotas for the admission of athletes to university**

There is no quota system for the entry of athletes to Irish universities.

However a number of Ireland's main universities offer sports scholarships. University College Dublin has offered sports scholarships since 1979, University College Cork since 1992 and Trinity College Dublin since 1997. In order to be considered for a scholarship candidates are required to possess the appropriate academic qualifications necessary for admission to or be full-time registered students at these universities.

Amounts awarded vary depending on the university. At University College Dublin for example, the range of scholarship benefits may include tuition fees, if applicable,

---

<sup>22</sup> Based on information provided by Peter Smyth, Secretary of the Irish Sports Council, July and October 2003.

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.irishsportsCouncil.ie/Carding%20Scheme.asp>

maintenance, books, equipment, treatment of injury and travel to national and international competitions and the value of each sports scholarship is assessed on an individual basis by the respective sports club<sup>24</sup>.

### **Grants for retired professionals to study at university**

The Irish Sports Council does not offer grants to former professional athletes to study at university.

### **Flexibility within the university system**

Special efforts made to facilitate athletes trying to pursue professional sports careers while enrolled in full-time third-level education vary depending on the academic institution.

### **Public sector**

There are no special provisions made for professional athletes to enter careers in the public sector in Ireland.

### **Private sector**

Companies in the private sector are not offered any special incentives to employ athletes who have finished their sporting careers.

### **Pension scheme**

There are no pension schemes which cater specifically for athletes in Ireland. However, according to the Finance Act of 2002, individuals whose income comes wholly or mainly from specified sporting activities (i.e. athletes, badminton players, boxers, cyclists, footballers, golfers, jockeys, rugby players, squash players, swimmers or tennis players) will be able to receive tax relief on a contribution of 30% of their annual salary towards a pension, irrespective of their age. In other sectors, employees must be at least 50 years of age in order to make a tax-deductible contribution of 30% of their income to a pension scheme<sup>25</sup>.

---

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.ucd.ie/sport/>

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.finfacts.com/fincentre/ppp1.htm> , [http://www.sage.ie/support/payroll/prsa\\_irishLife.asp](http://www.sage.ie/support/payroll/prsa_irishLife.asp)

## **ITALY<sup>26</sup>**

### **Provisions for the promotion of young athletes**

Within the secondary education sector, there are 10 sports oriented schools where students who are active in high-level sports can combine study with training. These schools are under the direct control of the Ministry of Education.

There are provisions for the promotion of athletes who study at Institutes of Sports Science. Other athletes who study at university are supported through the University Sports Centres which receive public grants. However there are no grants available specifically for athletes to study at university.

### **Quotas for the admission of athletes to university**

There is no quota system for the admission of athletes to university. An athlete's professional status is only considered for admission to a sports science faculty.

### **Grants for retired professionals to study at university**

There are no specific provisions for the allocation of grants to former athletes to study at university. According to Law No. 390/1991 individual universities are given autonomy through regional authorities and have their own grants which may be awarded to the most capable students.

### **Flexibility within the university system**

Officially special efforts to accommodate athletes studying at university – e.g. changing exam dates – are only made in some private universities. Frequently, however, an individual student will approach his or her professor directly to discuss changing exam dates, etc. although such arrangements can be difficult.

### **Public sector**

There are public competitions for entry into the following government services: the army, the airforce, the military police, the customs service, the fire brigade, the prison service, the State forest service and the marine. It is a tradition of the Italian armed forces and other similar state structures so have their own sports groups. These groups are usually interested in receiving a certain number of athletes. Athletes within the sports groups take part in military championships. There are quite a few high-level athletes in the military but they must do the same competitions as other applicants.

---

<sup>26</sup> Based on information provided by Dr. Diana Bianchedi, Vice President of the Italian Olympic Committee and Bruno Rossi Mori of the Documentation and Information Department of the Italian Olympic Committee, October 2003.

## **Private sector**

*Italia Lavoro* (Italy Work) manages the “Sport to Job” programme for retired athletes. This programme aims to help former athletes who are entering the job market by providing training courses and e-learning on subjects such as sponsoring, sports marketing and facilities management.

In Spain, Italy and Norway, the ADECCO Foundation co-operates with national Olympic committees and various sports associations to provide direct support to enable former athletes to either re-enter the workforce or in many cases make their first move into a conventional career. Outplacement services and access to training and advice have all proven effective. For many the first step is temporary or part-time work and 40 per cent of the former athletes placed by Adecco obtain a permanent employment contract. In Italy, in 2001, Adecco helped 176 former athletes to start a new career (success rate: 98%).<sup>27</sup> Since 2001 the Italian Olympic Committee and the Adecco foundation have operated a programme for retired athletes known as the Master Programme 2000. This programme involves negotiations with companies, introducing athletes. At the moment there are more than 300 former athletes who are employed in private companies as part of the Master 2000 Programme.

## **Pension scheme**

According to Italian law, professionals working in the sports sector must register with the National Body for Social Security of Show Business Employees. Law 91/1981 defines as sports-related professions: athletes, coaches, managers and trainers. In order to be regarded as a professional, the individual must be in paid permanent employment as established in the rules of the national sports federations and CONI, the Italian Olympic Committee.

The Provident Fund for Athlete Insurance was created on the initiative of the Italian Olympic Committee in 1934. SPORTASS is a public body which is responsible for providing insurance cover and welfare payments for sports injuries. SPORTASS provides professional athletes with social security coverage i.e. it offers a pension in addition to regular compulsory insurance.

The Italian Olympic Committee contributes the equivalent of twice the total prize money received by an Olympic medallist to SPORTASS to go towards that athlete’s individual pension fund. This system was established in 1996 on the occasion of the Atlanta Olympic Games.

All athletes who are members of the “Olympic Club” can make voluntary contributions to a pension fund. Those members who have been with the club for a minimum of eight years may draw their pensions from the age of 45. An athlete must be appointed to the “Olympic Club” by the Italian Olympic Committee’s National Council on the proposal of the Olympic Training Office and in agreement with the various sports federations.

---

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.adecco.com/Channels/adecco/about+adecco/socially+committed1.asp>

## **LUXEMBOURG<sup>28</sup>**

### **Provisions for the promotion of young athletes**

There are two main programmes for the promotion of young athletes in Luxembourg.

The first of these is a joint initiative by sports federations, the Ministry of Sports and the Olympic Committee (COSL). Under the initiative, talented athletes participate in two training camps abroad and three high-level international competitions each year. Athletes are provided with access to specialised coaches and medical support. The initiative is financed by the Ministry of Sports, the Olympic Committee and the relevant sports federation.

The second is a programme known as the “Olympic contract”. This programme can run for a maximum of four years and provides intensive coaching and medical support. Finance for the programme is shared equally by the Olympic Committee (COSL) and the Ministry of Sports.

Secondary schools offer special classes to pupils who practice sport at an advanced level. These classes aim to provide a link between education and sports training.

The Olympic and Sports Committee and individual sports federations receive grants.

### **Quotas for the admission of athletes to university**

At the moment Luxembourg does not have its own university. Students can complete the first (and in some cases the second) year of their third-level education through a formula known as “cours universitaire”. However, there are no quotas for the entry of athletes into third-level courses.

### **Grants for retired professionals to study at university**

There are no grants available for former professional athletes to study at university.

### **Flexibility within the university system**

There are no specific arrangements to facilitate athletes who combine a sports career with university study.

### **Public sector**

For the past 10 years the Luxembourgish military has had a sports section for young talented athletes. This sports section offers social security and facilitates entry into low-level positions of the State’s administrative service.

---

<sup>28</sup> Based on information provided by Karin Schank of the Luxembourgish Ministry of Sport, September and October 2003.

### **Private sector**

There are no incentives offered to companies in the private sector to employ athletes who have finished their sports careers.

### **Pension scheme**

There is no pension scheme designed specifically for athletes. Most athletes in Luxembourg are amateurs and have access to a pension scheme through their full-time professions.

However, a limited group of about 10 to 12 talented young athletes who are part of the sports section of the Luxembourgish military are able to pursue a professional sports career and receive social security cover through their status as members of the army. This system has been in existence for the last ten years.

## **THE NETHERLANDS<sup>29</sup>**

### **Provisions for the promotion of young athletes**

With the consent of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, Dutch children who display promise in a sports discipline can attend what are called LOOT secondary schools where they are able to adapt their school timetable to suit sports commitments and vice versa. There are 14 LOOT schools throughout the Netherlands. At the moment a scheme is being piloted whereby LOOT schools coordinate with other educational institutions in the same area to allow pupils who are talented in sport but who are enrolled in regular schools access to sports facilities close to their homes.

In 2001, the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport introduced a grant scheme for top-level athletes. The scheme caters for athletes from the age of 18 upwards. The amount awarded is the equivalent of 70% of the standard social welfare benefit for a single person and is intended to go towards athletes' living expenses so that they concentrate more fully on their sport. Recipients of these grants are not prohibited from earning an additional income. In June 2003, there were 245 athletes using the scheme.

### **Quotas for the admission of athletes to university**

There are no quotas for the admission of athletes to university.

### **Grants for retired professionals to study at university**

There are no grants available for former professional athletes to study at university.

### **Flexibility within the university system**

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science allows all students some flexibility in structuring their university studies. Sportspeople can resume third-level education after they end their sports careers. Some universities have small-scale regulations for top-level athletes – for example, the University of Twente.

### **Public sector**

The Dutch armed forces offer contracts to professional athletes which allows them to combine a career in the military with a professional sports career. At the moment there are 13 top-level athletes in the Dutch army. The best known of these is Mark Huizinga who won a gold medal for judo at the 2000 Sydney Olympics and who is an officer in the Dutch Royal Air Force.

---

<sup>29</sup> Based on information provided by Frank JM Van Linden of the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, August 2003, and Arnoud Sterk, Senior Advisor of the Sports Department of the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, October 2003.

### **Private sector**

There are no incentives for companies in the private sector to employ retired professional sportspeople.

### **Pension scheme**

In 1996 the Sports Department of the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport conducted a study on the desirability of setting up a transitional payment and pension fund for all elite athletes. There are already two such pension schemes in existence: one for professional soccer players - founded in 1972 - and another for professional cyclists. The Ministry of Finance is currently discussing several options for the establishment of an athlete pension scheme. While the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport is in favour of a transitional payment fund for all elite athletes, the Ministry of Finance is reluctant. Discussions are pending.

## AUSTRIA<sup>30</sup>

### Provisions for the promotion of young athletes

In Austria there are three options for the combining secondary school education with sports.

- Students can attend schools which focus on specific Winter sports (*Schi-Gymnasium*; *Schi-Handelsschule*)
- Other secondary schools have a general focus on sport. Some of these offer specialised classes in certain sports (e.g. football) in cooperation with sports federations
- The third option is secondary schools for young athletes who specialise in different sports. Students can train twice a day with personal coaches. They take five years to complete secondary school instead of the usual four. They have free time for training and competition and receive special support to help them to catch up with their schoolwork.

Universities offer courses on sports science which include modules on physical education, sports science and sports management. In addition to the academic training available to students at Sports Science Institutes, both sports students and others have plenty of opportunities for exercise, competition and preparation for competition at different levels at university.

As for all university students in Austria, students who are doing a sports-related course or athletes who are combining university study with a competitive sports career may be eligible for study grants depending on their social situation.

### Quotas for the admission of athletes to university

Since there is open access to third-level education in Austria, there are no quotas for the admission of athletes to university.

### Grants for retired professionals to study at university

There are no grants specifically for former professional athletes to study at university. As with all other university students, former athletes may be eligible for financial assistance depending on their social situation.

### Flexibility within the university system

There are no official provisions for flexibility for athletes studying at university. However, it is recommended that individual athletes negotiate special arrangements with their university professors.

---

<sup>30</sup> Based on information provided by Erika König-Zenz of the Austrian Sports Federation, July and October 2003 and Isabella Prieler, Division VI of the Office of the Chancellor, November 2003.

### **Public sector**

Austrian athletes who do military service are given a reduced service and have the opportunity to do training. A certain number of athletes can stay in the military depending on competition results.

### **Private sector**

There are no incentives given to companies in the private sector to employ retired professional athletes.

### **Pension scheme**

Pension schemes for athletes do not exist in Austria. However, the government and the Austrian Sports Federation are currently discussing a legal framework for professional athletes with a view to defining the status of a professional athlete and the consequences with regard to social security. It is expected that this legal framework will be completed within the next few months.

## **FINLAND<sup>31</sup>**

### **Provisions for the promotion of young athletes**

In Finland there are a number of provisions for promotion of sports at upper secondary school level. A young athlete can apply for a place in –

- A sports-oriented upper secondary school – there are 12 in Finland
- A sports-oriented vocational upper secondary school – there are 10 in Finland
- A general or vocational upper secondary school which specialises in sports

Sports-oriented schools are nominated and partly financed by the Ministry of Education. Additional finance comes from local educational institutions and some national sports federations. The schools are coordinated by a group which is chaired by the National Olympic Committee. Eligibility for admission to sports-oriented schools is based on grades, sporting merit and an entrance exam/interview.

Sports oriented schools have a special role to play in the development of Sports Academies which are currently being established in Finland's main cities. These academies offer special facilities and flexible arrangements to athletes in third-level education.

### **Quotas for the admission of athletes to university**

There are no quotas for the entry of athletes to university. There are two polytechnics which run special degree programmes for athletes. These begin every second year. Admission is based partly on sporting merit and partly on grades and an entrance exam.

### **Grants for retired professionals to study at university**

The Ministry of Education finances a foundation which provides study grants to preprofessionals and to athletes who have ended their sports careers. Grants are awarded to students at vocational upper secondary schools, at polytechnics and university. The amount of the grant is €1600 for athletes in third-level education and €1300 for athletes in upper secondary education. The grant is awarded a maximum of three times to the same individual.

### **Flexibility within the university system**

In recent years several universities and polytechnics have started their own programmes to cater for the needs of athletes who are combining education with sport. Sports Academies are made up of a network of secondary and third-level educational institutions, local educational and sports authorities, local sports clubs and national sports federations. Top-level athletes who enter general or vocational upper secondary schools,

---

<sup>31</sup> Based on information provided by Nelli Koivisto of the Finnish Ministry of Education, Department of Sports and Youth Affairs, September 2003.

polytechnics or universities are offered special facilities including study counselling, personal tutoring and flexible timetables.

The National Olympic Committee is financed by the Ministry of Education to employ a Study and Career Counsellor who provides assistance to athletes with study and career matters and who coordinates with educational institutions and sports federations.

### **Public sector**

There are no special provisions in place for the employment of athletes in the public sector.

### **Private sector**

Companies in the private sector are not offered any incentives to employ former professional athletes.

### **Pension scheme<sup>32</sup>**

A change in Finnish taxation legislation which was introduced on 15<sup>th</sup> March 1999 stipulates that any athlete who earns more than €9400 per year is allowed to contribute 20% of his or her salary to a tax-free pension fund. The maximum annual contribution to such a fund is €25,000. This change in legislation was introduced in order to allow athletes to save some money during their active sports career in order to facilitate their life following retirement from sport, for example, to finance study. Retired athletes can draw on their pension funds 5-10 years after ending their sports careers.

There are five different type of pension funds available for athletes in Finland. One pension fund is open to all types of athletes, a second is specifically for skiers, a third for track and field athletes, one is for ice-hockey players and another for football players.

There is currently a proposal underway to make a further change to the legislation on these pension funds so that athletes would be permitted to contribute a maximum of 30% of their income to their pensions and to double the upper annual limit on contributions to €50,000.

---

<sup>32</sup> Based on information provided by Tuuli Merikoski-Silius, Study and Career Counsellor at the Finnish Olympic Committee, October 2003.

## **SWEDEN<sup>33</sup>**

### **Provisions for the promotion of young athletes**

In both primary and secondary schools in Sweden, sport and health forms a separate subject. The aim is that children learn to take responsibility for their own physical training and to develop a permanent interest in fitness, sport and outdoor activities. The Swedish Sports Confederation seeks to improve conditions for sport in Swedish schools, particularly by increasing the number of lessons devoted to the subject.

Since the early 1970s sports and education have been combined in Sweden to allow talented young athletes to become part of the international elite. Within this context, in a large number of sporting disciplines, sports upper secondary schools serve as a stepping stone to the elite level. These upper secondary schools are complemented by regional and municipal sports upper secondary schools in many parts of the country.

Today there are 61 sports secondary schools in Sweden covering 32 sports disciplines. These schools have a total of approximately 1300 pupils. The schools which attract the largest numbers of pupils are those dedicated to skiing, athletics, orienteering, ice-hockey, basketball, football, bandies and volleyball. These are normal schools where part of the student body is made up of athletes who specialise in a common sport. All pupils follow a standard curriculum and athletes are given opportunities for training during the day. Pupils can, to some extent, adjust their school timetable for training and competition. These sports secondary schools stimulate young athletes by giving them the opportunity to train and interact with other like-minded pupils who play the same sports.

The Talent Programme in Swedish sports consists of a joint initiative between the government and the private business sector whereby 15 million Swedish Krona (approximately 1.7 million Euro) per year is allocated to the Swedish Olympic Committee as an investment in sporting talent. Responsibility for the programme lies with the Swedish Olympic Committee (SOC). The focus of the programme is on results and individuals but also aims to help athletes to prepare for life after their sporting careers. The programme also allows specialist sports associations to pursue their own long-term elite training programmes.

Each specialist sports association nominates athletes for selection for the Talent Programme. The annual selection of athletes for the programme is the responsibility of the SOC and is based on defined criteria which includes:

- Results achieved
- Previous training background
- Physical and mental state
- Attitude

---

<sup>33</sup> Based on information provided by Keneth Wising of the Swedish Ministry of Justice, July, August and October 2003.

Once an athlete has been selected for the programme, a contract is drawn up between the SOC, the specialist sports association involved and the individual athlete.

An individual development plan is drawn up for each athlete, with interim targets for results. These targets are formulated in order to facilitate follow-up and evaluation. Development plans are revised once a year. An athlete is allowed to remain in the Talent Programme even if the forecast results as not achieved in the short term.

### **Quotas for the admission of athletes to university**

There are no quotas for the admission to athletes to university in Sweden.

### **Grants for retired professionals to study at university**

There are no grants available for retired professional athletes to study at university.

### **Flexibility within the university system**

No specific measures are in place to facilitate athletes who wish to pursue a full-time professional sports career while enrolled in a third-level institution.

### **Public sector**

There are no provisions for the recruitment of athletes in the public sector.

### **Private sector**

Companies within the private sector are not offered any incentives to employ former professional athletes.

### **Pension scheme**

There are no special pension schemes for athletes in Sweden.

## UNITED KINGDOM

### The Athlete Career and Education programme (ACE)<sup>34</sup>

The ACE (Athlete Career and Education) programme is a UK-wide programme which aims to assist athletes in integrating career, education, lifestyle and sporting demands. The idea behind the ACE programme is that athletes should strike a balance between their commitment to sport and their long-term personal career goals.

Once an athlete has expressed an interest in the programme, he or she completes an Individual Athlete Assessment with their local adviser. This is a one-to-one session during which the adviser introduces the athlete to the full range of support services on offer through ACE. Each adviser is on hand to provide advice and guidance for the duration of the athlete's career. Support services offered through the ACE programme include:

- *Integration Planning* helps athletes to combine the demands of a sporting career with other personal aspirations.
- *Educational Guidance* supports athletes who wish to combine a full-time academic career with a professional sports career and advises athletes who decide to continue their studies. The ACE programme attempts to address the needs of the individual athlete as fully as possible. Advisers can negotiate changes in exam dates or can arrange for students to sit exams overseas if required. They can also help athletes to negotiate flexible periods of study, such as gap years, or can extend the duration of courses.
- *Career Planning* assists athletes to identify their personal strengths and weaknesses in order to decide on possible future careers.
- *Transitional Support* provides guidance for athletes who are injured, relocating or who are coming to the end of their sporting careers on what career prospects are open to them once they retire from sport.
- *OPEN*<sup>35</sup> - ACE also gives athletes access to the Olympic and Paralympic Employment Network which aims to help them gain employment with companies that provide flexible working arrangements and a potential future career. The British Olympic Association cites a number of benefits to participant companies which include:
  - athletes and coaches with a commitment and enthusiasm which can inspire other employees;
  - the potential to utilise the athletes and coaches for promotional purposes (subject to specific agreements);
  - opportunities to network with other OPEN companies.

---

<sup>34</sup> Based on information provided by Kathryn Humphrey of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and Ben Stewart, International Development Consultant of UK Sport, July 2003.

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.olympics.org.uk/athleteservices/athleteservicesOpen.asp>

Athletes and coaches are offered flexible working arrangements to enable them to meet training commitments and to take part in domestic and international competitions. The OPEN programme aims to facilitate the transition from a professional sports career and to encourage a balanced approach to sporting success.

- *Training and development programmes* are run for groups of athletes on subjects such as Media Know How, Financial Planning and Communication Skills. Courses are supported by e-learning materials.

The ACE programme is open to athletes who are on the World Class Performance Programme, to British Olympic Association Gold Passport holders or to athletes who are identified by the sports institute of their home country.

All UK-based agencies which provide support to professional athletes held a meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2003 to share good practice. The meeting has been organised by UK Sport, the agency charged by the Government with responsibility for creating a strategy for developing high-performance sport in the UK which is accountable to Parliament through the Department for Culture, Media and Sport<sup>36</sup>.

UK Sport is currently in the process of setting up a meeting with all of its European counterparts i.e. agencies who run education, career and lifestyle support programmes similar to ACE. The meeting is due to take place in April or May 2004 possibly at the British Olympic Association base in Lofer, Austria. The aims of the meeting will be:

- To share ideas of best practice among the athlete support programmes which exist throughout Europe
- To build Europe-wide networks which could provide help with athlete issues
- To promote the area of athlete support as a European group
- To outline some of the research that is being done in this area

England<sup>37</sup>

### **Provisions for the promotion of young athletes**

Research carried out by the national sports agency Sport England in 1999 showed that 70% of talented young athletes aged 17-21 drop out of sport. Often this is because of a move into higher education. A number of support services have been put in place in order to ensure that more talented young people stay in sport.

The Athlete Career and Education (ACE) programme provides advice and assistance to athletes in matters of education and career-planning (see description above).

---

<sup>36</sup> [http://www.uk sport.gov.uk/generic\\_template.asp?id=11708](http://www.uk sport.gov.uk/generic_template.asp?id=11708)

<sup>37</sup> Based on information provided by Kathryn Humphrey of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, July 2003, Ben Stewart, International Development Consultant of UK Sport July and October 2003, and Patrick Carter, Chair of Sport England, July 2003.

The Junior Athlete Education (JAE) programme is designed to support gifted and talented athletes at secondary school level. Funding for the scheme is administered through the Youth Sport Trust. Sports Colleges and their partner schools work with national governing bodies of sport to implement the programme which aims to help talented young athletes to achieve a balance between schoolwork, exams, family life and sports training and competitions. The goal of the programme is to enable students to maximise their potential in sport and study.

70% of universities in the UK offer sports scholarships. These vary in terms of value and content but most offer access to facilities and coaches and some form of support for students to help them find a balance between academic and sport commitments.

The Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme will be launched in April 2004 to provide financial support for talented athletes in the 16-25 age-group. Between 2004 and 2006, the scheme will deliver £3m per year and this will allow for approximately 1500 scholarships or bursaries each year. Funding will be provided by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and will be distributed through a network of 9 regional consortia of higher and further education institutions. Money will not be awarded directly to athletes but will go towards support service costs such as lifestyle support, sports science and sports medicine.

### **Quotas for the admission of athletes to university**

There are no set quotas for the entry of athletes to university. Universities compete for the best athletes provided they obtain the necessary entry requirements for their course. A small number of universities have reduced entry requirements for elite athletes. Most are flexible in their approach to the admission of elite athletes and will deal with applications on a case by case basis. The ACE programme provides assistance for those exiting World-Class programmes to apply for appropriate third-level courses.

### **Grants for retired professionals to study at university**

There are no grants available for retired professional athletes to study at university. Sports scholarships are awarded to athletes at the beginning rather than at the end of their sports careers. However the ACE programme offers an annual Education Award of up to £1000 which athletes can apply for. This award can then be used to finance part-time courses, postgraduate courses and resources for third-level study.

### **Flexibility within the university system**

Full-time professional athletes rarely do more than part-time study within the UK university system. Flexibility given to athletes in lecture and exam timetables varies across the sector. However the government is making efforts to improve this through schemes such as the Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme.

ACE advisers also provide support for athletes. Arrangements can be made for course deadlines or exam dates to be changed. If required exams can be taken under supervision abroad, in conjunction with the British Council.

If deemed appropriate, the ACE Education Award can be used to finance personal tutoring.

### **Public sector**

Former or current professional athletes can apply for positions within the public sector but they would need the same experience and qualifications as other applicants. In order to apply for positions in municipal sports facilities, they would be expected to hold a sports-related degree. The ACE programme is designed to help athletes achieve their long-term career goals.

### **Private sector**

Companies in the private sector are not offered incentives to employ former professional athletes. However the Olympic and Paralympic Employment Network (OPEN) aims to inform companies of the benefits of recruiting current or former professional athletes. The network aims to gain flexible employment for athletes which may lead to a long-term career.

### **Pension scheme**

There are no pension schemes which are designed specifically for athletes in England.

Northern Ireland<sup>38</sup>

### **Provisions for the promotion of young athletes**

Most sports governing bodies in Northern Ireland have established National Squad programmes in order to allow young athletes to progress from local to national level. Sports governing bodies are also being encouraged to identify and implement a “Long-Term Athlete / Player Development Pathway” for their individual sports. Current provisions include a number of “stepping stones” offered through a variety of programmes. These programmes are funded by collaborative packages involving a number of agencies including the Sports Council for Northern Ireland, District Councils, Education Boards and sports governing bodies.

- **Skills for Sport Camps** target delivery of physical literacy or fundamental movement skills to primary school children between the ages of six and nine.

---

<sup>38</sup> Based on information provided by Peter McCabe, Athlete Career and Education Co-ordinator of the Sports Institute of Northern Ireland, July and October 2003.

- **Youth Sport** is a programme aimed at encouraging young people to participate in sport by linking primary level and secondary level schools, and through the deployment of appropriately trained coaches to work with these young people.
- **Multi-Sports Camps** offer coaching in a range of sports for 10 to 13-year-olds.
- **Regional Development Squads** develop performance within regional squads and provide a stepping stone into county, provincial or national squads in the junior age groups (Under-16 and Under-18). Sports governing bodies run these junior age group squads.
- **The Sports Institute of Northern Ireland** has recently been established in order to provide support services to top athletes competing at international level.
- The Sports Lottery Fund offers revenue programmes to support elite athletes. The **Talented Athlete Programme** assists Northern Ireland's leading sportspeople to compete successfully at international level (e.g. at European and World Championships and in the Commonwealth and Olympic Games). The **Talented Athlete Next Generation Programme** assists potential 'Talented Athletes' with their training and competition programmes while the **Talented Junior Programme** assists with the development of 'Talented Juniors' (e.g. by providing financial assistance to cover coaching costs). Recently the Sports Lottery Fund completed a review of its athlete support programmes. There is a plan to amalgamate the existing Talented Athlete Programme and the Talented Athlete Next Generation Programme to create a single **Athlete Support Programme** from 2004. This programme will consist of two levels: elite and performance. The elite level will receive more funding.

Within secondary education, there is no mandatory, coordinated approach for specific provisions for the promotion of young elite/performance athletes. Individual schools have an opportunity to link into the Youth Sport programme but the coaching provided through Youth Sport is aimed at participation rather than performance. Schools may make special arrangements to involve performance level coaches in their sports activities but this is not widespread practice and is subject to the budget of the individual school.

Universities offer a limited number of sports bursaries to elite level athletes. These are worth approximately €1,500 and cover competition and equipment expenses. They do not cover university fees. Universities which offer these bursaries also offer athlete support services including sports science and mentoring.

### **Quotas for the admission of athletes to university**

One of Northern Ireland's two universities, the University of Ulster has an 'Elite Athlete Application Programme'. The programme 'recognises the sacrifices in terms of time, effort and crucially - in examination performance - which may result from the pursuit of a sport to its highest levels of competition. The Elite Athlete scheme enables the University to accept lower academic entrance requirements than normal for entry to all its full-time undergraduate courses'<sup>39</sup>. The programme attracts 50-60 potential elite athletes to the

---

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.ulster.ac.uk/eliteathlete/index.html>

university each year. Northern Ireland's other university, Queen's University in Belfast, has no special entry programme for athletes.

### **Grants for retired professionals to study at university**

In Northern Ireland there is no grant system in place for former professional athletes to study at university.

### **Flexibility within the university system**

Athletes who attend the Sports Institute of Northern Ireland (currently about 80) can avail of the Athlete Career and Education programme. The Sports Institute of Northern Ireland works in partnership with the Sports Council for Northern Ireland and the University of Ulster to offer the ACE programme. Athletes are assigned ACE advisers who assist with different aspects of career development and provide support to help the athletes integrate and the sports and academic aspects of their career development process. One aspect of this support is consideration of the opportunities available after a sports career is complete<sup>40</sup>.

The ACE programme also provides short development courses on CD-ROM which allow athletes to learn skills that will help them in their personal development. These include courses on time management, study skills, negotiation skills, career development, coping with change and working with the media<sup>41</sup>.

In addition the Sports Institute of Northern Ireland offers online resources for the completion of educational assignments, CV development and interview preparation<sup>42</sup>. The ACE website features links to university admissions services for athletes who wish to make the transition to higher education<sup>43</sup>.

However, as there is no clear policy from the Department of Education on support for elite athletes within the education system, the success of the ACE programme cannot always be guaranteed in each individual case. Past experience has shown that there is a certain degree of variation in the way the programme is operated in different educational institutions and even in different faculties within the same institution. A major step forward might be the drafting of a policy statement regarding provisions for elite athletes and the encouragement of universities and colleges to incorporate such a statement into student charter documentation.

### **Public sector**

There are no provisions for former or current professional athletes to take up careers in the public sector.

---

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.sini.co.uk/ace/index.htm>

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.sini.co.uk/ace/development.htm>

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.sini.co.uk/ace/tools.htm>

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.sini.co.uk/ace/links.htm>

## **Private sector**

Companies within the private sector are not offered any special incentives to employ athletes who have retired from professional sports careers.

## **Pension scheme**

There is no special pension scheme for athletes in Northern Ireland.

Scotland<sup>44</sup>

## **Provisions for the promotion of young athletes**

The Scottish Institute of Sport was established in 1998 by the national sports agency, sportscotland, in order to promote the development of young athletes in Scotland. Six Area Institutes have also been set up in Central Scotland, East of Scotland, Grampian, Highland, Tayside and Fife, and West of Scotland. Their responsibility is to identify and nurture local talent through to Scottish Institute level<sup>45</sup>. Many universities and colleges are involved in the Institute network as providers of facilities and services. Some secondary schools are also involved although to a lesser extent than third-level institutions due to the age range of athletes who avail of Institute services.

Since its launch, the Scottish Institute of Sport has selected approximately 200 athletes for support. This support includes individually tailored programmes in coaching (including training and competition programmes), technical support, sports medicine, sports science, performance analysis, and Athlete Career and Education (ACE UK)<sup>46</sup>. All Scottish Institute athletes receive financial support for programme costs. Many also receive further funding from sportscotland, and some receive bursaries from educational institutions.

## **Quotas for the admission of athletes to university**

There are no quotas for the entry of athletes to university in Scotland. Entry into third-level institutions is strictly on academic merit. The ACE programme assists athletes who decide to attend university either by helping them to gain the necessary qualifications or by helping with the admission process. The ACE programme also helps athletes to plan at an early stage for life after retirement which may involve further education.

## **Grants for retired professionals to study at university**

There are no grants designed specifically for retired athletes who wish to study at university. Former professional athletes who attended the Scottish Institute continue to

---

<sup>44</sup> Based on information provided by Stuart Turner, Lead Manager of sportscotland, July and October 2003.

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.sisport.com/>

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.sisport.com/>

receive support through the ACE programme for a year after they leave the Institute system.

The Institute is also piloting an Apprentice Coach Programme. At the moment there are two former professional athletes who work as apprentice coaches while pursuing academic qualifications. Nigel Holl, Programme Manager at the Scottish Institute of Sport, who runs the programme noted at its launch in December 2002,

“For athletes who have competed at a world class level it can be hard to find the right avenue to take after competition, but this programme gives them the opportunity to stay involved in the sport that has become such an integrated part of their life.”<sup>47</sup>

### **Flexibility within the university system**

The negotiation of flexible arrangements for athletes who choose to pursue a university qualification and a full-time professional sports career simultaneously is one of the main features of the ACE (Athlete Career and Education) programme. The Scottish Institute employs a full-time ACE coordinator who is part of a UK-wide network. The Scottish ACE coordinator has a team of six advisers who meet with athletes on their entry into the Scottish Institute system and help them to assess their career and education needs.

### **Public sector**

Although there are no specific provisions in place for athletes to enter into the public sector, a career as a professional athlete is regarded as valuable experience for future employment.

### **Private sector**

There is no system in place offering private companies incentives to employ former athletes. The Scottish Institute for Sports works with the commercial sector in order to help current professional athletes to gain flexible employment. For example the Royal Bank of Scotland currently employs six athletes who are attached to the Institute network in the Glasgow area. This type of employment allows athletes to gain experience and opens up a potential long-term career.

The ACE programme aims to raise issues related to education and career prospects for athletes at an early stage and to force them to consider life after sport. All evidence held by the national sports agency, sportscotland, shows that athletes are fully able to pursue a full-time professional or semi-professional career and to gain an educational or training qualification at the same time. The ACE programme as implemented in Scotland aims to provide athletes with the necessary education, training and skills to pursue their chosen career after they retire from sports and to avoid creating a system where they might be favoured over better-qualified individuals purely by virtue of their status as former athletes.

---

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.sisport.com/>

## **Pension scheme**

There are no pension schemes which cater specifically for athletes. However athletes who receive financial support towards living expenses are allowed to invest some of this money in personal pensions.

Wales<sup>48</sup>

## **Provisions for the promotion of young athletes**

In Wales grants are available to athletes in both secondary and third-level education through the Elite Cymru scheme. There is no limit to the number of grants awarded. At the moment there are 150 athletes in the Elite Cymru scheme. Eligibility is based on standards of performance.

Elite Cymru is aimed at providing a comprehensive support system to promising young athletes. It is a scheme which provides financial support as well as sports science testing and advice, psychological support, medical back-up and career and education advice<sup>49</sup>.

## **Quotas for the admission of athletes to university**

There are no quotas for the admission of athletes to university in Wales.

## **Grants for retired professionals to study at university**

There are grants available for former professional athletes who wish to study at university but these are only available immediately after retirement from a sports career.

## **Flexibility within the university system**

Special efforts are made to facilitate athletes who are simultaneously pursuing an academic and a sports career: for example, athletes receive assistance in negotiating flexible university timetables, an athlete might take six years (instead of the usual three) to complete his or her degree course.

The number of athletes who request education support through the Elite Cymru programme is relatively small because most wish to train full time. However the Sports Council for Wales (SCW) encourages all athletes to continue their education.

---

<sup>48</sup> Based on information provided by Ann Salvidge-Watkeys, Secretary of the Sports Council for Wales, July, August and October 2003.

<sup>49</sup> [http://www.sports-council-wales.co.uk/funding2.cfm?schemes\\_id=17&main\\_nav=funding&sub\\_nav=funding2](http://www.sports-council-wales.co.uk/funding2.cfm?schemes_id=17&main_nav=funding&sub_nav=funding2)

**Public sector**

There are no provisions for former or current professional athletes who wish to work in the public sector.

**Private sector**

Although there are no specific incentives offered to companies in the private sector to employ athletes who have retired from sporting careers, the OPEN programme (Olympic and Paralympic Employment Network) encourages companies to recruit athletes and coaches.

**Pension scheme**

There is no pension scheme in place for athletes in Wales. However athletes can obtain one-to-one professional advice on financial matters. As part of this service, athletes can (and do) seek advice on personal pension schemes.

**COMPARATIVE TABLE OF THE SITUATION IN THE MEMBER STATES<sup>50</sup>**

	<b>Provisions for the promotion of athletes Within education</b>	<b>Quotas for the admission of athletes to university</b>	<b>Grants for retired professional athletes to study at university</b>	<b>Flexibility within the university system</b>	<b>Employment of athletes in the public sector (police, military etc.)</b>	<b>Employment of retired professional athletes in the private sector</b>	<b>Pension scheme for athletes</b>
Belgium French	<b>YES</b>	NO	NO	<b>YES</b>	NO <sup>51</sup>	NO	Not available
Belgium Flemish	<b>YES</b>	NO	NO	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	NO	NO
Denmark	<b>YES</b>	NO <sup>52</sup>	NO	<b>YES</b>	NO	NO <sup>53</sup>	NO
Germany	<b>YES</b>	NO	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	NO
Greece	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	NO	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	NO	NO
Spain	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	NO	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>
France	<b>YES</b>	NO	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	NO
Ireland	<b>YES</b>	NO	NO	<b>YES</b>	NO	NO	NO <sup>54</sup>
Italy	<b>YES</b>	NO	NO	NO <sup>55</sup>	NO	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>
Luxembourg	<b>YES</b>	NO	NO	NO	<b>YES</b>	NO	NO
The Netherlands	<b>YES</b>	NO	NO	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	NO	<b>YES</b>
Austria	<b>YES</b>	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Finland	<b>YES</b>	NO	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	NO	NO	<b>YES</b>
Sweden	<b>YES</b>	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
UK England	<b>YES</b>	NO	NO	<b>YES</b>	NO	NO <sup>56</sup>	NO
UK Northern Ireland	<b>YES</b>	NO	NO	<b>YES</b>	NO	NO	NO
UK Scotland	<b>YES</b>	NO	NO	<b>YES</b>	NO	NO <sup>57</sup>	NO
UK Wales	<b>YES</b>	NO	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	NO	NO <sup>58</sup>	NO

<sup>50</sup> Established by the editor on the basis of results received, November 2003.

<sup>51</sup> The government of the French-speaking Community takes on 15 high-level athletes each year so they can concentrate fully on their sports activities.

<sup>52</sup> Although quotas do not exist, a sports career is considered as a valid qualification for certain courses.

<sup>53</sup> Although private companies are not offered direct incentives, one of the sponsors of Team Denmark is an employment agency which aims to provide employment opportunities to athletes.

<sup>54</sup> However employees in the sports sector enjoy favourable conditions regarding pension contributions.

<sup>55</sup> Officially flexible arrangements for athletes are possible only at certain private universities and otherwise can be difficult to negotiate.

<sup>56</sup> However the OPEN programme seeks to encourage private companies to employ athletes.

<sup>57</sup> However the Scottish Institute for Sports works to help current professionals gain employment.

<sup>58</sup> However the OPEN programme seeks to encourage private companies to employ athletes.



## **ACTIVITIES AT EU LEVEL**

### **The European Year of Education through Sport 2004**

The Decision of the European Parliament and the Council of 6<sup>th</sup> February 2003 establishing the European Year of Education through Sport 2004<sup>59</sup> deals with, amongst other things, the promotion of talented young athletes who wish to combine a sports career with their studies. The Decision states that the education of young sportsmen and sportswomen should not suffer as a result of their participation in competitive sport.

### **European Commission conference on “Cycling and Education in tomorrow’s Europe”<sup>60</sup>**

This conference which took place from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> July 2003 also dealt with the question of professional athletes career and education prospects. At the workshop, entitled ‘Education, Training and Retraining’, some young cyclists hinted that they were worried about the difficulties of balancing their studies with a sporting career. It was concluded that while success in sports is important, young athletes should not to lose sight of the transitory - and indeed uncertain - nature of life as a sports professional. Concerning the question of retraining, it was emphasised that this issue should ideally be addressed before an athlete comes to the end of his or her sports career.

It was found that the provisions in place for the promotion of cycling vary greatly from one state to another. In some countries cycling receives financial and material support from the state whereas in other countries there is no state support at all.

Another workshop on ‘Health and Working Conditions’ dealt with the issue of time management for young cyclists who are trying to balance schoolwork and sport. National and international competitions often overlap with crucial study periods or come too late in the season, imposing an excessive burden during the school year. It was concluded that the workload of a cyclist, regardless of his or her age, should be limited. Overtraining has adverse effects on physical and mental health. A number of cycling federations – namely those in Belgium, Italy and Luxembourg – limit the number of days of competition according to a cyclist’s age. Participants at the workshop felt that European harmonisation in this field would certainly constitute progress and would help to ensure equal opportunities.

At a third workshop entitled ‘Expectations and responsibilities of young cyclists in regard to the world of professional cycling’, it was recommended that young cyclists should seek the right balance between sport and study.

---

<sup>59</sup> Decision No. 291/2003/EC, OJ L 43/2003 p. 1

<sup>60</sup> Conference on the occasion of the Tour de France “Cycling and Education in Tomorrow’s Europe”, Paris, 2-5 July 2003, organised by the Sport Unit, Directorate General for Education and Culture, European Commission. Conclusions of workshop 1 on “Education, Training and Retraining”, workshop 2 on “Health and working conditions”, workshop 3 on “Expectations and responsibilities of young cyclists in regard to the world of professional cycling”.

Finally, participants discussed the prospects open to cyclists who have ended their sports careers. It was concluded that it is the duty of the various parties who are involved in a cyclist's career (e.g. family, teammates, coaches, sponsors etc.) to ensure that the cyclist does not simply pursue short-term results but focuses also on the longer-term picture: initial training, continuing training, health, employment conditions, reskilling, relevant information on what lies ahead. The participants felt that education and other aspects of the athlete's life should not be sacrificed to the pursuit of a career in cycling.