



WP4 Report of the AMiD Project

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1. Overview

The “Athletic migration: dual career and qualification in sports (AMiD)” project promotes and supports good governance in sport and Dual Careers (DC) of athletes by building a network for the exchange of best practices, by developing skills and competences in DC, especially addressing migrating athletes. Migrating athletes are a very suitable target group to serve this purpose because they operate in multiple European countries during their careers, including sports training and formal education. The overall objective is to support good governance in sport and DC by tackling the challenges of new economic and social conditions taking place in the European Union (EU).

The following report presents the findings of work package (WP) 4 of the AMiD project. WP4 focused on the *identification, recruitment for migration, and interviewing of student-athletes in DC* to question them about experiences made during their DC exchange, as well as the *systematic content analysis of the interviews*.

In the following qualitative analysis, the experiences of dual-career exchange athletes were recorded and evaluated. The aim was to reveal unknown details about the challenge’s athletes might face when migrating within the EU and how those challenges could be resolved through systematic support.

2. Methods

In the literature, qualitative methods were deemed useful for the systematic exploration of the views of migrating student-athletes, although findings mainly refer to American colleges as the most frequently represented migration site offering optimal opportunities to combine education and sport careers (Palumbo et al., accepted). Specifically, this investigation was based on the conceptualised student-athlete migration proposed by Love & Kim (2011), which encompasses six typologies of athletic migration. Thus, in-depth qualitative exploration of this topic was deemed valuable to provide insights into perceptions and experiences in European DC migrations by the student-athletes. The Institutional Review Board of the University of Cassino e Lazio Meridionale approved the proposed study.

To guarantee a rigorous research design, the research team defined the research questions, defined inclusion criteria for purposeful recruitment of migrating student-athletes, developed guidelines for conducting semi-structured interviews, and established the standard operating procedures for the data collection and synthesis of findings (Johnson & Christensen, 2012).

2.1. Inclusion Criteria

To ensure an appropriate representation of migrating student-athletes, a purposeful sample was deemed decisive to advance comprehensive practical knowledge on DC migration in the EU. Therefore, the project partners defined the inclusion criteria of the DC athletes that participated in the migration intervention and the subsequent interview. The following criteria were derived by the key researchers of the project during a Focus Group (Kitzinger, 1994) meeting in Rovaniemi, Finland, from the 18th-22nd of February 2019:

1. Age: between 18 and 30 years,
2. Sport commitment: a minimum of 10 hours per week,
3. Migration site: a European country,
4. Migration purpose: education and/or competitive reasons.

2.2. Recruitment of Athletes

Each project partner was instructed to recruit five student-athletes who meet the *inclusion criteria* as described above. As a result of this, the project partners were not restricted to look for participants just within the borders of their own countries, but also to use their well-established networks at international level. Student-athletes have been recruited at institutional level, at national level engaging other institutions, federations, and clubs. Moreover, each project partner's collaboration partners have been involved, reaching out for associations specialised in the DC and sports sectors. In addition, an informative handout (see Appendix A) and a *Letter of Support* (see Appendix B) have been developed and administered to athletes and institutions, respectively. The socio-demographic data of successfully recruited participants have been gathered in a recruitment database.

The participants were informed about the purpose of the project, the migration intervention, and the interview. They gave their informed written consent to participate and to record the interview.

2.3. Period of Implemented Migration Phase

The methodology for the migration phase was derived from previous outcomes that were summarised in the WP3 report. These were 1) a collection of support services for each partner that the respective institution can provide to migrating student-athletes and 2) an empiric assessment of services that were found effective and helpful in DC migration scenarios. Based on these findings, each partner institution selected support services they can provide appropriately for the specific student-athletes' career and migration characteristics and needs. Starting time and duration of migration periods were defined individually and varied between individual cases.

The methodology of the interview was finalised during a project meeting in Cassino from the 8th-12th of September 2019. At this time, all migration cases did not end yet, if started already. Interviews were conducted immediately at the end of the individual migration period or, if ongoing, at the latest possible time to meet the deadline of collection of all partners' data. The partners agreed to send all interview transcripts to the WP4 lead partner until February 2020. All migration periods and data collection were finalised before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. The further analyses and assessment were performed by the WP4 lead partner in online exchange with the other project partners. Therefore, this final step was luckily not affected by the pandemic.

2.4. Interview Questions and Guidelines

In accordance with Richards & Morse (2013), the literature on DC migration assisted in the definition of the most relevant research questions, and a systematic literature review was implemented by a member of the project team (Palumbo et al., accepted). During the project meeting in Cassino from the 8th-12th of September 2019, the partners agreed on six core questions for the interview in consideration of the current literature and previous findings from WP1, which depicted the current state, challenges, and needs of DC migrations.

1. *Why did you exchange/migrate while being a student-athlete?*
2. *How did you prepare yourself for your exchange/migration?*

3. *How successful was your exchange?*
4. *What kind of support did you receive?*
5. *What was good and what was bad?*
6. *Do you have recommendations or ideas for future improvement?*

These six questions were selected to get an overview of the background, challenges and available support options for an exchange and to evaluate opportunities for improving the migration possibilities of athletes during their studies.

The project partners also defined interview guidelines (see Appendix C) that described the interview length, the six core questions, and operational instructions for the implementation. The guidelines ensure the quality and are in line with the literature for qualitative excellence (Richards & Morse, 2013): Instructions for conducting the interviews and data gathering were clearly defined to guarantee sincerity through open discussion with no interference with the participants' opinions and data analysis without a judgemental attitude, credibility by fostering multiple opinions and various perspectives, significant contribution to the implementation of DC policies and services, and meaningful coherence between the opinion of DC migration experts.

2.5. Interviewing of Athletes

A *semi-structured non-standardised interview* approach has been applied. Based on predefined interview questions and guidelines, each of the partners conducted the interviews at the end of an individual migration period. All interviews have been recorded and deleted after the transcription.

2.6. Transcription of the Interviews

In case an interview has been conducted in a language other than English, they have been translated. The transcription process has been done individually by each partner. All transcripts have been sent to the WP4 lead for further analysis.

2.7. Data Analysis

The *content-structuring qualitative content analysis* (Mayring, 2000; Schreier, 2014) was used to evaluate the interview content. In the first step, the analysis units were defined. A single word was chosen as the coding unit and a sentence as the context unit. The evaluation unit included the continuous evaluation of the answers of the participants for

each question. This was followed by the inspection of the material, which was carried out independently by two project researchers. Sub-categories were developed inductively based on the interview material by each project researcher through the strategy of subsumption (i.e., combining similar content into one category, creating a new category for new/different content; Schreier, 2014). These have been compared and discussed by the project staff. The defined subcategories were combined into representative main categories. Category definitions and anchor examples were defined.

The category system was then reviewed. In the event of discrepancies, the category system was adjusted, and the trial run repeated. With an appropriate category fit, the full material was analysed and assigned to the categories of the final category system. A quantitative frequency analysis was carried out for each participant. The data of the participants from the individual countries were first summed up for the respective country. Subsequently, the frequencies (f) of the total sample, the women, the men, and the participants from EU and non-EU countries were counted by adding the individual category frequencies of the countries.

3. Results

3.1. Sample Characteristics

The sample characteristics were collected in the recruitment database. Overall, a total of 23 interviews was analysed. From these, 52,17% ($n = 12$) were male and 47,83% ($n = 11$) were female participants. The mean age was 24 years ($SD = 3,32$; $Min = 19$, $Max = 32$). Fifteen participants were citizens of the EU, and eight were not. The distribution of sports practice was as follows: Volleyball ($n = 4$); Handball ($n = 4$); Soccer ($n = 4$); Tennis ($n = 2$); Triathlon ($n = 1$); Cycling ($n = 1$); Luge ($n = 1$); Bobsleigh ($n = 1$); Alpine Skiing ($n = 1$); Ju-Jitsu ($n = 1$); Judo ($n = 1$); Ski-Jumping ($n = 1$) and Rowing ($n = 1$). The following studies were pursued by the participants: Sports Science ($n = 13$); Media and Communication ($n = 2$); Mechatronics ($n = 2$); Engineering ($n = 1$); Tourism and Recreation ($n = 1$); Mathematics ($n = 1$); Social Welfare ($n = 1$); International Business ($n = 1$). For one participant, no information about the academic major was available. Twelve participants pursued a bachelor's degree, of which three chose an online-based programme. Ten participants chose a master's degree and one a doctoral degree.

3.2. Findings by Question

The frequencies listed here refer to the total sample of 23 interviews. The codebooks for the formation of the main categories including the sub-categories, category definitions, and anchor examples can be found in Appendix D.

Question 1: Why did you exchange/migrate while being a student-athlete? (a) sporting development ($f = 15$), (b) future perspectives ($f = 14$), (c) academic development ($f = 14$), (d) basic conditions ($f = 12$), (e) personal motives ($f = 6$).

Question 2: How did you prepare yourself for your exchange/migration? (a) networking ($f = 9$), (b) external help ($f = 6$), (c) organisation ($f = 6$), (d) internet research ($f = 5$), (e) social support ($f = 5$), (f) no preparation ($f = 4$), (g) financial preparation ($f = 3$), (h) physical preparation ($f = 3$).

Question 3: How successful was your exchange? (a) quality of training and sporting success ($f = 18$), (b) academic successes ($f = 13$), (c) quantity of training ($f = 9$), (d) personal development ($f = 5$), (e) no successes ($f = 3$), (f) establishing relationships ($f = 2$), (g) general competencies ($f = 1$).

Question 4: What kind of support did you receive? (a) financial support ($f = 20$), (b) organisational support ($f = 14$), (c) social support ($f = 10$), (d) lack of support ($f = 3$).

Question 5: What was good and what was bad? (a) organisational challenges ($f = 13$), (b) personal issues ($f = 10$), (c) academic challenges ($f = 8$), (d) sports problems ($f = 3$), (e) no challenges ($f = 3$). *Question 6: Do you have recommendations or ideas for future improvement?* (a) attitude ($f = 8$), (b) work-sport-life balance ($f = 6$), (c) information upfront ($f = 5$), (d) purpose of exchange ($f = 5$), (e) systematic improvement of EU-sports exchange system ($f = 4$).

4. Discussion

The aim of this evaluation was to use a qualitative survey to get a more precise impression of the situation of DC exchange and migration in Europe. Overall, the survey within the framework of WP4 identified backgrounds, challenges and opportunities for improvement for the exchange in Europe as well as existing support options and successes of student-athletes in DC migration scenarios.

Regarding the first question “*Why did you exchange/migrate while being a student-athlete?*”, the main category of *sporting development* ($f = 15$), followed by *future perspectives* ($f = 14$) and *academic development* ($f = 14$), was found most frequently. This suggests that in this sample, the primary reasons for an exchange were comparably often the development of sporting and academic skills as well as the creation of future perspectives.

For the second question “*How did you prepare yourself for your exchange/migration?*”, the main category *networking* ($f = 9$) was reported most frequently. The second most frequent classifications were *external help* ($f = 6$) and *organisation* ($f = 6$). These results suggest that 39% of the participants most often sought contact with their future team, the university, or alumni exchange students to prepare for their exchange. Furthermore, 26% also use the help on-site, from their home country, or their family and organise the relevant aspects for the exchange such as taking an entrance test. This supports the suggestion to inform the student-athletes on their DC rights, policies, programmes, services, financial resources, and logistic support in place in their home country, in addition to availability of assets and opportunities as transnational student-athletes (Condello, Capranica, Doupona, Varga, & Burk, 2019) to further develop more equal opportunities for all student-athletes.

Regarding the third question “*How successful were you exchange?*”, the assignment to the main category *quality of training and sporting success* ($f = 18$) was the highest. This provides an indication that 78% of the participants have achieved success in terms of their sporting goals, the identification of strengths and weaknesses in the field of sport, the learning of new training methods, and the improvement of their sporting skills. The second most common category was *academic success* ($f = 13$), which was mentioned by almost 57% of the participants. From this, one could further conclude that most of the participants have achieved their academic goals, such as obtaining a degree, obtaining all the necessary credits, and improving language skills. Since student-athletes are committed to perform in both academics and sports careers, they might experience higher levels of stress and may not be able to commit as much time to academics as regular students. As a result, the academic performance might suffer and reflects in the participants reports about challenges in time management with respect to re-scheduling of examinations or attendance to mandatory classes. Thus, this qualitative questionnaire supports the EU Guidelines on Dual Careers of Athletes and more concrete in this

regard Guideline 15 “ Public authorities should support the development of an accreditation system for educational institutes with a sport profile and involved in DC of student-athletes, taking account of the specific characteristics of the different types of education” (European Commission, 2013).

For the fourth question “*What kind of support did you receive?*”, *financial support* ($f = 20$) was derived as main category with almost 87%, followed by *organisational support* ($f = 14$) with nearly 61%. This indicates that most of the exchange students in the current sample received financial and organisational support from, for example, associations, the family, and the team. Three participants reported a lack in support and agreed that those who received support deserve it. In one case, the employer (‘Bundeswehr’, eng.: German military) facilitated the athletic career; other athletes received funding from national agencies such as KADA in Austria. This suggests that there is a need for a more sophisticated support system for DC athletes in the EU that ensures equal chances for a successful DC regardless of the athletes’ socio-economic background, which is expressed in Guideline 4 of EU Guidelines on Dual Careers of Athletes: “Public and private sports authorities should support the implementation of dual careers of different types of athletes in the activities of national/regional sports organisations through formal agreements which require a clear strategy, planning of activities and involvement of athletes, and make the allocation of funding conditional upon the inclusion of the dual career concept in their activities” (European Commission, 2013).

Regarding the fifth question “*What was good and what was bad?*”, the main-category *organisational challenges* ($f = 13$) was most often assigned, nearly 57%. This suggests that more than half of the participants had difficulties with time management, combining sports with academic studies, and finding an apartment, for example, and that there is still a need for further action in the future. The category *personal issues* ($f = 10$) was assigned the second most frequently with 43%. This included, for example, homesickness, getting to know an unknown environment, and interpersonal problems (e.g., social isolation). The results are in line with findings of previous studies on transnational migration of DC athletes, which have shown that there is a lack of professional DC and cultural adaptation support for migrating DC athletes (Condello, Capranica, Doupona, Varga, & Burk, 2019). This problem could possibly be countered in the future via interpersonal support. One possibility for this would be acclimatisation

and support groups for exchange student-athletes under the lead of tutors who are familiar with the country and daily life there.

For the sixth question “*Do you have recommendations or ideas for future improvement?*”, the main category *attitude* ($f = 8$) was assigned most frequently, followed by the category *work-sport-life balance* ($f = 6$). So, almost 35% of participants advised future exchange students to be open-minded and confident. In addition, 26% of the participants recommended to keep a balance between academics, sports, and private life, and to take care of themselves and use the exchange to try out new things.

5. Limitations

The validity of the results is limited by the number of interviews conducted. Out of 25 planned interviews, 23 have been available for analyses. One interview could not take place because the DC was cancelled; another interview could not be used for analyses because of language barriers. It is important to mention that each project partner conducted the interviews independently, based on interview guidelines that have been developed and agreed on in advance. Despite the guidelines serving as standardisation measure, we cannot exclude the possibility that procedures may have varied at institutional level. This could have led to deviations in the quality of the interview content. In addition, it was not possible to avoid that some interviews had to be translated from native languages to English. We cannot state whether this may have had an impact on the content or quality of the transcribed data.

Another limitation can be seen in the generalisability/representativity of the findings. EU citizens and non-EU citizens have been interviewed, and the two groups cannot be compared because of an uneven distribution of both groups in the sample. It must also be considered that non-EU citizens might have other conditions for their exchange (e.g., scholarships). For this reason, it was not reasonable to compare these two groups. Moreover, the level of competition of the participants was not clear in all cases. While some participants ranked among the world's best in their respective sports, other participants seemed to be at the beginning of their training, do not frequently compete anymore, or were not equipped well enough to train at professional level during their migration period. Additionally, some participants indicated to be more interested in the coaching aspects of professional sports and thus do not seriously plan to become an

elite student-athlete. Furthermore, the sample size does not allow for inferential comparison between groups. However, in consideration of the sample size of previous investigations and the small size of the overall population of migrating student-athletes in Europe, the sample size in the current intervention seems representative.

6. Conclusion

There are some key takeaways that may be interesting to explore in future research, considering the limitation of this qualitative research. It became evident throughout all interviews that the migration of DC top athletes within the EU may pose some complications. These may be solved with a well-established network of professionals in the field of top sports in the EU and policies that further support stakeholders with greater capacities for future large-scale research on the issue of migration of elite athletes in the EU.

Many athletes, if not supported by stipends from their home country as in many non-EU athletes in this sample, considered financial support as a valuable support in the pursue of their sports career. This is particularly evident in athletes who face high expenses and material effort in sports practice (e.g., ski jumping, bobsleigh, or triathlon). However, it must be considered that none of the interviewed athletes faced a significant financial crisis. Most athletes in expensive sports are supported by informal support systems such as the family, a sponsor, the home club and/or a combination of those. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that most participants who practice high-cost sports may belong to a relatively privileged socio-economic part of society.

Furthermore, some questions regarding the situation of elite athletes who are interested in a transnational exchange in the EU remain unclear and should be approached in future research:

1. What is a true DC elite athlete, and do they need further support?
2. How many DC elite athletes are there in the EU, and how many are interested in a migration/exchange programme?
3. How many of these athletes have difficulties in the migration process?
4. Why do potential DC elite athletes decide against a migration/exchange?
5. What factors lead them to not participating in a migration/exchange programme?

In addition, an interesting consideration is the option of online study programmes, which three of the participants chose. These participants reported great flexibility in their programme that helped to prioritise either sports or education according to specific phases of the individual's sports situation. Especially these aspects have been criticised by athletes who participate in a regular on-campus study programme.

While the call for more flexibility in educational institutions by student-athletes became apparent, it must also be accounted that universities in the EU may be limited in this regard by local and national laws. The increasing importance of flexibility across various aspects of life is a trend that has been integrated into new educational formats such as online programmes. However, it needs all stakeholders to participate in improving the situation. Therefore, the sports sector may explore the idea of a more integrated and flexible approach for combining sports and education for its own benefits.

Finally, the personal interests of the exchange students should be considered. It is possible that factors such as homesickness and interpersonal problems can affect well-being. This can have an impact on academic and athletic performances. Therefore, interpersonal support opportunities for exchange students should be created and facilitated to identify and counteract possible personal challenges at early stages.

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Appendix A: Handout for Athletes

What is the AMiD-Project?!

We invite you to share your opinion!

Being a top athlete is difficult, studying in the same time on top of it - a real tightrope walk! In addition to the pressure to perform in sports, the university wants to see academic achievements. That can really tear on you as an athlete but also as a person. The project "Athletic migration: dual career and qualification in sports (AMiD)" promotes and supports elite student-athletes like you by building a network for the exchange of best practices and the development of skills and competences in the Dual Career. If you want to know more about the project follow this link:

www.AMiD-project.eu

In order for us to do more for athletes like you, we need to gain new insights and that's where YOU come into play!

The athletes know best!

In a short interview with six main questions we would like to learn the athletes perspective on potential improvements as well as good practices installed already. The interview will take place in a relaxed atmosphere will last no more than 30 minutes and you will remain anonymous.

What we want to learn more about:

- What challenges did you face during your stay?
- What solutions have been found for your challenges?
- Who delivered solutions?
- How helpful / effective were the solutions?
- How could you be better supported?

We look forward to your participation!!



Appendix B: Letter of Support

name
affiliation
address
address
phone number
email

www.AMiD-project.eu

Letter of Support

Dear **colleagues**, dear **student-athletes**

place, date

As part of the EU-funded Erasmus+ project “AMiD”, we would be very happy to receive your support as an intermediary. The project provides special Dual Career support services to student-athletes that we are currently recruiting.

We are looking for **5-10 actively studying athletes** at high level that are involved in **international mobility** for their sports or academic career (e.g. foreigners **studying/training/competing** in your **institution/club/federation** OR natives going abroad for studies or sports).

We would be very glad to get in touch with you and with this target group via your institution to offer our **free support services**. Thank you very much for your collaboration. Please do not hesitate to contact us for more information and to share our offer with your members and the target group in your reach.

Sincerely

name

National Coordinator

Signature



Appendix C: Interview Guidelines

- Conduct the interview at the end of the exchange period or at the latest possible time to fulfill the deadline (see below). In either way, do so in a face-to-face scenario. If this is not feasible, Skype sessions (preferably with camera) are possible.
- Record the interview via any device capable to save audio files.
- Max. duration of the interview: 40 minutes
- Use English or mother tongue.
- If not English, interview must be translated to English later in the written form.
- Transcribe (and translate to English) the interview.
- Collect all 5 transcribed interviews in English and forward them to the University of Hamburg, the University of Ljubljana, and in Cc to the project coordinator and all partners until latest 31 Jan 2020.
- Allow for comfortable atmosphere during the interview (environment, small talk to start with, etc).
- Inform about anonymous usage of data and get permission to record.
- Inform about the open nature of the 6 main questions and the primary interests for the interview:
 - What **challenges** did they face?
 - What **solutions** were found?
 - **Who** provided solutions?
 - How **helpful**/effective were they?
 - What would be **better**?
- Invite participants to respond comprehensively and to speak freely to cover all the primary interests throughout the interview.
- First, ask and note the following information from the student-athlete:
Age: Country: Sports:
- Ask main questions only first and only follow up with sub-questions if the student-athlete did not answer in sufficient detail.
- Beware that the student-athlete's response provided information on all core and sub-questions before going to the next core question.
- It is allowed to use other questions than the core and sub-questions to enrich the conversation and receive valuable information.
- Use circular question method until the topic is exploited and the student-athlete's answers are satisfying.

Appendix D: Exemplary Display of Categorisation Process

Question 1: Why did you exchange/migrate while being a student-athlete? (Goal, purpose, intention of the migration)

Subcategory	Main category	Category definition	Anchor example
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making connections • Second leg for post-sporting career • Get a degree 	Future perspectives	Anything relating to long-term career perspectives (3+)	<p>“So, I was looking for something to prepare for my career afterward.”</p> <p>“[...] you are almost forced to build a second plan if you are not exceptionally talented.”</p> <p>“I also wanted to make good connections for after I am done with post-grad and find a good job.”</p> <p>“The main reason was I wanted to study to have something besides sports.”</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language learning • Language improvement • Intellectual challenge 	Academic development	Anything relating to mid-term development in university (1-3 years)	<p>“To learn the language better [...]”</p> <p>“[...] for the purposes of my study.”</p> <p>“I also wanted a good school in regards of academics.”</p> <p>“The goal was to get a good master education.”</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Higher-level of competition ● New training methods 	<p>Sports development</p>	<p>Anything relating to short to mid-term development in a sporting career (6month to 3 years)</p>	<p>“My goal was to improve my game.”</p> <p>“[...]development of my athletic career I wanted to move to a country with a higher level of handball than was available in Australia.”</p> <p>“[...] different physical exercises and useful training technique.”</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Enjoy time ● Change ● New experience ● New challenge ● Point of time in career (age) 	<p>Personal motives</p>	<p>Anything relating to non-career purposes and experiences, such as self-fulfilment, self-indulging activities</p>	<p>“[...] to be a bit more international [...] and to enjoy my time in a different country.”</p> <p>“I also like challenges and thought it would be a good thing for me to try something new.”</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Facilities ● Natural conditions of the location ● Distance learning ● No suitable opportunities in other/own countries ● Recommended ● Quality of education ● Distance to facilities ● Distance to home 	<p>Basic conditions (National Framework)</p>	<p>Anything relating to environmental, organisational, logistical conditions</p>	<p>“I also decided to go to [...] because I got a full scholarship.”</p> <p>“[...] there was also the possibility to combine that with university and sport.”</p> <p>“I chose to study abroad, [...], because it offered me an opportunity to get an education and continue playing tennis on a high level.”</p> <p>“It was a good location and for skiing you need to go to the mountains.”</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possibility to combine education and sports • Scholarship 			
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Question 2: How did you prepare yourself for your exchange/migration?

Subcategory	Main category	Category definition	Anchor example
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help on location • Help from the country of origin • Help from family 	External help	Preparations concerning external supporters in preparing the exchange (University, Coaches, Peers, Teammates, Agencies, Agents) that has already been agreed upon.	<p>“I stay in contact with the head coach and he explained everything about what I need to be ready when I come.”</p> <p>“My coach was helpful with the process of applying to college and applying for required exams [...]. My future teammates helped me with campus orientation, which classes they recommend taking and just overall college life and how to get by. I also knew a person from back home who goes to the same university so he was very helpful in the process of applying.”</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not prepared • Poor preparation 	No preparation	The individual did not prepare specifically	<p>“The preparations were not over the top.”</p> <p>“I was prepared rather poorly.”</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Research about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sports facility - University - exchange programme - environmental conditions (weather, climate, etc.) - accommodation 	<p>Internet research</p>	<p>Desk research was done prior to the exchange via the Internet</p>	<p>“I informed myself about the weather in winter [...].”</p> <p>“I really wanted to get to know performance-oriented handball in Norway and that’s why I was looking for a club.”</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Contacting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - future team - university - sports club - alumni exchange students 	<p>Networking</p>	<p>Explicit first contact with relevant stakeholders in the country of exchange</p>	<p>“a girl who had done it last here, so the first year of the programme, and I just spoke with them and then the female who had already done it.”</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Visa ● Entry tests ● Application for University ● Enrolling courses and exams ● Diploma validation ● Other agreements ● Professional (Sports-)contracts 	<p>Organisation</p>	<p>Defined as any organisational and bureaucratic matters needed for a fruitful exchange</p>	<p>“It was much easier to arrange a visa for the purposes of research compared to a visa for a “professional athlete”.”</p> <p>“I made arrangements with my contact professor at the university.”</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recruiting 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Building up savings ● Application for Erasmus+ ● Scholarships 	Financial preparation	Any economic aspects that must be considered for the exchange	“Until a few days before I came, I was working to have money here.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fellow students provided information ● Supportive talks with family, teammates and friends ● Mental preparation 	Social support	Any preparation is undertaken to prepare the mentally	“I had also a lot of support from my husband.” “teammates were very nice to reach out and offer help if I needed anything.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● High training frequency 	Physical preparation	Any measures taken to prepare for a higher level of competition	“I was also training every day you know to make sure that, when I got out here, I can impress some of the coaches with my abilities.” “To prepare for Rome as for America you have got to, as an athlete, work on your fitness work on your practice with the ball.”