



SPORT & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

SURVEY REPORT

Prepared for:

SPORT-ENT project

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1 Executive Summary

The international survey of approximately 400 young football players across 6 European national football associations asked players dozens of questions on their attitude towards their second career path.

Target group was football players, age between 18 and 30, who are actively playing in professional and semi-professional teams and football leagues.

The survey was conducted in July 2020 among 395 football players. An online quantitative questionnaire, targeted at professional/semi-professional football players, was designed, and circulated among the football players across the countries.

328 participants in the survey provided complete responses, which are analysed in this report. The respondents were primarily:

- residents of Slovenia (37%; n=122), North Macedonia (32%; n=106) and Azerbaijan (18%; n=60),
- male (83%; n=273),
- age between 16 and 30 (89%; n=293),
- payed by their clubs for playing football (73%; n=240), majority of which on a full-time basis (58%; n=135).

The survey was designed specifically to gather the opinions of active young football players on their career after they stop playing football.

The results of the survey show that football players are interested in becoming entrepreneurs, whether as specialists, running community programmes, educational programmes, or non-profit organisations, becoming investors in start-ups or innovating products, services, and technologies. Players can use different skills during their entrepreneurship: discipline, teamwork, patience, respect, and resilience.

In the light of the survey, it is recommended to provide football players with a training on entrepreneurship, in order to provide a possible professional alternative after their football career or to be able to approach the sports field from a business perspective during the time on the football field. They would appreciate mentoring support regarding their follow-on career and are willing to invest their time in trainings on the topic of entrepreneurship. Becoming entrepreneur represents not only an option to generate economic income, but also the possibility of professional growth, which is what would move the players most to participate in such courses.

The main sections of this report include:

- the background and objectives for the project,
- the methodology employed for the project,
- survey results,
- an analysis of those results and
- conclusions and recommendations.

2 Background and Objectives

2.1 EU Guidelines on 'Dual Career'

High-level athletes who train and compete throughout Europe face multiple risks, with many missing out on high quality education and training that could help them prepare for a new career after they retire. In response to the European Council's 2008 call to address the question of "dual careers", the Commission is engaged in making sure that high-level athletes have the skills and knowledge they need in order to be able to smoothly move on from sport when the time comes.

The European employment policy encouraged Member States to work to build employment pathways for individuals and reduce unemployment, in particular, through adapting education and training systems in order to raise quality, broaden supply, diversify access, and ensure flexibility and responsiveness to new occupational needs and skills requirements.

'Dual Career' should be understood to mean that an athlete can combine, without unreasonable personal effort, their sporting career with education and/or work in a flexible way (...), without compromising either objective (...). Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on dual careers for athletes (2013/C 168/04).

A career in elite sport is short, fragile and time consuming. Most successful sporting professionals will have to retire around the age of 30 and will therefore need to find a new job and role in life. The issues are worse for trainees that fail to make the grade as professionals and for players who suffer a career ending injury. Parameters of the job (e.g. short-term contracts, frequent traveling, etc.), expectations of immediate success and extreme commitment to the profession tend to discourage preparation for life after sport.

The Commission's support for dual careers ensures that sportspeople receive an education and/or professional training alongside their sports training. It will also help European athletes perform well and compete at a high international level, while reducing the number who drop out of school, university and sport.

Too many elite athletes reach the end of their sporting careers unprepared for career transition. Tailored education opportunities and support services facilitating a successful transition into a second career are essential during and after the sporting career.

According to the Education and Training 2020 strategic objectives set by the Council in 2009 and the New Priorities for European cooperation in education and training from 2015, Entrepreneurship keeps on being an important self-employment choice and has an untapped potential that needs to be properly promoted and fostered amongst people. Entrepreneurship is not only a personal self-employment choice. If the new enterprise grows up with success, it could have a positive impact in the labour market.

Dual career arrangements are relatively recent in the majority of Member States and sports. In Member States where these arrangements have been developed for some time, they sometimes lack solid agreements between the sport system and either the

educational sector or the labour market. The conclusions of two EU funded studies, the results of dual career projects supported in the framework of the 2009 Preparatory Action in the field of sport, and informal expert meetings with Member States led the European Commission to propose to develop guidelines on dual careers in its Communication on sport of January 2011. In its Resolution on an EU Work Plan for Sport 2011-2014, the Council decided to treat the development of such guidelines as a priority.

According to paper 'EU Guidelines on Dual Careers of Athletes: Recommended Policy Actions in Support of Dual Careers in High-Performance Sport' (2012) '... The design of dual career programmes should meet athletes' individual needs taking into account their age, sport specialisation, career stage and financial status, with the athletes themselves taking increasing responsibility as they progress through their careers...'

2.2 SPORT-ENT project

The EU funded SPORT-ENT project addresses this particular issue but adds the dimension of 'preparation for self-employment through entrepreneurship training' that builds on existing skills and competencies learnt in sport (using football as an exemplar) – which can then be adapted to meet any sport.

The similarities between the entrepreneur and the footballer are striking. To be successful in either arena – the business office or the playing field – the participant must learn to maximize their strengths and negate their weaknesses. Bringing together these two disciplines are both innovative and unique and will provide the appropriate mind set and competencies for an individual to succeed as an entrepreneur. They can learn what is needed using a blended learning approach – learning the practical approach at a football club and the theoretical approach using the on-line training programme.

For a footballer, knowing the particular strengths one possesses is vital to success in the game. A football player who can master the left-foot shot is a key player when the score is tied and there is a play in the goal box. The runner who can maintain a reserve of energy until the last lap of a four-lap race will have an advantage over the other runners who are gasping for every bit of air.

For the entrepreneur, understanding the strengths one possesses is equally as important. The businessperson who excels at bringing in new clients will not thrive if they are trapped in the office every day. A salesperson who can confidently ask for million-dollar contracts will thrive when given the opportunity to make the presentations.

The project aims to create a set of TRAINING & SUPPORT MATERIALS for granting real opportunities to individuals engaged in sport (18-30 years old) to enhance their 'employability pathway' by developing their entrepreneurial skills and competences. This will be achieved by harnessing the complimentary and overlapping dimensions of entrepreneurship and sport thereby enhancing their opportunities for a dual career. The sport of football will be used as the 'methodological template' for other sports to adapt and implement.

3 Methodology

Data gathering was undertaken using established methodology of questionnaire. An online quantitative questionnaire, targeted at professional/semi-professional football players, was designed in collaboration with Project Partners.

A draft of the questionnaire was subjected to a pretest, resulting in modifications to the questionnaire both in terms of question wording and length. Twenty-two (22) questions were agreed in the final questionnaire. Common types of questions were used, including multiple choice, rating scales etc.

The questionnaire was translated into 6 different languages. It was accessible on a survey online platform, distributed via e-mail and published on official website of the project, as well as on national associations' websites. Questions were distributed by the national football associations directly to football players or via football clubs.

Demographic data were gathered, such as country of residence, gender, and age.

Participants were asked about their current employment status as a football player, their personal position with their second career, their attitude towards their employment after playing football.

Participants were asked, for example:

- Are you paid by your Club to play football? On what basis are you paid (full-time/part-time)?
- What age you think that you will stop playing football? Have you thought about what you would do when you no longer play football?
- Do you already have a career path to follow after your sports career? Have you considered the possibility to become an entrepreneur?
- Does your Club offer support regarding follow-on career advice? Would it be helpful if you could be provided with mentoring support to help you understand your employment options when you stop playing professional football?

Participants were asked whether they thought about possibilities to become entrepreneurs after their football career, when would they consider starting an entrepreneurial activity and which of the entrepreneur profiles (specialist entrepreneur, social entrepreneur, investor entrepreneur, innovative entrepreneur) are more suited to what they would like to be in the future.

Further on, the survey was asking whether the participants would follow a course on the topic of entrepreneurship, how they think it would help them and what would move them most to do a training.

Participants were also asked the following questions about their learning preferences:

- How would you prefer the training to be offered (face to face, online or blended learning)?
- How long would you like this course to last (3 months, 6 months or 1 year)?
- How much time daily would you invest in training (1 hour, 2 hours or 4 hours)?
- What is your preferred learning style (practical hands on, visual, auditory or reading/writing)?

4 Results and analysis

This section of the report presents the feedback of the football players who responded to the survey (i.e. the respondents).

Three-hundred and ninety-five (395) football players participated in the survey. Three-hundred and twenty-eight (328) respondents completed the survey (completion rate of 83%). The base for each table in this report is all complete responses (n=328). Typical time each participant spent for completing the survey was 4 minutes.

The section is divided into subchapters, which present insight in:

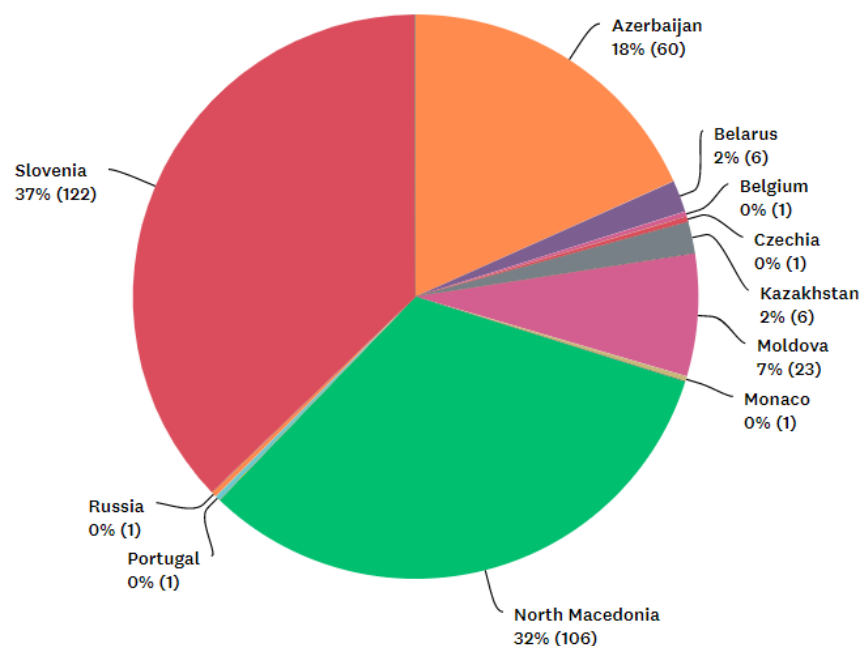
- demographics of the respondents,
- their current employment status,
- current view and possibilities for future career,
- respondents' attitude towards entrepreneurship,
- their interest in entrepreneurship training and
- their learning preferences.

4.1 Demographic figures

Respondents were residents of **11 different European countries**.

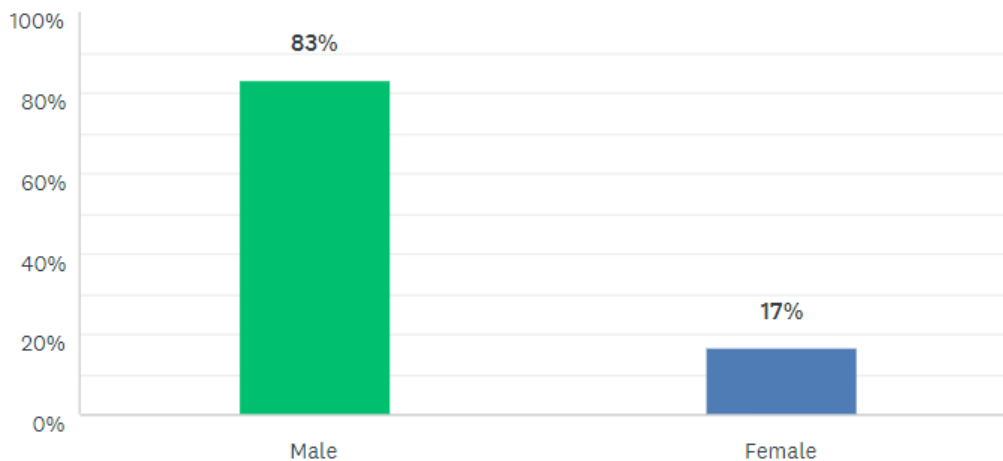
Majority of respondents are residents of Slovenia (37%; n=122), North Macedonia (32%; n=106) and Azerbaijan (18%; n=60). 7% (n=23) of respondents were residents of Moldova, 2% (n=6) residents of Kazakhstan, 2% (n=6) residents of Belarus, and 2% are residents of Belgium, Czechia, Monaco, Russia and Portugal (1 respondent from each country).

Table 1: Q1: Distribution (percentage) by country of residence.



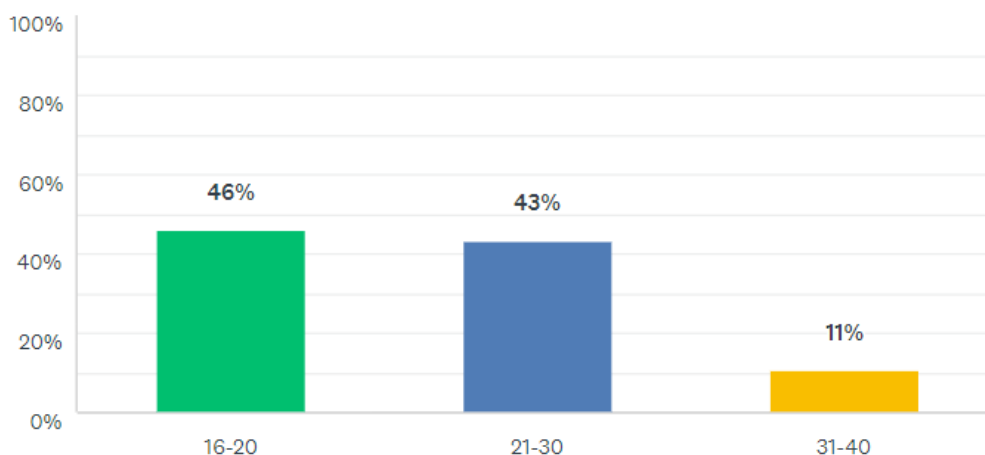
Majority (83%; 273) of respondents were male.

Table 2: Q2: Distribution (percentage) by gender.



89% of respondents are age 16-30, of which half are younger than 20 years and other half are older than 20.

Table 3: Q3: Distribution (percentage) by age.



4.2 Current employment status

73% (n=240) of the respondents are paid for playing football. 58% of those, who are paid, are paid full-time. The rest are paid part-time – for majority of them **(67%) football represents their primary source of income**, while for 33% of the part-time paid football players football is a secondary source of income.

Table 4: Q4: Are you paid by your Club to play football?

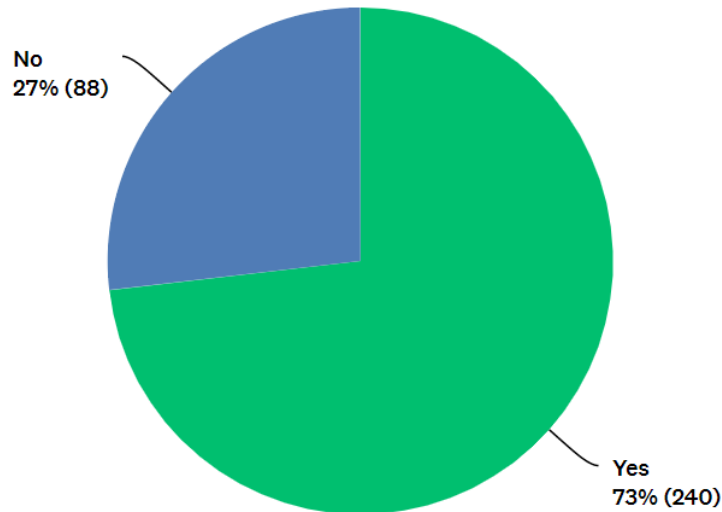
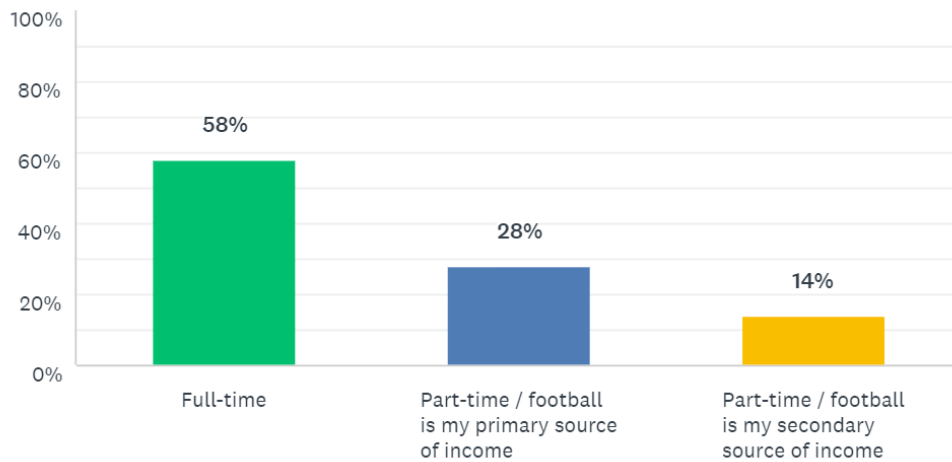


Table 5: Q5: If you are paid what basis are you paid?



4.3 Future career

48% of players (n=158) responded that they believe they will stop playing football at the age of 35, 31% (n=101) think they will stop playing at the age of 40, while the rest think they will stop playing before 30 or even before the age of 25.

Table 6: Q6: At what age you think that you will stop playing football?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
40	31%	101
35	48%	158
30	12%	39
25	9%	30
TOTAL		328

Majority of respondents (61%; n=199) would stay employed in the sports field after they finish playing football. 22% (n=72) would like to have employment not connected with sport and 17% (n=57) are thinking about self-employment. **52% (n=169) of respondents already have a career path to follow after their sports career**, while 48% (n=159) do not yet have it.

Table 7: Q7: Have you thought about what you would do when you no longer play football?

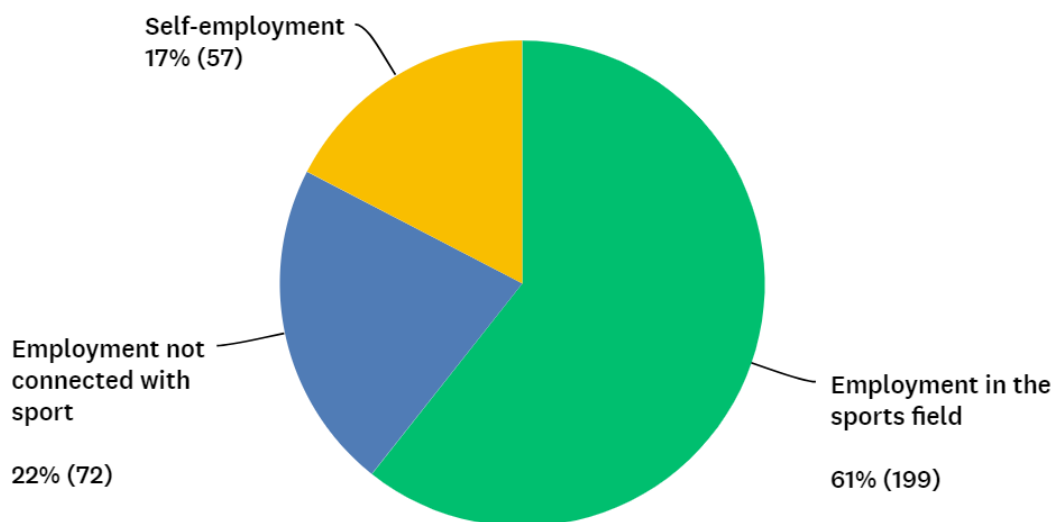
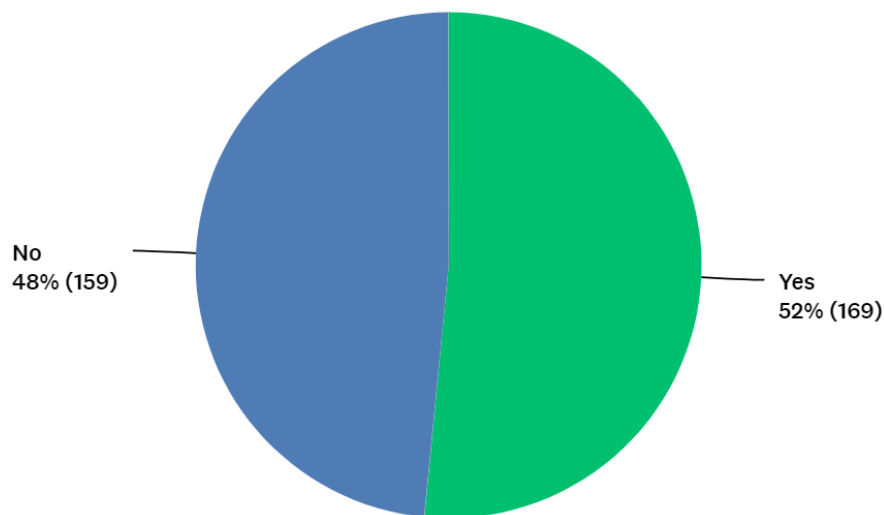


Table 8: Q8: Do you already have a career path to follow after your sports career?



To 57% (n=188) of the respondents, their clubs offer support regarding follow-on career advice, while to the rest (43%; n=140) this support is not offered. Vast majority (87%; n=284) believe, that it would be helpful if they could be provided with mentoring support to help them understand their employment options when they stop playing professional football.

Table 9: Q9: Does your Club offer support/advice regarding follow-on career advice?

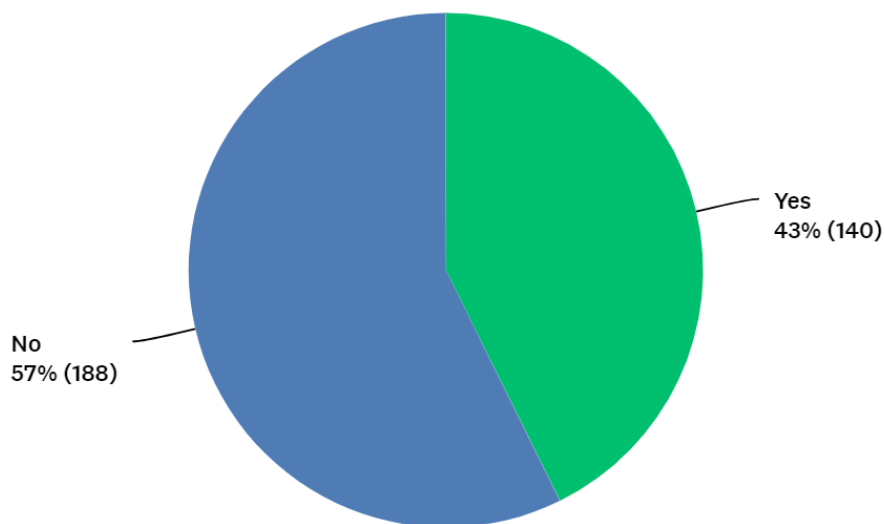
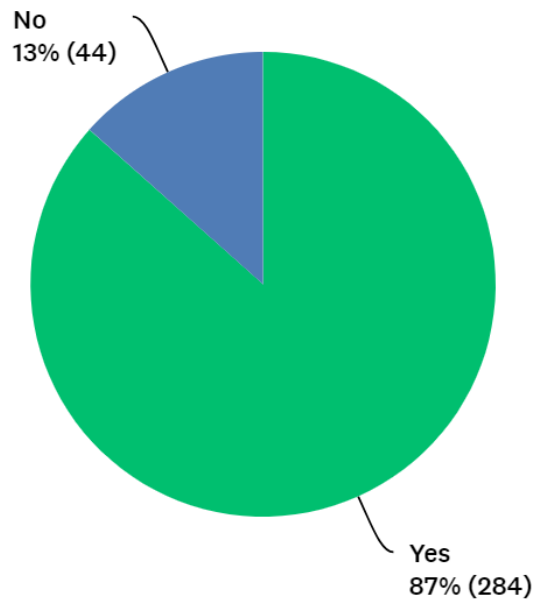


Table 10: Q10: Would it be helpful if you could be provided with mentoring support to help you understand your employment options when you stop playing professional football?



4.4 Attitude towards entrepreneurship

Vast majority of respondents (**87%; n=288**) have expressed interest in becoming entrepreneurs.

Most of respondents (73%; n=241) have already considered the possibility to become an entrepreneur (in sport field or other area) after their football career.

45% (n=146) would consider starting an entrepreneurial activity **once they finish their sports careers**, while **36% (n=119)** would try to start entrepreneurship **simultaneously along with their sports careers**. 2% (n=6) are already entrepreneurs. 4% of respondents (n=14) have always wanted to do it, but not found the moment, while 12% (n=40) do not think they will ever become entrepreneurs.

Table 11: Q11: Have you ever considered the possibility to become an entrepreneur after your football career (in sport field or other area)?

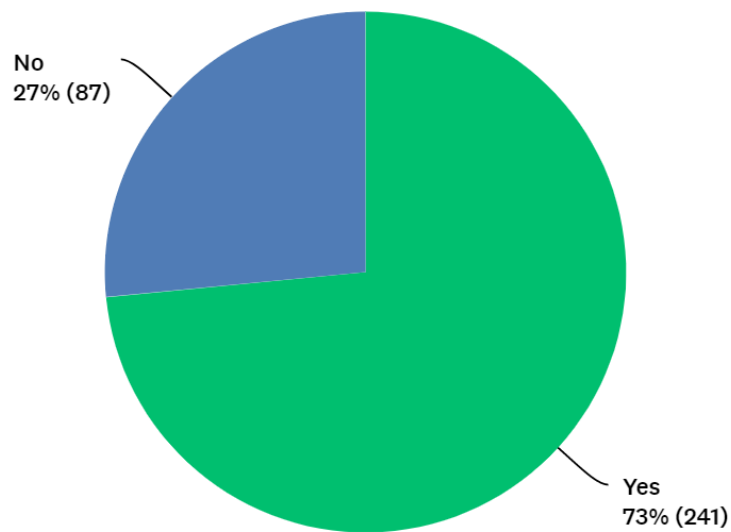
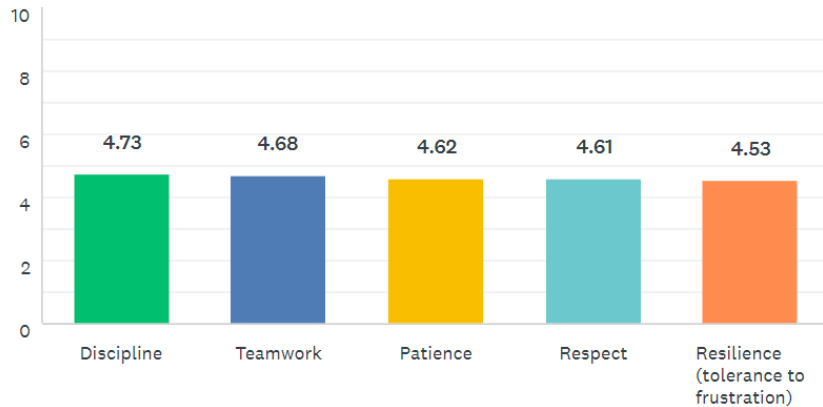


Table 12: Q12: When would you consider starting an entrepreneurial activity?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Once I finish my sports career	45% 149
I would try to start simultaneously along with my sports career	36% 119
I don't think I ever will	12% 40
I have always wanted to do it, but I have not found the moment	4% 14
I am already an entrepreneur	2% 6
TOTAL	328

Respondents have rated how useful different skills are for starting a business, on a scale from 1 (not useful) to 5 (very useful). Majority (69% or more) of respondents have rated each of the skills to be very useful. **The best rated skill for starting a business was discipline (weighted average of 4,73)**, followed by teamwork, patience, respect, and resilience.

Table 13: Q13: How useful do you consider the following skills to be for starting a business? (1-not useful, 5-very useful)



	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
▼ Discipline	0.91% 3	1.52% 5	2.44% 8	13.72% 45	81.40% 267	328	4.73
▼ Teamwork	1.83% 6	1.22% 4	2.44% 8	16.46% 54	78.05% 256	328	4.68
▼ Patience	1.52% 5	1.52% 5	4.27% 14	18.60% 61	74.09% 243	328	4.62
▼ Respect	1.22% 4	1.52% 5	4.88% 16	20.12% 66	72.26% 237	328	4.61
▼ Resilience (tolerance to frustration)	1.52% 5	0.91% 3	8.84% 29	20.12% 66	68.60% 225	328	4.53

Among different entrepreneur profiles, 37% chose specialist entrepreneur, 29% social entrepreneur, 28% investor entrepreneur and 26% innovative entrepreneur.

Table 14: Q14: Which of the following entrepreneur profiles do you think are more suited to what you would like to be in the future?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Specialist entrepreneur (being an expert)	37% 122
▼ Social entrepreneur (running community projects, educational programmes, non-profit organisations, etc.)	29% 94
▼ Investor entrepreneur (investing in opportunities other than your own, e.g. start-up)	28% 92
▼ Innovative entrepreneur (creating innovative products, services, technologies)	26% 84
Total Respondents: 328	

4.5 Interest in entrepreneurship training

73% (n=240) of respondents **would follow a course/training** on the topic of entrepreneurship.

43% (n=140) of respondents think entrepreneurship training would help them towards a **possible professional alternative**, while **33% (n=108)** believe that entrepreneurship training would help them **to approach the sports field from a business perspective**. 21% (n=70) do not know how would help them and 3% (n=10) believe it would not help them at all.

What would move the players most to do a training in entrepreneurship are **the possibility of professional growth (51%; n=168)** and **the option to generate economic income (50%; n=164)**. 15% (n=48) think that the difficulty of facing the labour market would be the reason, while 7% (n=22) answered that nothing moves them to do a training in entrepreneurship.

Q15: Would you follow a course/training on the topic of entrepreneurship?

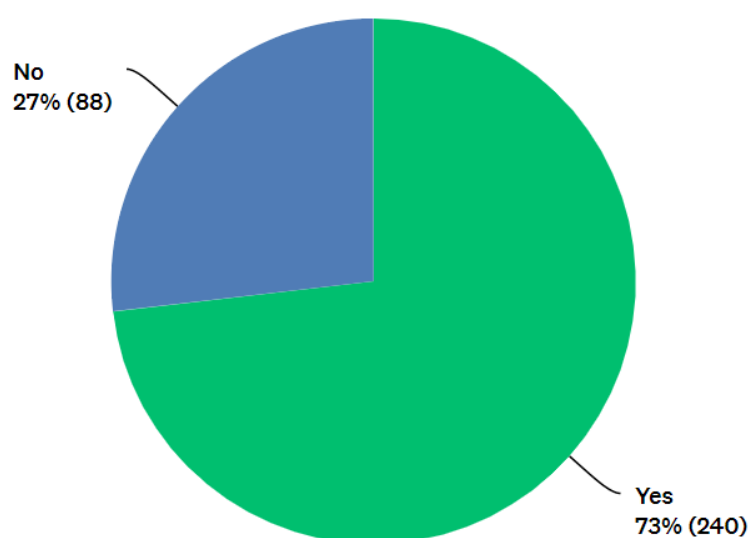


Table 16: Q16: How do you think an entrepreneurship training would help you?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ A possible professional alternative	43%	140
▼ I would approach the sports field from a business perspective	33%	108
▼ I'm not sure how it would help me	21%	70
▼ It wouldn't help me at all	3%	10
TOTAL		328

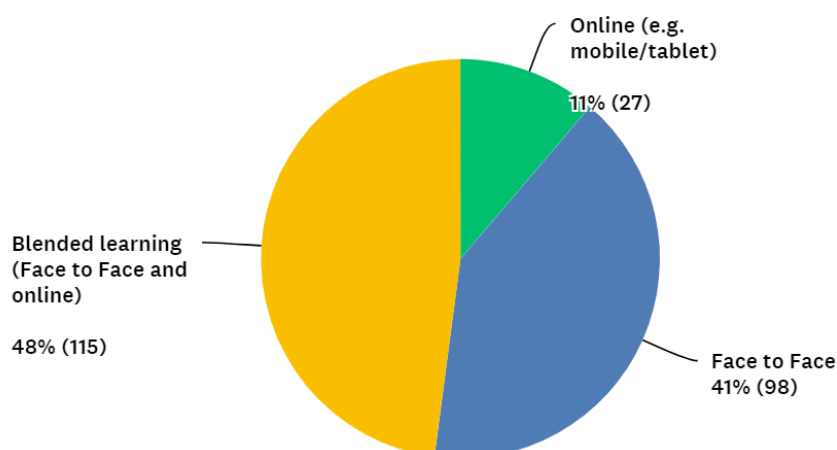
Table 17: Q17: What would move you most to do a training in entrepreneurship?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ The possibility of professional growth	51%	168
▼ The option to generate economic income	50%	164
▼ The difficulty of facing the labour market	15%	48
▼ Nothing moves me to do a training in entrepreneurship	7%	22
Total Respondents: 328		

4.6 Learning preferences¹

11% (n=27) prefer online training (e.g. mobile/tablet), while 41% (n=98) prefer face to face. **Most of respondents (48%; n=115) would prefer blended learning (online and face to face).**

Table 18: Q18: How would you prefer the training to be offered?



Most of the respondents (52%; n=124) would like the course to last 3 months, 31% (n=75) would prefer a 6-months course and 17% would like the course to last 1 year. **Most of them (57%; n=136) would invest 2 hours daily**, while 34% (n=81) would invest 1 hour and 10% (n= 23) 4 hours daily.

¹ In this section, only the learning preferences of participants, who have answered YES to question Q15 (Would you follow a course/training on the topic of entrepreneurship?) were analysed (n=240).

Table 19: Q19: If you enrol in some course, how long would you like this course to last?

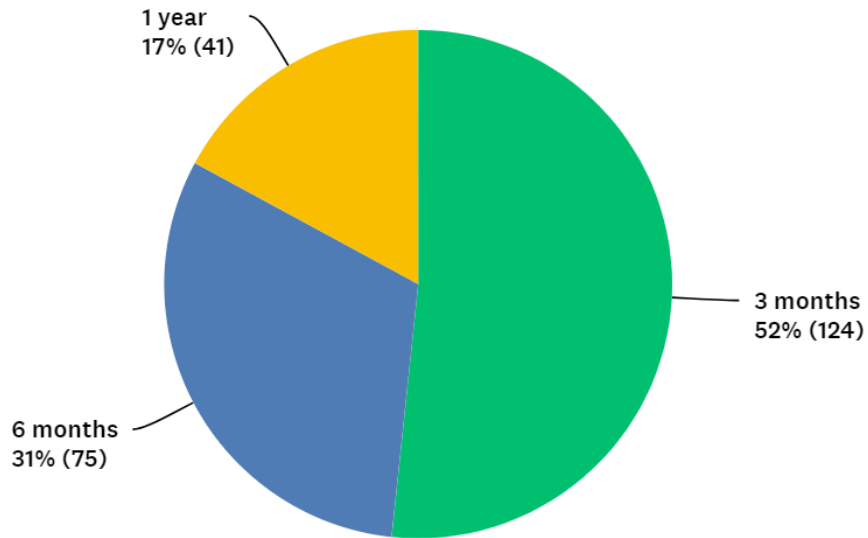
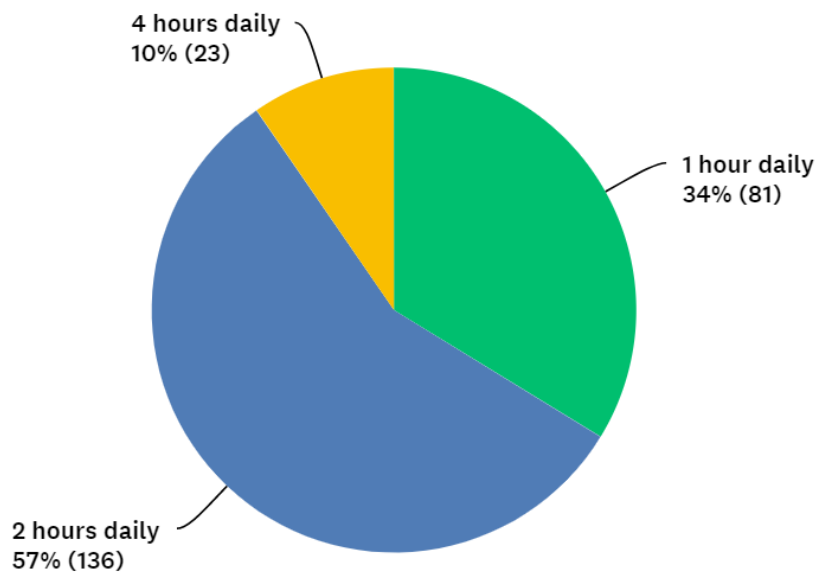
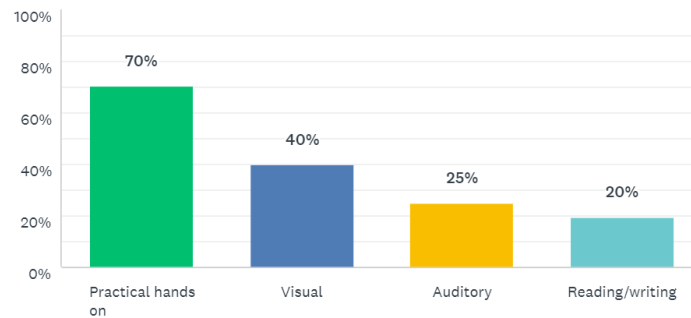


Table 20: Q20: How much time daily would you invest in training?



70% (n=169) of the respondents chose Practical hands on as their preferred learning style. 40% (n=96) chose visual, 25% (n=60) auditory and 20% (n=47) reading/writing.

Table 21: Q21: What is your preferred learning style



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Practical hands on	70% 169
▼ Visual	40% 96
▼ Auditory	25% 60
▼ Reading/writing	20% 47
Total Respondents: 240	

5 Conclusion and Recommendations

Analysis of the survey data obtained in this project shows that for young football players, playing football in professional or semi-professional youth leagues represents a source of income (primary or secondary), which ends together with their football career, mostly after their age of 35.

Football players are interested in becoming entrepreneurs, whether as specialists/experts or running community programmes, educational programmes, or non-profit organisations, becoming investors in start-ups or innovating products, services, and technologies. Most of them had already considered to become entrepreneurs after their football career and it is recommended to provide the players the possibility to start entrepreneurship also simultaneously, along with their sports careers.

The clubs do offer support regarding follow-on career advice, but a special mentoring support to help players understand their employment options when they stop playing professional football would be recommended.

It would be recommended to provide a course/training for football players on the topic of entrepreneurship, to help players towards a possible professional alternative or to be able to approach the sports field from a business perspective. It can be concluded that the possibility of professional growth and the option to generate economic income would move the players most to do a training in entrepreneurship.

It is important to ensure that a player can combine their football career and the training in a flexible and effective way, without comprising either objective. In the light of the results of the survey regarding the learning preferences, it is therefore recommended that:

- The training is offered as a blended learning, a combination of online and face to face seminars.
- The course should last between 3 and 6 months.
- Daily investment should be a maximum of 2 hours.
- Practical hands on would be recommended learning style, added by visual, audio and reading/writing materials.