B-WISER aims at optimizing the employability and employment of athletes in three specific career stages:

- when they are active in elite sport (D-phase)
- when they have retired from elite sport and prepare for a first-time employment (R-phase)
- when they are employed in their post-athletic career (P-phase)

B-WISER ADDRESSES THESE AIMS BY:

1) identifying the current status of 'elite sport and employment' support services for active and former elite athletes in Europe
2) identifying the competencies active and retired athletes require to optimize their employability
3) identifying how active and retired athletes can create added value for employers
4) developing and/or enhancing evidence-based tools and practices to optimize athletes' employability

More information:
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B-WISER CONSORTIUM

50 Internationally Renowned Dual Career Experts

6 EU Member States

13 Research and/or Elite Sport Organisations
- 6 Universities
- 4 National Olympic committees
- National Paralympic committee
- Sport governing body
- High Performance Center

14 International Experts
- Elite sport
- Career support
- Employment and HR
- Project management

B-WISER is coordinated by the Vrije Universiteit Brussel
1. CURRENT STATUS OF 'ELITE SPORT AND EMPLOYMENT' SUPPORT SERVICES

169 stakeholders in career support completed an online survey on their practices, roles, challenges and effectiveness measures related to 'elite sport and employment' - 62% elite sport organisations 
- 25% employers and employment agencies 
- 13% educational institutions

PRACTICES
European stakeholders have a lot of good practices in place, such as strong cooperation networks, job placement support, coaching services, and flexible working conditions.

CHALLENGES
Stakeholders lack awareness about the options and importance of proactive retirement planning guided by qualified career counsellors.

MEASURES
Effectiveness and efficiency measures for career support services are rarely in place and need to be further established.

FOCUS
Stakeholders’ focus on support depends on the career stages:
- D-phase: support with planning & time management, job exploration
- R-phase: support with coping with a new identity, active job search
- P-phase: support with adaptation to a new environment

2. COMPETENCIES REQUIRED BY ATHLETES TO OPTIMIZE EMPLOYABILITY

954 active and retired elite athletes completed an online survey on the barriers they face and the competencies they require to optimize their employability.

The Athletes’ Competency Questionnaire for Employability (ACQE) identified:
1) The barriers athletes face in preparing for first-time employment or in securing sustainable employment:
- Time constraints
- Lack of financial resources
- Lack of long-term perspective
- Lack of support from organisation or Self-confidence issues
- Difficulties with your (new) identity
- Motivational problems
- Injury
- Social pressure

2) Active and retired athletes’ perceived possession of 31 competencies* required to optimize their employability:
- Generic competency profiles
- Career-stage specific competency profiles (DRP)
- Other specific competency profiles (e.g. gender, sport, education)

3) The competencies where athletes perceive a competitive advantage (in comparison with employees without an elite sport background):
- Ability to be goal-oriented
- Self-discipline to manage the demands of different life domains
- Ability to cope with stress effectively

4) A competency framework that structures active and retired athletes’ competencies in four competency areas:

3. EMPLOYERS' PERSPECTIVE ON HIRING ATHLETES

36 employers were questioned in 4 focus groups and 6 face-to-face interviews regarding the reasons why they (do not) hire athletes and ways to maximize athletes’ added value.

WHY EMPLOYERS HIRE ATHLETES
- Affinity with sport
- Need for flexible arrangements
- Facilitates cooperation with sport organisations
- Lack of key competencies
- Set of strong competencies
- Occupational delay
- Commercial purposes
- Legal frameworks
- Sport is priority
- Possibility of injury

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The results suggest ways to maximize athletes’ added value and open up new prospects for improved career support services.

4. EVIDENCE-BASED TOOLS TO OPTIMIZE ATHLETES' EMPLOYABILITY

A toolbox for career counselors with 10 evidence-based tools was developed based on the needs of athletes and employers expressed in the first three work packages. The tools aim to increase athletes’ awareness about their competencies and enhance the matching with employers.

TABLE 1: TOOLBOX FOR CAREER COUNSELORS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHASE</th>
<th>TOOL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WHERE AM I?</td>
<td>Holistic Athletic Career Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHO AM I?</td>
<td>ACQE Competency Profiling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHERE DO I WANT TO GO?</td>
<td>Life Wheel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Compass</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Holistic Goal Setting</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Motivational Interviewing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOW DO I GET THERE?</td>
<td>Competitive Advantage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GROW Coaching Methodology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five-Step Career Planning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAKE ACTION!</td>
<td>Speed networking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The complete ACQE competency list is available on www.bwiser.eu/downloads/

The toolbox will be published in February 2019 on www.bwiser.eu