

# Use of Sport as a Vehicle for Skills Development for the Labour Market

**Report of Evaluation and Guidelines on the use of the training platform developed within the framework of IO3 the ERASMUS + Sport project:**  
*'Sport as a vehicle for developing skills for the labor market and promoting employability and entrepreneurship'*



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**Report of Evaluation and Guidelines on the  
Use of Sport as a Vehicle for Skills Development for the Labour Market**  
Intellectual Output 3 | Work-package 3

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Definitions .....	2
INTRODUCTION .....	3
SECTION 1 – SBS4MED TRAINING .....	5
1. Theoretical assumptions of the training: the insights from IO1 .....	5
2. Methodological assumptions of SBS4MED training course.....	8
3. The sport coaches involved in the training.....	12
4. The web-platform supporting the training.....	12
SECTION 2 –THE IMPACT OF SBS4MED TRAINING .....	13
1. The impact evaluation design.....	13
2. Description of the sample.....	16
1. Results .....	17
SECTION 3 – SBS4MED TRAINING COURSE: THE LESSONS LEARNT .....	20

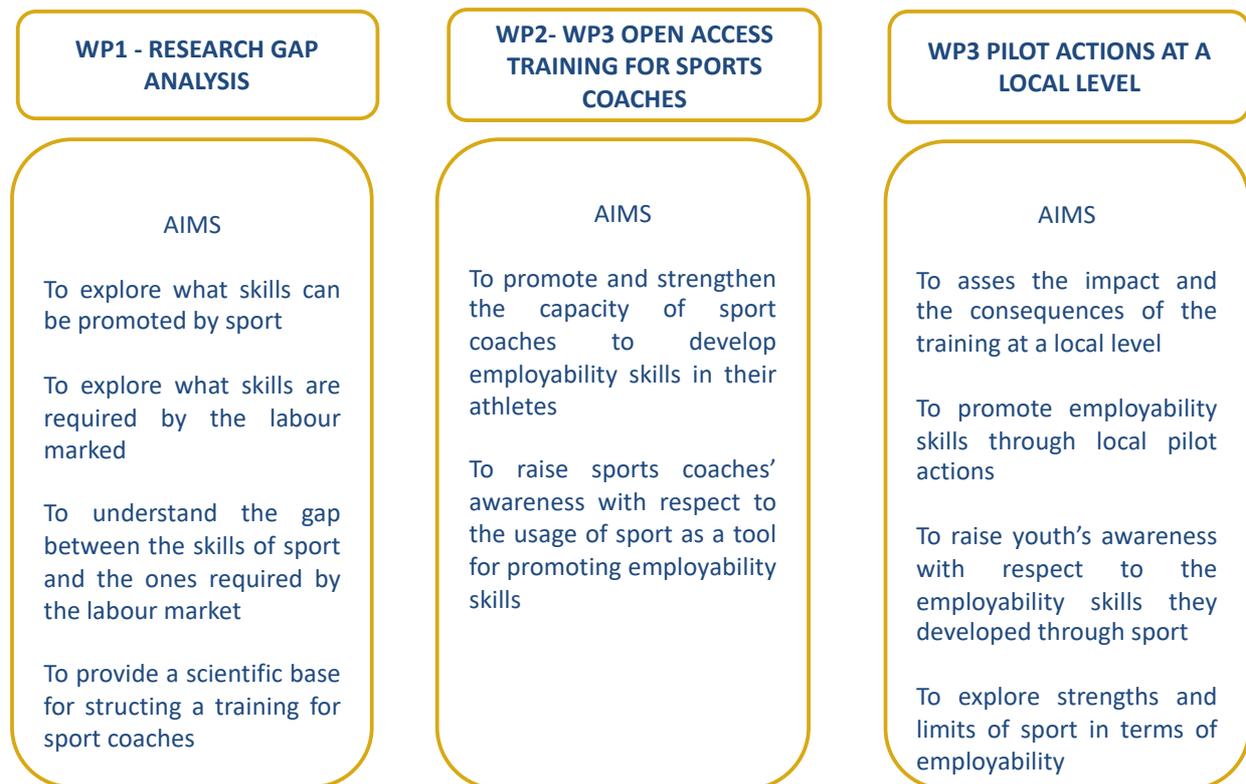
## Definitions

<b>Evaluation</b>	The periodic assessment of performance against agreed-upon objectives and anticipated outcomes. The aim of evaluation is to describe the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability (OECD, in Kusek and Rist, 2004; Cloete et al., 2014).
<b>Impact</b>	Long-term effects or influence, to obtain a meaningful result; the realisation of medium- and long-term anticipated outcomes into substantive results. Such changes can positive or negative (UNDG, 2011).
<b>Indicator</b>	A measuring instrument that is used to provide a concrete and measurable unit. Indicators are variables that help measure changes. (WHO, 2006).
<b>Sport programme</b>	A set of related sport events or activities that have a specific long-term aim, such as growing participants in a specific sport and using sporting activities as a tool to achieve development objectives (Commonwealth, 2019)
<b>Employability</b>	Employability is the potential ability to obtain and maintain professional employment (Yorke, 2006)
<b>Employability skills</b>	Set of subjective attributes, such as values, attitudes and behaviours that can foster job success (Allen et al., 2013).

## INTRODUCTION

Sbs4MED aims at promoting social transformation through sport in the Mediterranean region by focusing on sport as a vehicle for promoting work capacities and employment.

Sport in this project is not an end but a “mean” (a tool) for addressing the social and economic problem of low employment. The key work packages of the project are shown in Figure 1.



*Figure 1 SBS4MED Work-packages (WP)*

The following report focuses on the main results achieved during the Work Package 3 (WP3). WP3 consisted of the implementation of a training course for coaches having the general scope to strengthen their capacity to use sport for employability skills development.

More in detail, the training aimed at:

- Promoting coaches' capacity to foster employability skills in their athletes through sport
- Promoting sports coaches' awareness and knowledge with respect to the usage of sport as a tool for employability skills

The *first section* provides an overview of the methodological and theoretical pillars basing the training course and describes the details of the training in order to facilitate its implementation by whatever organization that is interested.

The *second section* of the document highlights the key results of the training course as reported by the sport coaches who took part in it. The description of such outcomes provides evidences of the positive impact of the training and offers a scientific ground to export the training program in other European contexts.

The *last section* describes the new learnings achieved during the training sessions and reports some useful suggestions for practitioners who are interested in replicating the experience of SBS4MED.

## SECTION 1 – SBS4MED TRAINING

### 1. Theoretical assumptions of the training: the insights from IO1

The research gap analysis of WP1 gave us detailed theoretical insights that guided the structure of the training modules. More in detail, it channeled the following conclusions:

- 1) Sport is reported as a powerful vehicle to develop employability skills such as communication skills, inter-personal (collaboration) and intra-personal (adaptation) skills, contextualization skills (management of complexity) and thinking skills (decision making and creativity); however, *the link between sport and employability still remains vague and ideal*
- 2) Athletes develop skills, abilities, attitudes and values, which cannot be classified as formal training, and which are generally not highly valued outside the sporting sphere, let alone in the workplace.
- 3) It is not clear how the skills developed by sport are transferred to the labour market; one possible way for promoting transferability is working on *self-consciousness and awareness of athletes*.
- 4) Coaches are reported as key figures to promote athletes' self-consciousness and awareness, however, coaches are well equipped with sport and technical competencies rather than employability skills; the priority of coaches remains sport.
- 5) It is very important to acquire a commitment from all the actors involved in the achievement of common objectives. We are referring to: the athletes themselves, the trainers and their families.
- 6) Is a struggle to explain the methods and practical actions to be applied on the playing field to promote awareness among athletes and their employers.
- 7) We provide a modular, simple, but technically sound, self-assessable programme for all interested institutions and individuals.
- 8) In the light of all these considerations, we decided to develop our training in five main modules that are fully described at page 6 and 7 (Table 2).

The modules are structured to develop discussion and sharing among the coaches around:

- Their representation of sport (Module 1)
- The representation of their professional role as coaches (Module 2)
- The links between sport and employability skills (Module 3)
- How to practically develop employability skills through sport (Module 4)
- How to tailor sport activities according to athletes' needs and diversity (Module 5)

## TRAINING CONTENTS

## MAIN OBJECTIVES

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE MODULE

### MODULE 1: INTRODUCTION TO SPORT

This module aims at helping sport coaches in becoming more conscious with respect to what sport means to them. The module has the purpose to guide them in understanding that their latent representation of sport impact on how they behave and use sport in their daily routine for promoting employability skills.

To co-build a shared representation of the meaning of sport

**Tool - *What does sport mean to you?*** During the training, sport coaches are individually asked to answer the question “What does sport mean to you” by choosing an image that reflect their representation of sport. The images and the related explanation of the choice are shared among the group with trainers guiding the discussion

### MODULE 2: THE ROLE OF SPORT COACHES

The module provides coaches with a reflections and debate about their role and identity. The debate developed within this module aims to open up coaches’ minds about their identity and reinforce their consciousness about their key role as guide and mentors for their athletes.

To develop participants’ awareness about their role as sports coaches

**Tool – “You as a sport coach”;** Sport coaches are asked to answer to the following questions on a white paper: a) What kind of coach are you? b) Which coach would you like to be? 3) Which coach should you be?; Participants share their answers and trainers encourage discussion around the three images emerged of sport coaches: the real, the desired and the ideal.

**The role of the coaches:** The trainer is called to show 2-3 videos from the platform. Coaches are called upon to reflect on this key question: *What do these videos tell us about the coaches and their role? How do these coaching styles may influence the development of employability skills through sports?* The trainer guide the discussion and lead the group to reflect on the diverse representation of sport coaches emerging from the group

### MODULE 3: SPORT FOR EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

The module aims to reinforce the practical implication of sport toward the development of employability skills.

To make participants reflect on the skills for the world of work that can be developed through sport

**Tool – Employability**—> *What does employability mean to you?* Sport coaches are asked to report words that, according to them, are linked to the concept of “employability” in contemporary society. Participants and trainers discuss together the various words.

**Tool – Sport and employability** → sport coaches are individually asked to write down the employability skills that can be developed through their sport. Participants share their skills and discuss convergences and divergences with the support of the trainers.

### MODULE 4 : FROM THE ROLE TO THE PRACTICE

To make participants think about diverse practices for developing

**Tool – Daily routine and practice of training;** coaches are asked to bring back an example of a training they usually implement with their athletes. From that training, they are asked to reflect on the employability skills they have developed. This exercise

During the module, sport coaches will be guided into reflecting on their training routines as sport coaches. Starting from *what coaches YET do on the field* with the athletes, they will be asked to reflect about what employability skills they silently develop within their practice. This activity will permit to develop coaches' awareness about the implicit skills they develop through their trainings. Then, they will be asked to structure and define practical strategy to make more explicit these skills.

employability skills through sport

To co-build with participants practical exercises and strategies to develop employability skills through sport

is powerfully useful to make more explicit certain skills that sport coaches already develop in their athletes without awareness.

**Tool – Inspiring coaches** ( link with the platform; in the web-platform it is possible to find diverse videos and written sport exercises; it's up to trainer which one to show during the training)→ These videos can be used as a tool for promoting critical think in sport coaches. The scope of this exercise is to develop sport coaches capacity to observe, critique and change their own actions.

**Tool - Role playing** (link with football and volleyball exercises on the webplatform; the tool can be used if the training is in presence and there is adequate space)

### MODULE 5: DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

The module is fundamental to adapt and contextualize the development of employability skills through sport considering the specific athletes' needs and differences at a local level.

To promote reflection on the concept of difference and diversity within sport.

To promote reflection related to how to manage diversity and how to adapt interventions coherently with athletes' needs and characteristics (gender, culture, individual characteristics, ethnicity, religion or social / economic status)

**Tool - Diversity and differences** (link with videos in the web-platform) - The trainer can show in the classroom 1-2 video among those present on the platform. Starting from this videos, participants are asked to answer to these questions: What are the main characteristics of your team in terms of diversity? What is diversity for you? To which diversity category (gender, culture, individual characteristics, ethnicity, religion or social / economic status, sport skills level) do you mostly pay attention during your training? The trainers collect the answers and guide the group to converge towards a shared definition of diversity.

**Tool - Diversity in your team** : in this section, sport coaches are asked to answer to this question “What is the most prevalent diversity in your team? Choose among the type of diversity here proposed: age diversity, race diversity, gender diversity, personality diversity, sport skills diversity, religion or social / economic status diversity”. This tool is functional to highlight the specificity of each sport team and help sport coaches to develop awareness with respect to the unique characteristics of their team.

**Tool – Diversity and difference** (link with slide presentation in the platform) → This slide presentation shows a definition of “diversity” and “difference”, and propose some practical strategies to manage diversity in sport.

Table 1 – Content, objectives and development of the training modules

## 2. Methodological assumptions of SBS4MED training course

### 1) Sport as a *plus per se*

The training course aims to promote an approach for employability skills development purely based in sport (Coalter, 2007). In order to explain what we mean by this approach, we refer to the categorisation of sport interventions proposed by Coalter (2007). Coalter (2007) examined the typologies of interventions that use sport to enhance diverse social outcomes, including the development of employability skills, and identified three main types of programmes that can be delivered: sport programmes, ‘sport-plus’, and ‘plus-sport’ (see table 1).

**Sport-based program** : intervention purely based in sport. Sport is the centre of the intervention and it is the core activity within the program.

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**Sport-plus program**: the sport environment is intentionally set to transmit certain values, or to promote specific changes. These initiatives generally provide parallel initiatives (e.g.: workshops) aimed at developing a certain social awareness or changes (e.g.: gender equality, racism, social inclusion; development of skills).

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**Plus-sport program**: sport is a marginal activity within the program and it is used only as a hook to reach people who live in conditions of marginality or exclusion

*Table 2 – Coalter’s (2007) classification of sport-based programs*

Sbs4MED training course embraces the principles of *sport-based programmes* (Coalter, 2007). Within the course, sport is conceived as a catalyst for employability skills without the need to add extra activities to develop such skills, as it would happen in the so-called *sport-plus* programmes.

Within sport-plus programmes, which are nowadays the most popular approach in funded sports interventions (Coalter et al., 2020), the sport environment is intentionally set to transmit certain values, or to promote specific skills. These initiatives generally provide parallel initiatives (e.g.: workshop) aimed at developing a certain social awareness or changes (e.g.: gender equality, racism, social inclusion; employability) and adapt/de-structure the sportive and competitive dimension of sport during the intervention (Sterchele, 2015). An example of this approach is when ad hoc games or physical exercises are intentionally structured to work and debate with participants on specific life skills or employability skills.

The *sport-plus* approach has been criticized for *de-sportizing* sport (Sterchele, 2015; Malcolm, 2005; Stokvis, 1992). Sterchele (2015) argue that when used for social purposes (and this is the case when sport interventions aim at developing employability skills), mainstream sports often need to be adapted and partially de-structured by downplaying their competitive dimension. Within this approach, the form and structure of mainstream competitive sports are often manipulated in different ways to make them more suitable for reaching social goals. This point is also relevant when we observe the benefits of the competition, as the group roles emerged easily in this condition, as opposed to the only-hedonic practice.

In SbS4MED training, we wanted to propose an alternative approach to the mainstream *de-sportization* of sport interventions, arguing that in order to promote social outcomes through sports, it is possible to use sport without de-structuring or adapting it with adding activities.

#### *How to do it?*

Module 4 of our training course (table 1) provides a good example to explain the particularity of the approach. During the module, coaches reflect on their sport training routines, *starting from what they yet do on the field with the athletes*, they are asked to describe the employability skills they silently and implicitly develop within their practice with the athletes (Holt et al., 2017).

Through this approach, employability skills are inductively raised by normal sport training. The skills emerge from the daily practice proposed by the coach rather than being forcibly introduced through an *ad hoc* exercise.

This approach doesn't change the way coaches implement their sport training, rather raises a reflection *a posteriori* by the coaches around what they proposed to their athletes and enhance their awareness about the usage of sport during their daily practice (see table 3)

	<b>Example of instructions for the coach</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Fields of implementation</b>
<b>SbS4MED training course approach (inductive method)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Think about a normal training you generally propose to your athletes: concentrate on 1-2 exercises (the more relevant or important to you from a sportive perspective);</li> <li>- Starting from these key exercises: what employability skills are developed in your</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The sportive goals of the training are maintained</li> <li>- The social goal (developing employability skills) is the consequence of the sport practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Coaches can implement this type of training in whatever contexts and with any kind of athletes</li> </ul>

	opinion through these exercises?		
<b>Traditional sport-plus approach (deductive method)</b>	- Create an exercise to develop employability skills (e.g.: communication; collaboration etc.)	- The social purpose (developing employability skills) guides the structure of the exercises - The employability skills ground the sport training rather than the contrary - The social purpose of the activity overcomes the sportive ones	- They are asked to adapt/change their way of implementing sport activities - In performative sport fields, this kind of approach can be hardly implemented because the sportive goals are left apart

*Table 3 – The particularities of SbS4MED training course approach in comparison with the traditional sport-plus approach*

**2) Learning from the bottom : reflection on experience as a key leverage to acquire knowledge.**

A second methodological assumption basing the SbS4MED training course is that participants have direct experience and previous knowledge about the object of the training. In traditional trainings, when the knowledge is transmitted by the expert, such backgrounds owned by the participants generally remain implicit.

In each module, participants are invited to discuss their own *habits* as sport coaches. Generally, these habits, no matter the professional field of application, are strongly crystallised in the daily routine of professionals. The possibility to discuss these sedimented practices with a larger group permits us to analyse them and, through confrontations with other professional, to sustain processes of individual changes (Alastra, Scaratti, Kaneklin, 2012).

This way of implementing the training course allows to activate serious reflections around certain consolidated routines and sustains the promotion of self-awareness as professionals.

**3) The group as a source of learning**

Each module of the training was structured with the intention to develop a debate among the coaches who have been constantly asked to discuss certain topics under the supervision of the trainer. Through this approach, knowledge is not mechanically transmitted by the the trainer rather it is co-built with the participation of the group. The new learnings are thus achieved from the sharing and reflections between the diverse group of participants. This pedagogical approach sustains the development of social knowledge (Gibbons et al., 1994).

The presence of the group, thus, becomes a source to develop new learnings.

In conclusion, three keywords guided the development of SbS4MED training course: *experience, group and sport* (see figure 2)



**EXPERIENCE;**

Experience is one of the most important source of human learning. We would like to promote an innovative training where coaches could talk about and reflect on their experience on the field.



**GROUP**

Sharing our thoughts in group helps opening our horizons. We would like to promote a training where sharing the experience inside the group is the main (but not the only) source of learning and improvement for coaches.



**SPORT**

Sport remains the priority and the aim of our training project. We would like to guide coaches in a more conscious and effective use of sport.

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*Figure 2 Development of SbS4MED training course*

### 3. The sport coaches involved in the training

The training was conceived to involve small groups of 8-10 sport coaches working with sport group with these requirements:

- i) Sport coaches working with youths in grassroot sport societies
- ii) Sport coaches working with talented youth athletes\* or elite athletes\*\*
- iii) Sport coaches working with migrants/refugees and populations living conditions of vulnerability

#### **Why a focus on coaches?**

Coaches are a very important point of reference for athletes; their way of acting, communicating and motivating has a significant influence on them. Their positive and balanced contribution is developed in the cognitive (thinking), motor (skills) and affective (feelings and emotions) areas.

\*Talented athletes = a talented athlete is recognised by a sports organisation as having the potential to develop an elite sports career.

\*\*Elite athletes= an elite athlete is an athlete who has a professional contract with an employer or sports organisation or has the status of an elite athlete recognised by a sports organisation.

Even if each country has different ways to classify elite or top level athletes, in this report we refer to the definitions proposed by the European Guidelines. For more info see also [https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/sport/library/documents/dual-career-guidelines-final\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/sport/library/documents/dual-career-guidelines-final_en.pdf)

### 4. The web-platform supporting the training

The training has been planned to be delivered both in presence or online according to COVID-19 restrictions at a national level. In both cases, trainers were asked to use a web-platform where they could find diverse materials supporting the training.

Within the platform, the trainers had access to the track of the modules in detail (objectives, tools, methodological suggestions) and the material (videos, pictures, interviews) supporting the training as well as some suggestion related to how best using these materials.

Sport coaches participating in the training could also have access to the platform.

## SECTION 2 –THE IMPACT OF SBS4MED TRAINING

### 1. The impact evaluation design

We developed a longitudinal quantitative evaluation design with a qualitative focus. We proposed two questionnaires at two times (before the start of the training and at the end) and the implementation of focus groups at the end of the training.

Furthermore, the training course trainers have been asked to fill a monitoring diary for each training session in order to highlight strengths and weaknesses of the path. Table 4 shows the material collected for each country involved in the project.

	<b>Pre-post questionnaire</b>	<b>Final focus group</b>	<b>Monitoring diaries</b>
Italy	12	1	4
Balearic Island	4	4	2
Cyprus	9	1	x
Greece	/		/
Portugal	8	1	/
Croatia	/	/	/

*Table 4 – Evaluation data tools for each country*

At the beginning of the training course (T1), an online questionnaire (via Qualtrics platform) has been proposed to the coaches in order to investigate:

- (i) *their knowledge* with respect to the meaning of employability and the contribution of sport in developing employability skills
- (ii) *their awareness* of the role they play in developing employability skills
- (iii) *their knowledge and application of strategies* for developing such skills
- (iv) *their sense of self-efficacy* with respect to developing employability through sports.

At the end of the training (T2), a second questionnaire assessing the same variables has been proposed. At T2, coaches were further asked to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the path.

Within the focus group, the same areas of investigation as in the questionnaire have been explored, with the intention of giving greater density to the quantitative data collected and

highlighting the experiences and meanings associated to the training course. More in detail we asked the coaches the following questions:

- *Describe the training experience you attended*
- *What did you learn from this training?*
- *What skills do you feel you developed in this training? How did you learn them during the training?*
- *What practical strategies have you consolidated for developing id skills for employability through sport? How did the training help you acquire these strategies?*
- *In what ways did the training change your style of conducting training?*
- *How do you evaluate the training overall?*
- *In what ways has it been helpful?*
- *What have been its strengths?*
- *What, on the other hand, would you modify?*

The evaluation of SbS4MED training course has been developed on the basis of five main indicators:

- (a) *Awareness of coaches regarding the contribution of sport to employability*
- (b) *Awareness of coaches with respect to their role in developing skills for employability*
- (c) *Awareness of practical strategies for developing skills through sport*
- (d) *Usage of practical strategies for developing skills through sport*
- (e) *Coaches' self-efficacy with respect to their ability to promote skills for employability through sport*

The table shows the items for each indicator. For the majority of the indicators, since there are no validated scales that fit the purposes of our research, ad hoc questions were created. For the evaluation of indicator (d), we used the sub-scale 3 “Practicing Life Skills” of the Coaching Life Skills Questionnaire (Camiré et al. 2021).

<b>INDICATORS</b>	<b>ITEMS</b>
(a) <i>Awareness around the contribution of sport to employability</i>	Sport is an effective tool for developing employability skills (ad hoc question)

(b) <i>Awareness of coaches with respect to their role in developing skills for employability</i>	Coaches, through their work, can develop useful employability skills in their athletes ( <i>ad hoc question</i> )
(c) <i>Awareness of practical strategies for developing skills through sport</i>	I know practical strategies to develop employability skills in my athletes through sports ( <i>ad hoc question</i> )
(d) <i>Usage of practical strategies for developing skills through sport</i>	<p>Sub-scale 3 “Practicing Life Skills” 4 items</p> <p><b>Incorporate life skills into my coaching plan.</b> (Example: I dedicate specific time to practice conflict resolution).</p> <p><b>Create opportunities for athletes to use life skills in sport.</b> (Example: I give athletes responsibilities for planning practice activities. I have athletes lead the pre-game pep talk).</p> <p><b>Provide athletes with support for using life skills in sport.</b> (Example: I expose athletes to negotiation principles they can use during conflict resolution).</p> <p><b>Afford athletes opportunities to reflect on their use of life skills in sport.</b> (Example: I ask questions to athletes for them to describe their life skill application experiences in sport).</p>
(e) <i>Coaches' self-efficacy with respect to their ability to promote skills for employability through sport</i>	I feel able to develop employability skills in my athletes through sports ( <i>ad hoc question</i> )

*Table 5- Evaluation indicators and related questionnaire items*

The results of the evaluation will be presented following these indicators.

## 2. Description of the sample

90 sport coaches were invited to participate voluntarily and freely in an online questionnaire and focus group to evaluate the impact of SbS4MED training course.

33 participants (F = 8, M = 25) involved in SbS4MED training course filled the pre-post questionnaire between November 2021 and April 2022. The study was conducted in accordance with the Helsinki Declaration and Italy's data protection regulation and obtained the ethical approval of the Ethics Commission of the UCSC Faculty of Psychology. Participants gave their online consent to participate in the quantitative research and gave their written consent for participating in the focus groups.

The average age of the participants who filled out the questionnaire was 33.2 years ( $SD = 13.00$ ; range: 22–79 years). In total, 69.7% of participants were football coaches, 9.1% were basketball coaches, 6.1% were futsal coaches 3% were handball coaches, 6.1 were swimming coaches and 3% didn't specified.

Furthermore, 27.3% of the coaches were from Cyprus, 36,4% from Italy, 24.2% from Portugal, 12.1% from Spain. The majority of the coaches (75.8%) were grassroots sports trainers, 12.1% of the sample were youth elite sport coaches and 12.1% of the sample did not specify the field of training.

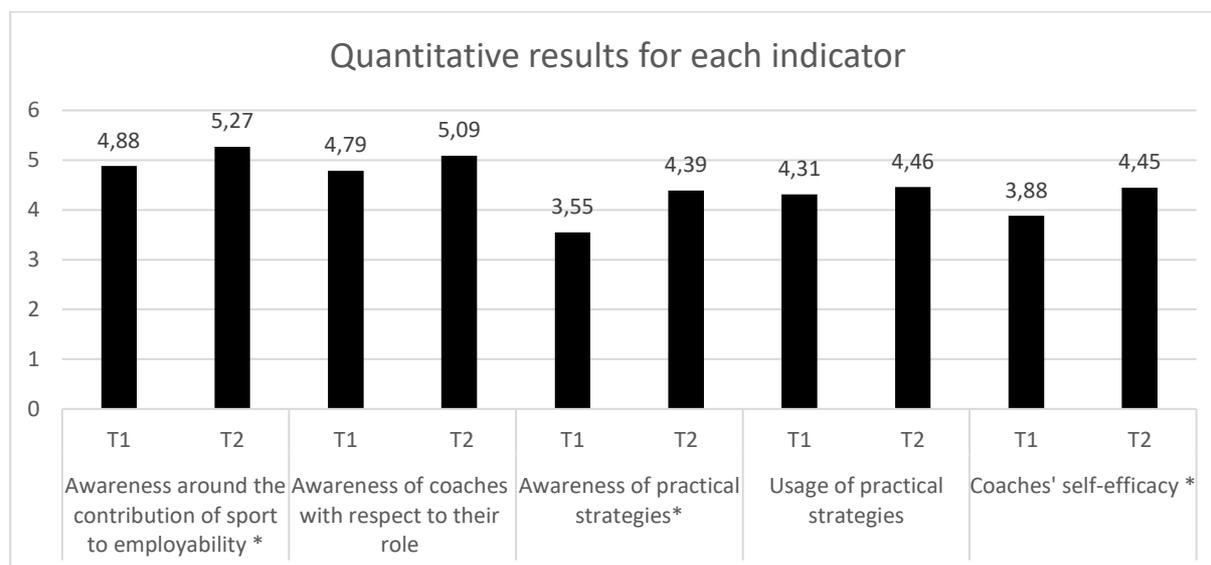
A total of 18 sport coaches participated in the final focus groups. Table 5 shows the details of the sample involved.

<b>Detail of FG participants</b>	
Italy	10 male sport coaches
Balearic Island	3 male sport coaches
Cyprus and Greece	5 sport coaches (female= 1, male =4)
Portugal	10 sport coaches (female=3, male=7)
Croatia	/

*Table 6 – Research participants of the focus groups*

## 1. Results

Figure 3 shows the quantitative results of the evaluation.



*Figure 3 Mean comparison for each evaluation indicator*

Note. The titles of the indicators marked with an asterisk indicate significant differences

### (a) Awareness around the contribution of sport to employability

Regarding the awareness around the contribution of sport to employability, at T1, it is reported a mean score of 4.88 (DS = 1.2). At T2, the mean score (M=5.27; DS = 1.00) shows a statistically significant increase ( $p < .05$ ).

These results are supported also by the focus groups. Participants reported that the training helped them in developing a new perspective on sport. Coaches described they discovered an added value of sport through the training course and this is mentioned as something completely new for them, something they've never thought about.

“It gets me a huge picture, a big clue of the different side of sport. Because I never thought, I never think for a second that through sport you can also find skill. You can also learn something which will help you to find a job, it never crossed my mind (...) But after having this session is like “Oh, there's a lot which we need to know and I never knew this before” (P1, Cyprus)

### (b) Awareness of coaches with respect to their role in developing skills for employability

Data from the questionnaires shows an increase at T2 even if not statistically significant.

This result is partially in contrast with what has been reported by the focus groups participants.

Some coaches described the training program as a tool to acquire more awareness around their role:

“The program gives us the opportunity to strengthening our role as a coach and also give us a better understanding of the importance of sport in our daily life” (P2, Greece)

*(c) Awareness of practical strategies for developing skills through sport*

At T1, it is reported a mean scores of 3.55 (DS = 1.41 ). At T2, the mean score (M=4.39 ; DS = 1.11) shows a statistically significant increase (p < .05) .

This result was raised also from the focus group.

The training course has been compared by the interviewees to a kind of dose booster, a dose that reinforces practices, skills and knowledge that sport coaches already have in them. “The program gave me a boost” (P5, Cyprus)

During a normal training with the athletes, sport coaches often think and accomplish their objectives automatically. According to participants, what this training has developed is a greater knowledge and awareness about the implicit development of skills and values that are complementary to technical and sportive growth. This is one of the elements most recognized by the participants: the training was an enhancement of what is already happening in the training process.

“Actually it helped me and I think all of us, to took knowledge about what we can develop through coaching without even thinking about it. I mean it comes automatically with coaching, but sometimes we never realized what we what we achieve with this extra, besides coaching I mean. Just training football, what what we can achieve more? We never think about it, but with that program we realized what we can achieve more” (P4, Greece)

*(d) Usage of practical strategies for developing skills through sport*

Data from the questionnaires shows an increase at T2 even if not statistically significant.

This has been also reported by some participants in the focus groups.

In the Italian FG, for instance, sport coaches reported that there is a gap between the theoretical knowledge acquired during the training and their practice with the athletes.

The training course has promoted greater self-awareness around certain behaviors by the participants rather than a practical change in how sport coaches structure and deliver their trainings with the athletes. It seems that the training course provided coaches with a new awareness but this hardly impacted on their current practices. This is because the training

touched certain topics without providing coaches with spaces to transfer into practice all the theoretical insights touched during the path.

“We here limited ourselves to knowledge, not experience. Because we didn't do it (he is referring to the practice of developing employability skills through sport), we told and listened to it, we shared it with each other, the confrontation was a very strong thing, however, it goes up to a certain level. Direct practice (he is referring to the practice with the athletes) could make the difference: practical competence is deeper than knowledge. Not only what you learn, but also what you do. (...) the how is kind of missing, there are nuances inside that we cannot have, because we are not practicing them” (P9, Italy)

(e) *Coaches' self-efficacy with respect to their ability to promote skills for employability through sport*

At T1, it is reported a mean scores of 4.88 (DS = 1.26 ). At T2, the mean score (M=5.27 ; DS = 1.00) shows a statistically significant increase ( $p < .05$ ).

"It (he is referring to the training course) gave me food for thought on some of the exercises...it doesn't change my style but it gave me awareness (...) I can introduce things that I used to do without thinking, I have never thought about transferring skills into the working world, I used to say "yes they are important, I do them, but a little bit like this." Now I have the knowledge that they are important” (P3, Greece)

### SECTION 3 – SBS4MED TRAINING COURSE: THE LESSONS LEARNT

The impact evaluation of the training suggests some key lessons to support the usage of sport as a vehicle for developing employability skills.

First, during the training course, the coaches greatly appreciated the participatory and dialogical approach. Comparison with coaches from different sports disciplines is described as an added value of the course and a source of enrichment. Participatory approaches applied to training, therefore, seem to better support processes of engagement and motivation. This finding suggests that a participatory pedagogical approach is desirable in training paths for coaches and could be more widely promoted within the official trainings of sports federations. At the same time, *transdisciplinarity* – set off by the presence of sport coaches with different sports backgrounds – constituted an added value for the coaches themselves and should be further sustained by sports federations.

*"I would say that the dialogue with others (coaches) is crucial" (Participant Italy)*

*"The dialogue we had with all the participants help me a lot to start thinking also in other ways and that's very important to me" (P3)*

Second, the evaluative research has highlighted the importance of awareness and strengthening of the coach's role as key elements in the development of employability skills through sport. Raising coaches' awareness around their personal contribution to the process of skills development can be understood as an essential pre-condition for the promotion of a virtuous mechanism of skills promotion.

Soft skills that can be transferred from sports practice to the labour market are learned, and integrated into sports training, thanks to the training of coaches.

*"To be a coach you cannot improvise: you have to train, you have to have skills. Because it is a delicate role within our society (...) we have a big responsibility" (Participant, Italy)*

During the training, we developed some insights also from the usage of the web-platform.

More in detail:

- It should be integrated and used in more formal educational programmes for athletes.
- It can be customised, adapted and timed to the characteristics of different users and types of individual or group sport.
- The online tool should be translated into several EU languages.

- Some start and end sessions can be face-to-face allowing for more effective communication strategies.

Finally, it is possible to highlight a chain of tips that can be followed as guidelines in order to strengthen the usage of sport as a tool of employability on behalf of coaches.

1. *Promote actions of dialogue and participation* including sport coaches around the topics of sport and employability.
2. *Discuss from the bottom* with coaches the possible links between sport and employability.
3. Promote the sharing among coaches from different sports backgrounds to enhance *transdisciplinarity and mutual enrichment*.
4. Sustain *coaches' reflexivity* around their daily practices with the athletes and make them aware of the implicit promotion of employability skills in *what they yet do* on the playing field.
5. Sustain coaches' creativity in the development of new sports exercises.
6. Implement a programme to support athletes, depending on the type of sport practiced, gender and their real needs.
7. An effective tutoring system, based on communication and facilitating individualised attention.
8. Differentiate the hard skills from the soft skills and raise awareness about their relevance in during coaching activities.
9. When approaching coaches from different sports, be sensitive to the fact that some of them are more connected to soft skills than others.
10. Consider the fact some coaches come from bigger clubs and others from smaller clubs which will influence the way they can work with their trainees; so be aware of the different conditions for the application of the training.
11. Try to complete the training by suggesting practical examples or previous experiences.
12. Make public, in a qualitative way, information from former athletes (in the three situations described before) about their experiences in the market and with the employers (basically, confront expectations *vs* reality, and their way to cope with barriers).

**Use of Sport as a Vehicle for Skills Development for the Labour Market**  
 Report of Evaluation and Guidelines on the use of the training platform developed within the framework of IO3 the ERASMUS + Sport project: "SKILLS by SPORT 4 MED: Sport as a vehicle for developing skills for the labor market and promoting employability and entrepreneurship"



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