



IBU Dual Career Strategy



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1 Introduction

IBU Background

The International Biathlon Union (IBU) is the international governing body for the sport of biathlon. Biathlon combines cross-country skiing with marksmanship shooting and is recognised by the International Olympic Committee as one of the Olympic programme's seven winter sports. Other forms of biathlon (also governed by the IBU) combine rifle shooting with other forms of movement (such as roller skiing, running, mountain biking or snowshoe hiking). All such forms of biathlon are referred to collectively in the Constitution as Biathlon.

Target 26

The IBU's strategic plan Target 26 was approved in October 2019. As a result of a structured consultation process, the program provides a framework for developing and growing biathlon dynamically and sustainably until 2026. Target 26 consists of five interrelated targets, divided into 15 specific objectives. Delivering against Target 26 will be a multi-year process requiring the engagement and involvement of all IBU stakeholders. This will be realised through interaction and ongoing dialogue with the national federations, local organising committees, athletes, sponsors, partners, and fans.

The IBU's strategic plan Target 26 provides the mandate to pursue the dual career program, as part of the Biathlon Academy, with the vision to support athletes under Target #1, Objective#1 '(...) The Biathlon Academy will provide tailor-made support to current and retired athletes to ensure that they can perform at their best and transition to life after their sporting careers (...).'

Approach to Dual Career Strategy development

The development of the strategy was inspired by the IOC Athlete365 Career+¹ framework, the EU guidelines on Dual Career² as well as on the IBU Academy Strategy³ 2021-2026 which aims to develop a dual career program.

¹ [Career - Athlete365 \(olympics.com\)](https://olympics.com/en/athletes/career)

² [Full version of EU Guidelines on Dual Careers \(2012\)](#)

³ [Full version of IBU Academy Strategy \(2021-2026\)](#)

According to the European Commission, athletes face challenges with the educational system and the labour market as they spend much time on training and competitions at home and abroad. To simplify a combination of education and sport, dual-career arrangements need to be implemented. However, despite the EU Guidelines on Dual Careers, there are still barriers to implement effective dual career services. The three main barriers to implementation are according to the project STARTING 11, a dual career project co-funded by the EU, that there are too few policies and formalised programs, that there is a lack of stakeholder awareness and engagement in dual careers, and that there is not enough support in the form of counselling programs.ⁱ

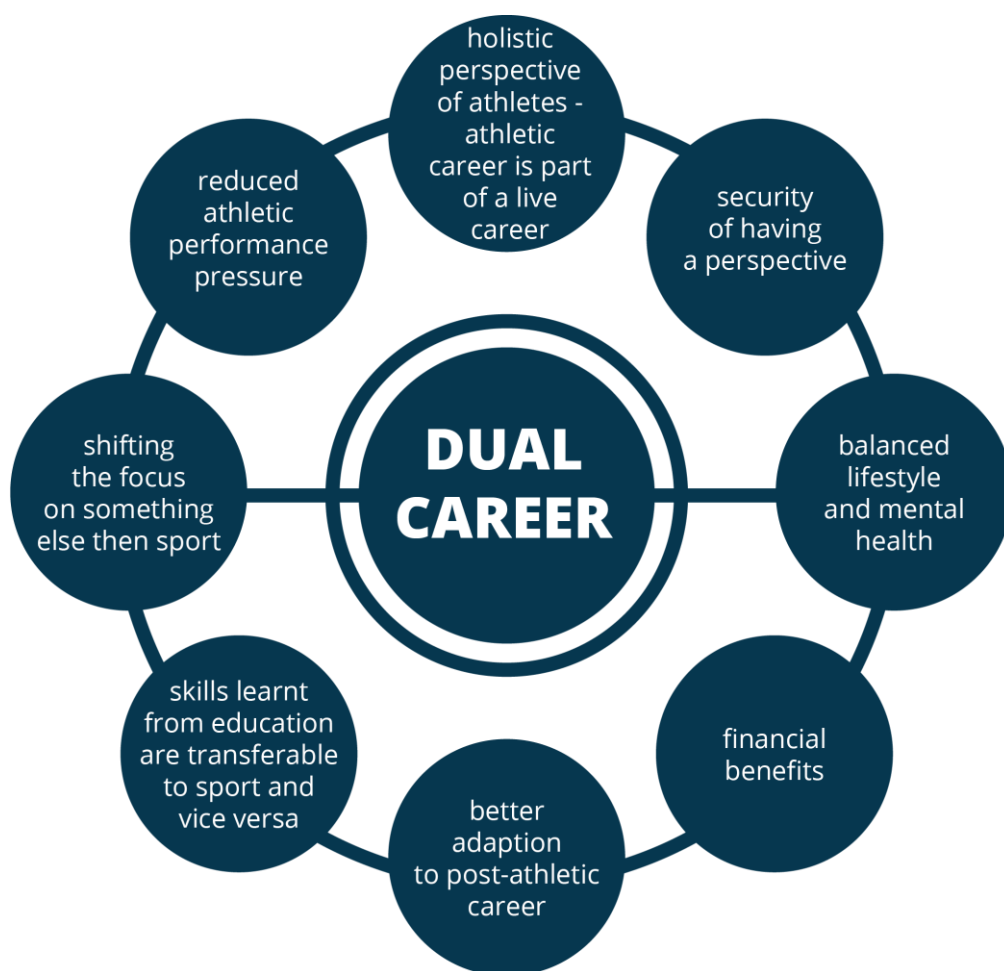
Student-athletes are combining both education and sport. As a result, they encounter various challenges and stressors which can impact their well-being. Such stressors are that student-athletes need to manage academic deadlines, practice, competitions, and travelling. In addition, they must ensure they do not get injured or sick. If athletes receive social support, this has a positive impact on the athletes' well-being. Athletes are potentially supported by coaches, teammates, family or other staff like wax technicians and physiologists. It is important that the athletes and the athlete's environment is aware of a dual career and its benefits. Therefore, sport organizations shall take measures to make parents, coaches, teammates, educational institutions, and businesses aware of their role in the athlete's dual career and how they can be supportive.^{ii iii iv}

Benefits of Dual Career

Athletes are not only high-performing athletes who focus only on sport, athletes may have also other interests in life – outside sport. Therefore, the “whole” person needs to be considered, which includes development in both athletic and non-athletic areas. Therefore, a holistic perspective must be taken, thus seeing the athletic career as a part of, as well as a contribution to, a life career.^v

Furthermore, realizing that there is more to life than sport can help for a balanced lifestyle and mental health. A dual career gives athletes the security of having a second perspective in case the athletic career is not as successful as expected, which in turn leads to a reduced athletic performance pressure. In addition, it can defuse the frustration that comes from dedicating the time exclusively to elite sport, with minimal improvement in athletic performance. Moreover, the two fields education and sport support each other. Skills learnt from education are transferable to sport and vice versa. Education gives athletes a break from sport, a positive distraction, and allows them to shift the focus on something else than sport. However,

the combination of sport and education must be well planned and coordinated, otherwise it could be a negative distraction for athletes, which is why dual career arrangements are beneficial. Further benefits include a better adaptation to the post-athletic career, as athletes have already a better plan for their career and can adjust quicker to the new life. Additionally, athletes who pursued a dual career have financial benefits, as they have better job opportunities and a better access to the labour market.^{vi vii viii}



2 Dual Career Commitment

Dual Career Vision

The IBU believes that a sustainable dual career program creates the possibility for talented, professional, and elite athletes to simultaneously build an educational or job path within a sports career and develops leaders who will serve all biathlon sectors in the future.

Dual Career Definition

The IBU defines a dual career program as resources aimed at raising awareness and creating opportunities for athletes to combine their biathlon career with education and/or work flexibly, without compromising either objective.

Dual Career Goals

- Raise awareness of the importance of a dual career among national federations, coaches, athletes, and the athletes' social environment and encourage athletes to pursue a dual career.
- Build a platform of information exchange about dual career possibilities.
- Create educational programs and scholarships within the IBU Academy.

3 IBU Dual Career Strategy

IBU Dual Career Status

IBU aims to develop a dual career program to simplify education for athletes and make them aware of the need for education. For the correct implementation of this program, it was first necessary to review the existing dual career programs, identify challenges and learn from best practices.

During the period of January 2022 and March 2022, we interviewed different organisations and federations about available programs and their efficiency and sought recommendations for implementing a dual career strategy. The following organisations and federations were interviewed:

Organization/Federation	
International Olympic Committee	International Sports Federation
UEFA	International Sports Federation
Swiss Olympic	National Olympic Committee
Canada	National Federation
Czech Republic	National Federation
Bulgaria	National Federation
Belarus	National Federation
KADA	Dual Career Organization
University of Östersund	University
Academy of Physical Education in Katowice	University

The results of the interviews can be summarized in five areas of recommendation:

Raising awareness among athletes and their social environment:

It is important to educate athletes about the importance of a dual career and that there is a life after sport. It is important to raise awareness of dual careers among athlete’s social environment because athletes rely to a great extent on their opinions, e.g., on the opinion of coaches or parents.

Cooperations with flexible educational organisations and companies

Biathlon is a time-consuming sport that requires a lot of time for training and competitions. In order to still be able to combine sports with education, educational organisations must offer some flexibility when it comes to attendance, distance learning, extending deadlines, or delaying exams. This can be achieved through cooperations with educational organisations. Providing information about possible educational

organisations which offer the required flexibility in advance might help the athletes in choosing an educational organisation.

Companies have to offer some flexibility – the vocational training schedule needs to be adapted to the competition and training schedule. It is recommended to cooperate with companies or label them as athlete-friendly. This benefits both parties – companies can use the label for marketing purposes and athletes benefit from the dual career possibility.

Supporting athletes in their dual career development

Support is especially needed for athletes who transition from Junior into Senior level and for athletes who are about to retire from sport or who have recently retired. Guidance counsellors or personality workshops can help athletes in these transition phases.

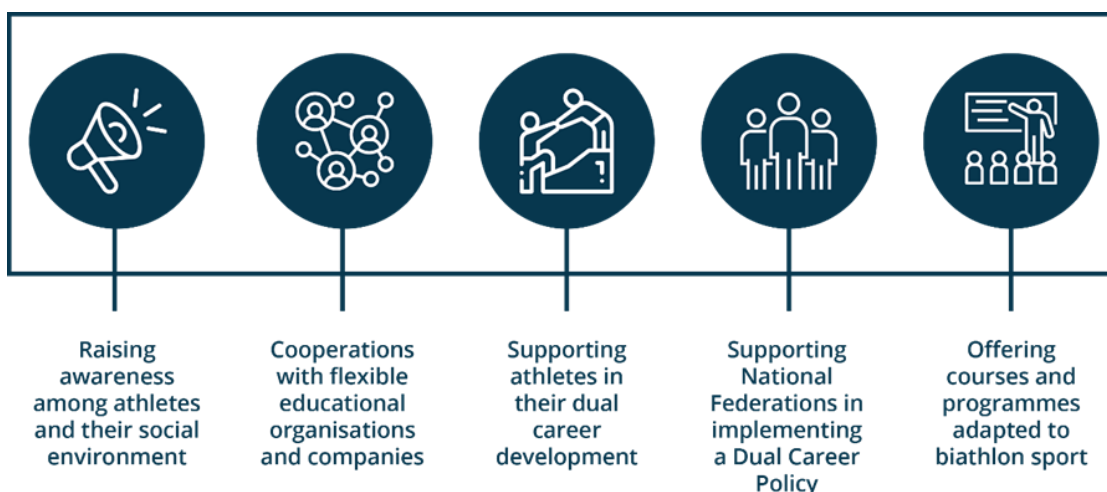
Financial support is recommended for international athletes who are eager to pursue a dual career but do not get any financial support from the national federation, government, or another institution.

Supporting National Federations in implementing a Dual Career Policy

IBU shall support NFs by providing information on best practices and contacts of other countries with a successful dual career program.

Offering courses and programs adapted to biathlon sport

A combination of IBU-organized (for practical topics) and IBU-coordinated (for academic topics) courses is recommended. Courses should be designed to meet the requirements and career fields in the sport of biathlon and to prepare athletes to pursue a professional career in the sport of biathlon.



IBU Academy Expert Group

With the implementation of the IBU Academy, the IBU Academy Expert Group was established. Since one of the goals of the IBU Academy is the Dual Career, the IBU Academy Expert Group is also consulted for the IBU Dual Career. This shall ensure that the IBU Dual Career is created and implemented in line with international standards, the interests of different stakeholders and is focused on priority areas. The members of the Expert Group are representatives of NFs, athletes, coaches as well as educational experts and comprise female and male representatives.

IBU Stakeholders and Strategic Objectives

To implement dual career practices at all levels of sport, engagement and commitment from different IBU stakeholders is crucial. As part of this analysis, the IBU's stakeholders were identified and divided into two levels based on the ability of the IBU to influence their decisions and behaviour:

1. IBU as an organisation
2. National Federations

Level 1: IBU as an organisation	Level 2: National Federations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IBU Executive Board • IBU management team and staff • IBU Academy • Biathlon Integrity Unit (BIU) board and staff • IBU Athletes Committees • Athlete Ambassadors • IBU Officials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member National Federations • NF Executive Board members • NF staff • Clubs / Sport schools • Athletes (from junior to senior) • Retired athletes • Coaches • Wax technicians / Physiotherapists • Sponsors • Organising committees
<p>Level 1 includes all operations, activities, and meetings organised by individuals in these groups.</p>	<p>Level 2 includes the above groups of national federations and organising committees.</p>
Strategic objectives per Level	
<p>The IBU encourages athletes to pursue educational and/or work activities in the biathlon sector and supports biathletes by providing relevant information, allocating resources, and creating opportunities.</p>	<p>The IBU motivates National Federations to promote the IBU dual career policy and strategy, create programs, and use existing opportunities in their countries.</p>

Focus Area and Goals

Awareness and Communication: Raising awareness of the importance of a dual career among national federations, coaches, athletes, and the athletes’ social environment to ensure that a dual career belongs to the biathlon culture. Encouraging athletes to pursue a dual career to be prepared for a second career.

Education/Work: Creating educational programs and scholarships in the IBU Academy and building a platform of information exchange about dual career possibilities to make them available for athletes.

Awareness and Communication Goal	Objectives
<p>Raise awareness of the importance of a dual career among national federations, coaches, athletes, and the athletes’ social environment to ensure that a dual career belongs to the biathlon culture. Encourage athletes to pursue a dual career to be prepared for a second career.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourage NFs to implement or promote a dual career policy by 2023. 2. Highlight the importance of a dual career among athletes from 2024. 3. Inform coaches about their role and how they can support an athlete’s dual career from 2024. 4. Inform the athletes’ team environment about their role and how they can support an athlete’s dual career from 2024.
Education/Work Goal	Objectives
<p>Create educational programs and scholarships in the IBU Academy and build a platform of information exchange about dual career possibilities to make them available for athletes.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and exchange best practices between NFs and educational institutions from 2023. 2. Find and unite partners who are involved in high-performance sport and education from 2024. 3. Build a platform to exchange information on dual career possibilities and to make them available for athletes from 2024. 4. Define and implement programs and related support from 2024.

4 Program Delivery, objectives and activities

To ensure that the program is focused on specific goals we implement the following activities plan:

Focus Area: Awareness and Communication				
Objectives	Level	Activities	Responsible	Deadline
1. Encourage NFs to implement or promote a dual career policy by 2023.	IBU as an organisation and National Federations	1.1 Inform all NFs about the IBU Dual Career Policy and Strategy. 1.2 Provide a template for a national-level dual career policy to be used by IBU members. 1.3 Encourage NFs that already implemented a dual career policy to further develop the strategy. 1.4 Encourage NFs to cooperate with local dual career organisations, universities, and/or companies. 1.5 Enable the exchange of good governance practices (IFs, NFs).	IBU Dev. IBU Comm.	by 2023
2. Highlight the importance of a dual career among athletes by 2024.	IBU as an organisation and National Federations	2.1 Develop a guideline for athletes and share it with all NFs and all athletes competing in IBU events by 2024. 2.2 Organise a yearly webinar/seminar to inform athletes about the importance and benefits of a dual career. 2.3 Introduce athlete ambassadors to raise awareness among athletes about the importance and benefits of a dual career.	IBU Dev. AC	by 2024
3. Inform coaches about their role and how they can support an athlete's dual career from 2024.	IBU as an organisation and National Federations	3.1 Integrate a dual career module into the IBU Coach Education. 3.2 Develop a coaches guideline and share it with all NFs.	IBU Dev. IBU Comm.	from 2024
4. Inform the athletes' team environment about their role and how they can support an athlete's dual career from 2024.	IBU as an organisation and National Federations	4.1 Develop a guideline for the athletes' team environment (for the IBU the athletes' team environment are wax technicians, physiotherapists, and sponsors) and share it with all NFs and IBU sponsors.	IBU Dev. IBU Comm.	from 2024

Focus Area: Education/Work				
Objectives	Level	Activities	Responsible	Deadline
1. Identify and exchange best practices between NFs and educational institutions from 2023.	IBU as an organisation and National Federations	1.1 Collect dual career possibilities from NFs and make them available for other NFs and educational institutions. 1.2 Promote among athletes the IBU Academy projects. 1.3 Promote among athletes the IOC project Athletes365 as well as similar projects.	IBU Dev. Sports & Events Dep. AC	from 2023
2. Find and unite partners who are involved in high-performance sport and education from 2024.	IBU as an organisation	2.1 Cooperate with different universities and identify athlete friendly universities and/or programs. 2.2 Cooperate with different companies who offer an athlete friendly education. 2.3 Search for opportunities from the EU Erasmus project. 2.4 Act as a link between educational institutions and NFs.	IBU Dev.	from 2024
3. Build a platform to exchange information on dual career possibilities and to make them available for athletes from 2024.	IBU as an organisation	3.1 Inform athletes about dual career possibilities in different countries on the platform. 3.2 Implement a career service within the IBU e-learning platform to support athletes in their career development and provide the possibility to exchange experiences with each other.	IBU Dev. AC	from 2024
4. Define and implement programs and related support from 2024	IBU as an organisation	4.1 Expand existing IBU programs and provide them to athletes. 4.2 Identify the interests from athletes and design and implement biathlon related programs. 4.3 Develop a grant system that financially supports NFs and athletes in the implementation of dual career projects. 4.4 Implement a mentorship programme or/and organise workshops to help athletes to set up their development goals. 4.5 Offer athlete-friendly internships within the IBU departments.	All departments BIU Executive Board AC	from 2024

5 Program Approach

Program Governance

The IBU Executive Board will be responsible for overall decision-making and providing oversight of strategy and resourcing for the IBU Dual Career. Under the Secretary-General, the Development Director has the lead for the overall development and execution of the process, supported by the entire Management Team, and the IBU Academy Expert Group.

In order to develop and maintain the strategy regarding informational and educational activities, measures and tools need to be implemented. They should provide the necessary conditions to support athletes in their second career. Athletes are experts in the field of biathlon, keeping their knowledge within the biathlon sport helps us grow and develop. Achieving the goals is challenging without the involvement of the National Federations and IBU financial support. Therefore, implementing IBU Dual Career activities and programs in the strategy requires assistance at the national and IBU level. IBU should act as a role model and help IBU member NFs to implement or further develop a dual career policy as well as programs and actions.

Monitoring and Reporting

Implementing IBU Dual Career strategy should be monitored systematically at both the national and IBU level. To ensure that progress towards the objectives is tracked, statistics must be collected regularly and published widely in the annual IBU Activity Report. Partnerships with educational institutions and companies must be evaluated every four years to ensure that the programs meet the objectives of the Dual Career strategy.

IBU Academy Expert Group should evaluate concepts and programs every second year and consider KPIs such as participants satisfaction, cost per participant, long term-impact, number of educated athletes, number of applicants, number of grants, number of courses, seminars and workshops, and number of partnerships.

6 Reference List

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