



STUDY ON THE MINIMUM QUALITY REQUIREMENTS FOR DUAL CAREER SERVICES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Disclaimer:

“The information and views set out in this study are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the European Commission. The European Commission does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this study. Neither the European Commission nor any person acting on the European Commission’s behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained therein.”

***Europe Direct is a service to help you find answers
to your questions about the European Union.***

**Freephone number (*):
00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11**

(*) The information given is free, as are most calls (though some operators, phone boxes or hotels may charge you).

More information on the European Union is available on the internet (<http://europa.eu>).

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2016

ISBN 978-92-79-54600-6
doi: 10.2766/801544

© European Union, 2016
Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.

PRINTED ON PROCESS CHLORINE-FREE RECYCLED PAPER (PCF)

Executive summary – English

Elite, talented athletes face multiple challenges in combining their sport with education or employment. These challenges persist in the transition to a new career after their sporting one has come to an end. This is not only hard for the individual, but also a loss for society as a whole.

Conversely, a successful combination of education, training or work with sport can enable an individual to reach his or her full potential in life. This is known as a “Dual Career” (DC). Dual Career is a complicated policy domain, which links multi stakeholder policy domains such as education, youth, health and labour market and has to connect these towards adequate career development of talents.

The exact number of athletes in need of Dual Career services is hard to pinpoint. The definition of ‘elite athlete’ varies widely among MSs and very few MSs monitor these numbers and individual Career closely. The numbers we were able to collect already add up to more than 60.000. Taking into account the (large) missing MSs and the variety in definitions, the number of athletes in need of Dual Career, which should be safeguarded for future society, adds up to more than 120.000 per year!

This document is the final report of the Study on Minimum Quality Requirements for Dual Career Services. The main objective of which was to develop a set of such requirements to function as a reference point for national DC services and facilities across the EU. These are presented in the form of a quality framework offering transparency, and quality, safety and security guarantees for athletes. This includes a labelling and/or accreditation system for facilities and services at national and European levels. Recommendations for future developments in both policy and research are also included. The appendices to the report are comprehensive and include our research tools (survey, in-depth interviews, and focus-group discussions), 25 country profiles, reports of meetings, and lists of organisations consulted.

The study was conducted by the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences in partnership with Birch Consultants, the Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme (TASS), the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) and the European Student as Athlete (EAS) network.

Conclusions at system level

Underlying the proposed framework is a comprehensive, categorised overview of current DC policies and programmes throughout the 28 EU MSs. This reveals that a small number of MSs have extensive, well-organised systems; in others they are more fragmentary and less developed. Comparing the current programmes and policies in the 28th MSs we conclude at system level:

1. Variety in policies and programmes for Dual Career across Europe

Looking at existing policies and practices across the EU MSs, a scattered pattern with a large variety is observed. The fact that athletes have to combine their athletic careers with building an educational curriculum and / or work is not new. Yet, it is only recently that it has been addressed by a growing number of MSs as a topic for action and policy.

Several countries have some initiatives in or intentions of support for Dual Career, but do not label them as a system per se, let alone, monitor or guide this from the perspective of monitoring and enhancing Dual Career. In three countries, it was not possible to reach an expert or national programme officer with an insight into support arrangements for Dual Career, but most other countries have elements of it and some countries are starting to develop an official policy support system for Dual Career.

2. Diverse ownership – skills gap versus education gap

MSs differ in the extent of their initiatives and policies. They also vary in the main actors on the scene: sometimes these are sports or athlete organisations, sometimes education centres, and sometimes it is the government.

In the inventory phase, we consulted the respondents about the role of four different groups of stakeholders (domains): (1) governments, (2) the education sector, (3) the sports sector and (4) the labour market. The inventory shows that the policy domains with primary responsibility at the national level are most likely to be education and sports (19 countries). Stakeholders responsible for effective transition into the labour market are clearly missing. Yet the employability of an athlete beyond their sporting career should be a joint responsibility, since it relates to skills, professional education and the opportunity to obtain a degree. In the majority of countries, multiple institutions are active in this domain, but there exists a lack of cooperation between them. Even when the education gap is covered, a skills gap often remains.

3. No consistent definitions: room for a European-wide framework

Most MSs consulted show to have ambitions that reach further than actual current provision for athletes in Dual Career. Practical support facilities that are effective in one nation can also be relevant in others. With increasing international student and athlete mobility between MSs, it would help to have a Europe-wide framework, which could be deployed uniformly in individual MSs. Such a system would guide and help athletes and students in making their career decisions. However, at present even the definitions for Dual Career– including underlying terms such as “athlete student” – differ between EU countries. There is an urgent need for clear terminology and interpretation across Europe for this new policy domain.

4. Governmental and non-governmental policy programmes

Alongside government programmes at national, regional or even local level, non-governmental structures add to the depth and breadth of the initiatives found across Europe. These initiatives can add extra value to effective systems for Dual Career. Having observed the different systems in place, we see that high-value non-governmental programmes can be very supportive of, and even replace, government ones. Our surveys show a great variety of such systems filling gaps in state provision in various countries. At this level, policy actors – sometimes including government – in numerous MSs have official documents setting out relevant intentions and key ambitions and goals. In some countries, the subject of Dual Career is addressed as a cross cutting

theme involving cooperation between government, the education sector, sports organisations, and players in the labour market.

Conclusions at service level

The service organisations we have included all have one feature in common: they are independent bodies focusing on a wide range of aspects of an athlete's Dual Career. All have decided upon a structure, the one more comprehensive than the other, to promote at least some aspects of Dual Career for a talented or elite athlete. Our survey, desk research, consultations, and expert meetings highlighted various factors to take into account in this respect. Several of these factors were found in the different organisational models, making them key or at least very important features of successful systems to enhance Dual Career.

This leads to the following conclusions at service level:

- 1. There should be an independent organisation responsible for DC.** *This organisation ensures the availability of career counselling services to improve future employability for every athlete participating in a Dual Career program. Potential employers are made aware of the particular abilities of current and former elite athletes, as also advised by other sports organisations (EU Athletes, 2014). Career training and counselling improves the athlete's employability. Courses and support during life transitions prepare them for their future careers.*
- 2. Formal agreements have to be made with educational institutions to ensure their support for DC.** *This is important because a lack of such support can adversely affect the athlete's performance and well-being (Cosh & Tully, 2014). The educational institutions will then appoint personal coordinators to support enrolled athletes to finish their education program. Athletes participating in a Dual Career program will only take courses that are government accredited or meet set quality criteria.*
- 3. All support is adapted to the needs of the individual athlete** *and considers the Dual Career as part of a whole-life development plan, taking into account the well-being of the individual athlete. Their requirements can be very diverse (Wylleman & Reints, 2010). As part of that plan, the athlete's development is monitored on a regular basis and action is taken when necessary.*
- 4. Sports facilities should be situated close to educational facilities, to facilitate athlete mobility.** *This proximity also improves communication and cooperation between relevant stakeholders. Entourages, including parents, staff and coaches, are kept aware and informed about the athlete's dual career. Coaches receive additional training. The personal, athlete-centred approach includes support from competent expert staff (psychologists, nutritionists, physiologists, etc.), whose work is evaluated on a regular basis to assure quality, as substantiated by research on managing athletes' transitions (Debois, Ledon, & Wylleman, 2014)*
- 5. The formation of a DC network is encouraged** *(like ASPC, the association of high-performance training centres). This is relevant since sharing knowledge, best practices and developing systems together has proven more powerful than every MS on it's own.*

Overall, DC services are most effective when they provide individual support, promote athlete mobility, are enshrined in formal agreements, combine facilities (e.g. education and training in the same place), and encourage professionalism, awareness, interaction and monitoring. In particular, it is vital that all concerned – not least the athlete – accept and live up to their responsibilities and that they communicate as openly and intensively

as possible. Pitfalls include inconsistent definitions and qualification criteria, diverse ownership of an issue that involves a large number of stakeholders, and discrepancies between the great variety of policies and practices in place.

Quality Framework

Our analysis of best practices, expert (including athlete) input and feasibility considerations has produced a Quality Framework, which builds upon the positives and seeks to overcome the pitfalls.

The ultimate objective is to improve Dual Career systems taking into account the different roles and responsibilities of each player in this system. It is not a list with minimum quality requirements. We put the athlete at its centre, with four principal “dimensions” in their orbit: the entourage (coaches, tutors, parents, etc.); stakeholders in sport, education and the labour market; national governments; and the EU. Each of these is broken down into sub dimensions for which specific quality requirements – more than eighty in total – have been formulated:



1. **Athlete:** the athlete is at the centre of our quality framework. This is because each sport and each individual athlete is different. They need different services at different career stages at both system and personal levels. Those services should, therefore, be as personalised as possible. At the same time, full personal commitment on the part of the athlete is also essential.



2. **Entourage:** the impact and success of policies, programmes and services for Dual Career depend on their implementation at personal and professional level close to the athlete. The direct influencers in this respect are the coach and manager, together with the teacher or employer, and the social network of parents and friends as the athlete’s entourage. This entourage is crucial in providing the support and flexibility needed to successfully develop as an athlete and a professional.



3. **Stakeholders:** we have identified stakeholders at both the organisational and the sectoral (i.e. sports, education, labour market) levels. Ideally, they should bear responsibility for the implementation of existing national legislation or policies and should translate these and their own policies to the entourage and athlete. This requires communication between stakeholders and between different organisational levels (from policy to practice).



4. **National government:** national governments provide the legislation and policy framework needed to encourage sectors to take responsibility for talented athletes to assure the safe professional development of student athletes. The quality framework offers governments a comprehensive overview of services to be developed (if they are not already in place), including tools to initiate them from the government’s perspective, taking into account its responsibilities. It also

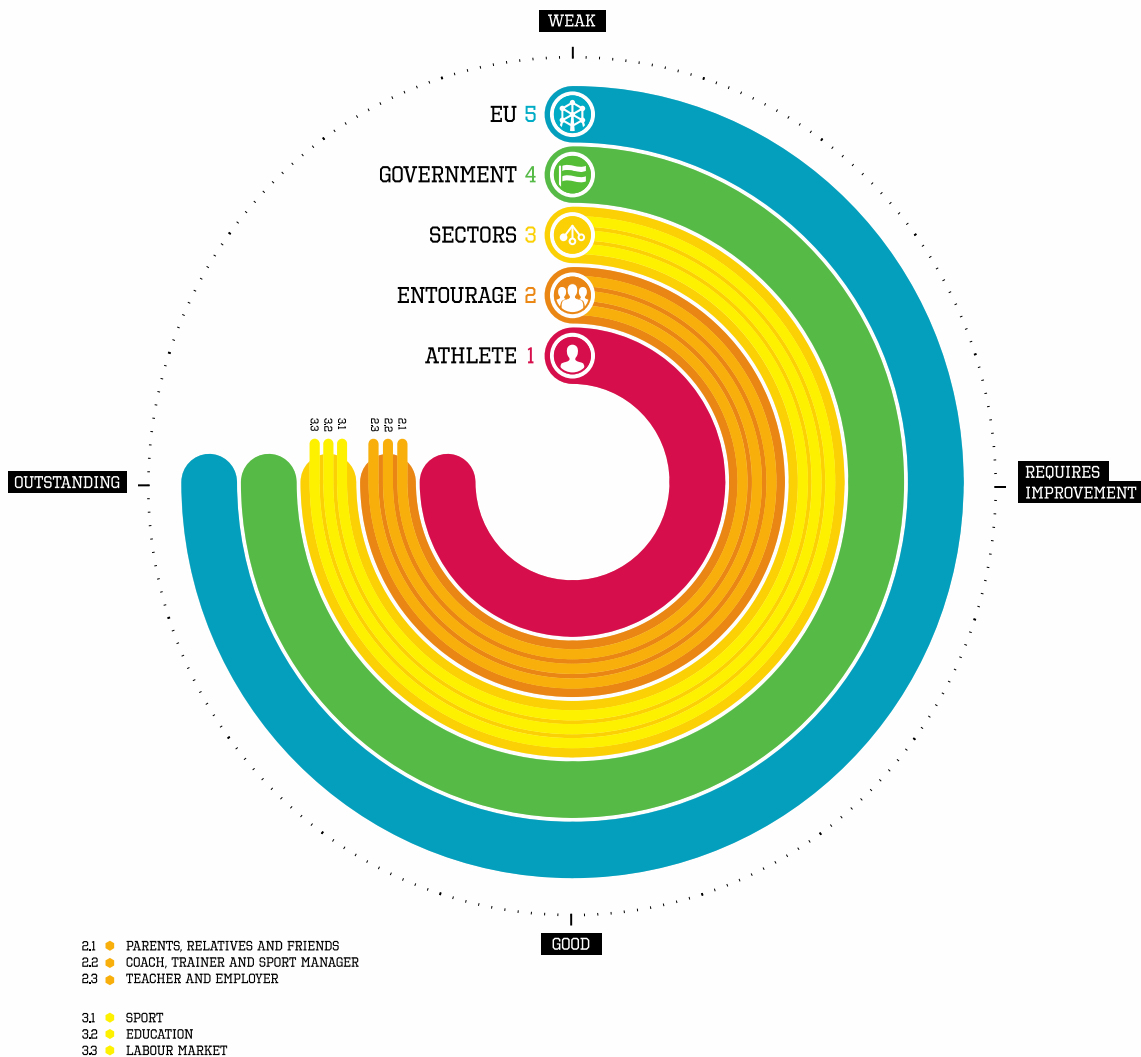
offers those governments with an established system a tool for its monitoring and improvement.



5. European Union (EU): as students and athletes throughout Europe become more and more mobile, and education less confined to physical institutions due to new technologies, such as massive open online courses (MOOCs), there is a growing need to monitor student athletes. It is also important to connect with trends and development in the education and labour markets. The EC can play a key role in this respect, actively facilitating the sports world and its athletes in connecting with those changing global markets.

We defined a four-point rating system: **weak – requires improvement – good – outstanding**. Each dimension and sub dimension can be rated using this.

DUAL CAREER QUALITY FRAMEWORK



In comparison to previous exercises of its kind, the benefits of our framework lie in its tooling. We provide each stakeholder with a set of actions, tools and best practices to fulfil the responsibilities required of them within the overall DC system. These should (i) enable organisations to assess their own “DC-friendliness”, (ii) support new arrangements and advance existing ones, and (iii) provide a long-term monitoring tool.

Minimum requirements

Additionally we have tried to list minimal needs in the establishment of High Performance Training Centres (HPTCs). These centres aim to provide facilities and services combining opportunities to follow education and practicing sports at high level. The success of these centres depends on the awareness at the level of both the athlete and HPTC of each other’s goals and services.

The minimum requirements of the HPTC should consist of at least the following 5 pillars: accommodations, education, staff, facilities and services. Please note that these are starting points, and implementation of these minimum requirements depends on national configurations.

Accommodation:

- Sleeping facilities, suitable for athletes’ dimensions and size
- Restaurant, serving healthy, fresh and well-prepared food
- Sport facilities of the highest international training level
- Rooms to study - ICT and Internet equipped- and to relax

Educational facilities

(should be international exchangeable), which offer programmes that are:

- Progressive (for the individual), courses can be linked and combined
- Relevant (for the individual), concerning the desired learning career
- Encourage employability (of the individual), are linked to industry-recognized providers
- Encourage commitment (of the individual), minimum amount of learning hours
- Accredited, by national education standards and ministry

Staff

all specialists are nationally accredited, committed to the Dual Career of the individual athlete and full time available:

- Physiotherapy
- Coach (Strength, Conditioning, Recovery)
- Nutritionist
- Sport Psychologist
- Medical support

Facilities:

All facilities mentioned at ‘accommodation’ should be located close to each other to improve the athlete’s mobility. The basic principle here is that the athletes in an HPTC should not lose time travelling from one facility to another but be able to use their training-study time schedule most efficiently. Recommended is a 15 minute rule, meaning that all facilities should be within a 15 minute biking distance from each other (preferably at the same location).

Services

all services should be centred around the individual athlete and delivered by nationally certified experts.

- Lifestyle support
- Career support
- Nutrition support
- Medical support
- Psychological support

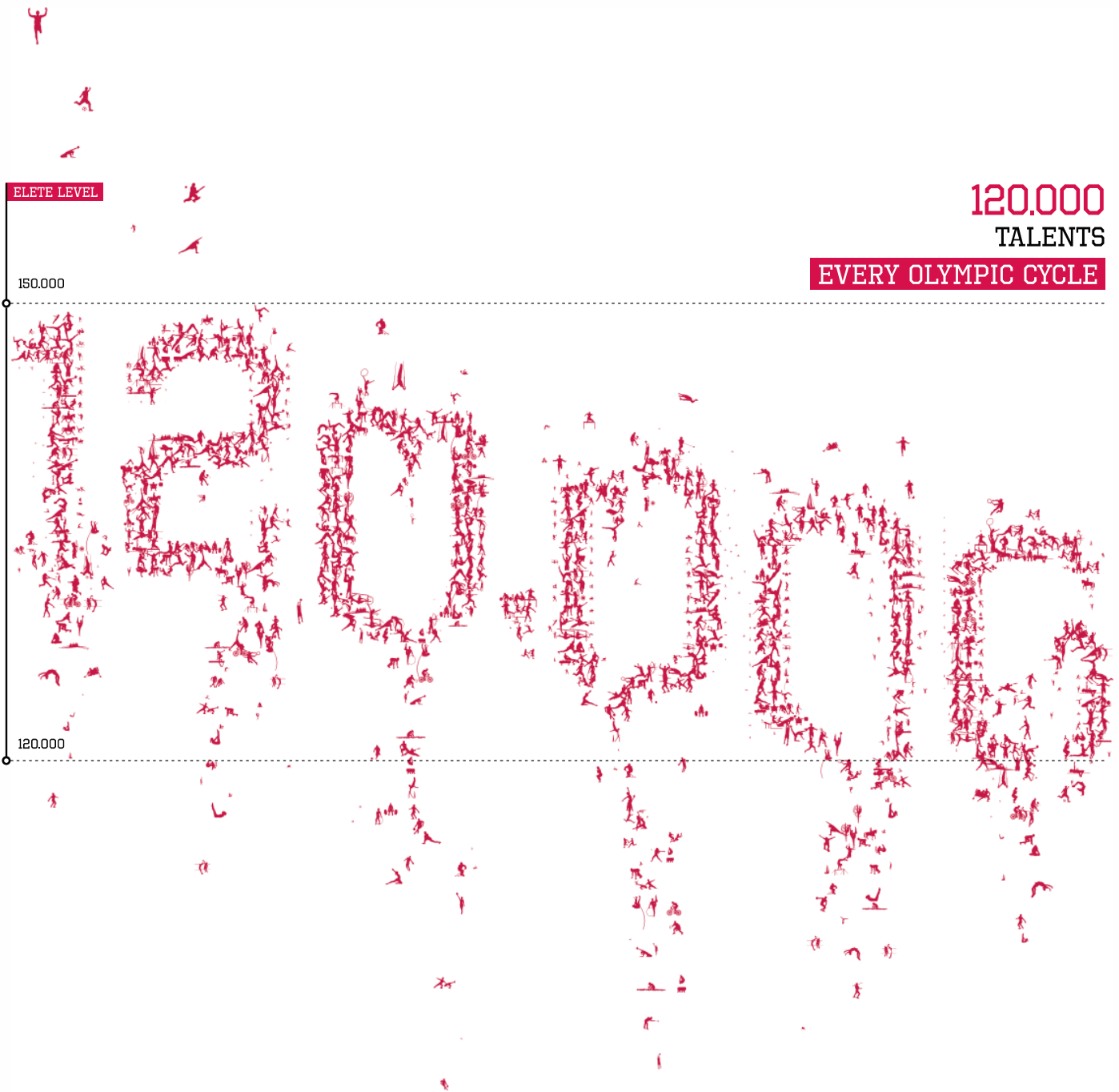
Recommendations

This research report shows that there is a need for a Europe-wide framework on support systems and facilities for Dual Careers, which could be deployed uniformly in individual MSs. We have designed this framework but the success of such a framework and list of minimum requirements depends strongly upon how it is implemented. In this respect, we recommend:

- Develop this framework into an easily accessible online tool for all stakeholders. This will enable them to assess elements of an effective system for Dual Careers, in each EU MS and thereby compare the quality of their own services with others and share best practices easily. Athletes and coaches in particular should be made aware of this tool, so that they can assess different providers of education and training in their own and other countries.
- Support the development of a network of national contact points to implement and monitor the quality framework in their own domestic contexts, to guarantee the quality of stakeholder assessments and self-assessments and to provide statistical monitoring of athletes.
- Additional research, specifically targeted at the level of the services for athletes with Dual Careers, could support effective policy making for Dual Careers.

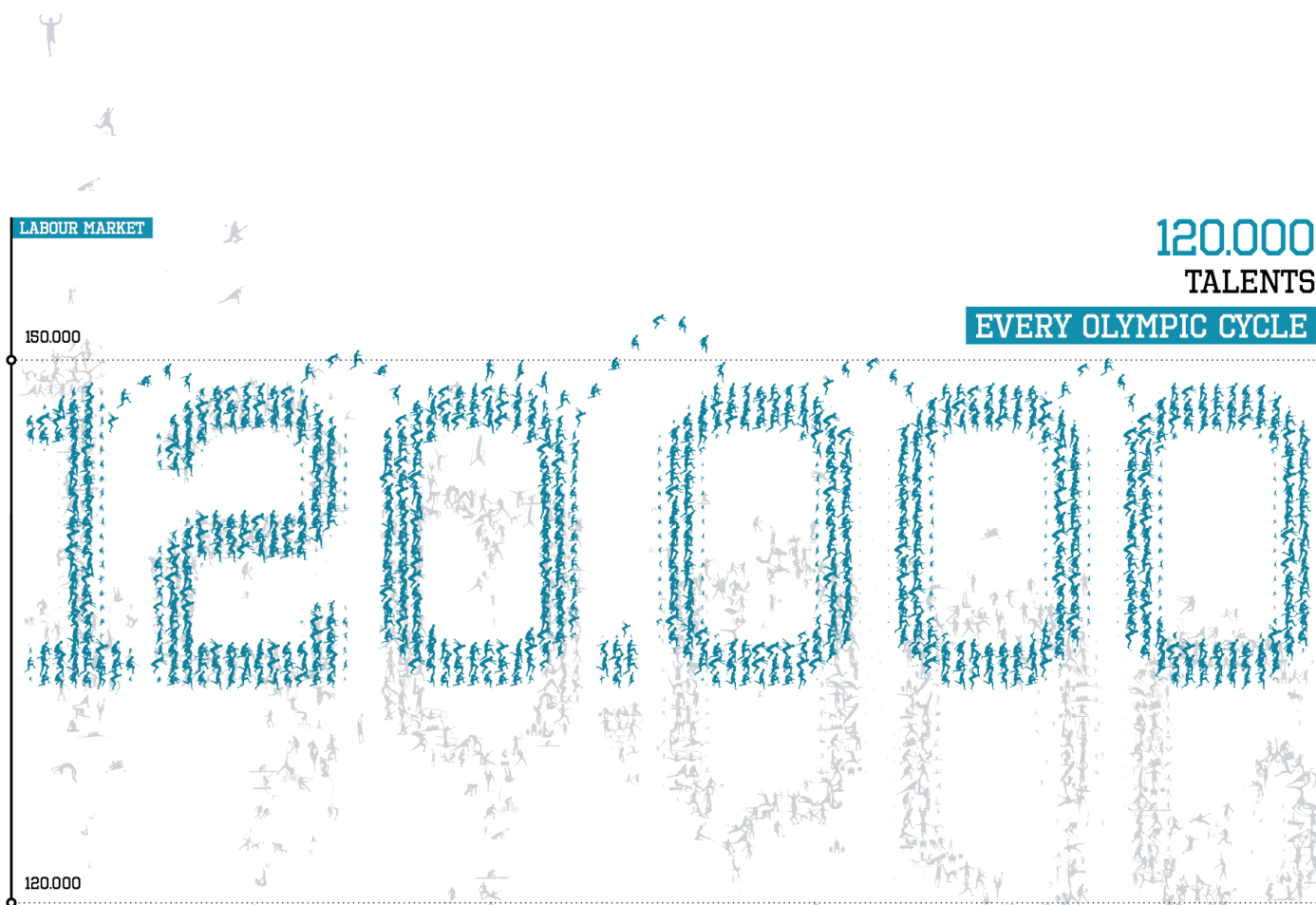
CURRENT SITUATION

POTENTIAL LOSS OF TALENT



DESIRED SITUATION

POTENTIAL GAIN OF TALENT



DUAL CAREERS QUALITY FRAMEWORK

HOW TO OBTAIN EU PUBLICATIONS

Free publications:

- one copy:
via EU Bookshop (<http://bookshop.europa.eu>);
- more than one copy or posters/maps:
from the European Union's representations (http://ec.europa.eu/represent_en.htm);
from the delegations in non-EU countries (http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/index_en.htm);
by contacting the Europe Direct service (http://europa.eu/europedirect/index_en.htm) or
calling 00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11 (freephone number from anywhere in the EU) (*).

(*) The information given is free, as are most calls (though some operators, phone boxes or hotels may charge you).

Priced publications:

- via EU Bookshop (<http://bookshop.europa.eu>).



Publications Office

ISBN 978-92-79-54600-6