



I am a Sport Entrepreneur - what R U?

SPORT ENTREPRENEURING **FIRST** INSPIRATION

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WORK PAPER - NO FURTHER EDITING DONE

Changing Europe will not be able to create economy and jobs through large-scale production plants.

Europe will increasingly need to generate innovative economy in specialized fields, using all its creativity to explore new markets, new activities and new interests of the European citizens.

Sport is one among others a field of activity with considerable potential, also economic potential. It links to young people's interests, to health, to engagement of millions of Europeans, and sport and sport-like activities can be developed in almost unlimited directions and scope.

This is the social-economic context of *I am a Sport Entrepreneur - what R U?*

This small paper offers the project a first set of inspirations - to motivate and engage project partners and community players.

The paper forms part of the *Sport Entrepreneur Attachment Package*.



WHAT IS SPORT ENTREPRENEURING?

Entrepreneuring is in our days defined in a very broad way, such as initiative-taking, creating something that is not there, inventing a new activity or product, engaging in social and educational activities and changing them, working with the community to bring new things and change things not working well, creating a small business, an association, a club, whatever.

The focus is on the initiative-taking and the creation of real things that are not there, and that can create economy or help people solve problems. A special focus these days is on creation entrepreneurial mentality.

Sport entrepreneuring is therefore about creating economy from sport initiatives, such as eventing, establishing a new club, a new way of doing sport, new sport activities for groups of citizens, creating health initiatives through sport - or a combination of the above.

Sport entrepreneuring is almost unlimited...

Sometimes the focus is on sport, sometimes on the entrepreneuring and creating economy, and sometimes on social innovation or inclusion through sport. Sport entrepreneuring can take place at all levels: from small community initiatives to large-scale international missions. Basically, sport entrepreneuring is a potential unlimited growth field in Europe, and probably will be even more in the future.

When promoting entrepreneurship among young people, sport is a privileged field, as very many young people like sport - either by doing sport or following sport. Sport and creative technology and media are among the most privileged fields for engaging young people in entrepreneuring.

Sport entrepreneuring is a very flexible thing. You can do sport everywhere, you don't need a lot of equipment (only in some sport genres), you can easily join and you can make it competitive at different levels. The creative opportunities in sport entrepreneuring are almost endless...

At the same time there is a general consensus to support sport in society - all players and stakeholders agree that sport is benefitting for very many reasons and that sport should be promoted across all age groups and social-economic groups. It is therefore in general possible to promote sport initiatives and even get support for them. Often it is not so easy to get support for social initiatives for example.

Sport entrepreneuring can start small and grow big, stay small or go international. Many sport entrepreneuring initiatives can grow into large-scale initiatives if promoted and managed well. This means that young people can work on their ambitions in the field of sport entrepreneuring!

If we add the increasing importance of virtual entrepreneuring, such as crowd funding and working in collaborative virtual teams, the perspectives of sport entrepreneuring in innovative mixed realities emerge - with unlimited opportunities for creative young people.

Many institutions can be involved in sport entrepreneuring and for very different reasons: educations training youth workers, business colleges, sport colleges,

even university departments - and, of course, all sorts of entrepreneurial centers, hubs and other formal or non-formal settings.

This means that it is possible to team up with important stakeholders and institutions in the communities, and to get their support.

Many local public authorities are also interested in creating new sport activities, eventing and organisations in their communities - as they are well aware of the manifold benefits of this.

Last, but not least, sport is popular among major companies. Some of them have support programs for sport, others are considerable sport sponsors - and some simply appreciate sport and entrepreneurial initiative-taking.

Establishing sponsorships for sport initiatives is easier than for so many other types of initiatives.

Sport and entrepreneurship go well together: they both share things as competitiveness, team work, taking initiative and working hard to achieve your mission.

In short: well managed, sport entrepreneuring can be a paradise for young initiative-takers!

And at the same time it can contribute to economy, inclusion and social change...



HOW CAN IT HAPPEN?

The outcomes of sport entrepreneuring can be very different:

- > creating local sport events, social or competitive
- > creating sport activity at local level
- > forming a new association
- > bringing new stakeholders together to offer new sport initiatives in the community
- > establishing a new sport club. perhaps with innovative missions
- > forming a community power center for other young sport entrepreneurs
- > integrating sport entrepreneuring in local or regional educations
- > offering sport events for special groups of people and citizens
- > taking sport eventing and entrepreneuring to a regional or national level
- > taking sport evening and entrepreneuring to a European level
- > using European funding programs to organize sport entrepreneuring mobility
- > using social networking and virtual collaboration to develop sort entrepreneuring and evening, or integrating virtual collaboration in other forms of sport entrepreneuring
- > etc., etc.

As can be seen from this list, the organisational forms of sport entrepreneuring are very many and can easily be combined.

However, and regardless of the concrete organisations form, sport entrepreneuring is also *demanding*.

Sport activity and eventing is in itself complex, and entrepreneurship certainly also is. Combining sport and entrepreneurship takes a lot of learning, a lot of trying out and experimentation and a lot of... *capacity building*.

We could write books about what skills and competences are needed in entrepreneuring and in sport entrepreneuring, but it can also be made more simple:

Young people engaging in sport entrepreneuring need:

- > to receive considerable and qualified support from their communities
- > to go through long periods of practicing, planning, experimenting, teaming up and... capacity building
- > to be very dedicated and pursue missions over longer time periods, accept set-backs and try again
- > to learn on the flight about very many things, such as planning, managing a sport project, financial terms and conditions, sponsoring, and a lot more
- > to team up with peers and supporters to make their missions possible

Even if taking place in non-formal settings, young people going sport entrepreneurial need solid support infrastructures, access to expert knowledge and guidance, financial resources and qualified people accompanying them on their journeys.

Strong infrastructures in the community - or small eco-systems of sport entrepreneurship - must ensure the long-term capacity building of the young people.

At the same time qualified methods must be put in place to take the young people through the many entrepreneurial steps and levels, helping the young people to build up the mission step by step and by taking the right steps at the right time.

A small example: you do not knock the door to the local bank without a qualified project plan. And you do not do it alone; you do it with someone from the public authorities and with the manager of the local sport club.

It is precisely the mission of **I am a Sport Entrepreneur - what R U?** through European-wide practical experimentation and knowledge creation to deliver solid guidelines for all those challenges involved in sport entrepreneuring to help youth organisations, youth workers and future young sport entrepreneurs to walk on solid grounds.

Having said that, and having made clear that serious sport entrepreneuring takes dedication, time and resources over long time periods, we must also point to the positive fact that sport entrepreneuring can take place in all sorts of (non-formal) contexts.

Sport entrepreneuring and eventing can take place everywhere: in clubs, in schools, in non-formal youth provisions, in nature, in the streets, in big sport arenas, at the beach... Everywhere.

This is what makes sport entrepreneuring more flexible than other forms of entrepreneuring.

And, this is also what gives plenty of room for *innovation*.

Adding to this flexibility, young sport entrepreneurs can also chose to work with their missions at very different levels, such as full time, part time - or even as a hobby or in certain seasons.

However, and no matter the scope or level of the sport entrepreneuring, it is important to keep in mind that serious sport entrepreneuring also requires sustainability: if you think to small, the initiatives will slowly disappear; if you think to big from the start, your mission might be mission impossible and you give up.

The sustainability of sport entrepreneuring is one of the keys to success, and it takes good planning, dedication and a lot of... *capacity building*.

In sport entrepreneuring everything is possible - but only if you are serious and work hard.



WHAT CAN IT BE ABOUT?

But, then, what can sport entrepreneurship be about? What can be the “content” of sport entrepreneurship?

The nature of sport entrepreneurship is to create something new, something that is not there - even to create some innovation and take sport and entrepreneurship in new directions.

The idea would, at least in most cases, not be simply to repeat what the local sport club is already doing.

It is not an obligation for sport entrepreneurship to be innovative, but it helps!

The young sport entrepreneurs will most likely have a lot of ideas, and they should follow those ideas; but as first inspiration - to exemplify what such sport entrepreneurship could be about - let us list some possible directions.

Sport entrepreneurship initiatives could for example:

- ⊕ Address elite sport in a new way - or work out ways to go from amateur sport to elite
- ⊕ Develop various forms of social sport and for different groups of citizens
- ⊕ Use natural resources and surrounding to create new sport activities, including helping to preserve those natural resources
- ⊕ Develop new forms of sport tourism for specific group of tourists
- ⊕ Develop new forms of sport linking to playful health and lifestyle activity and mentality change
- ⊕ Develop new sport initiatives for a wide range of citizens, such as children, young people, adults and seniors - or bringing those groups together
- ⊕ Use sport as social inclusion, linking sport activity to inclusive capacity building
- ⊕ Invent new sport disciplines or sport activities
- ⊕ Link together sport and learning
- ⊕ Integrate sport in everyday life (work, education, unemployment, etc.) in new ways, including in competitive ways

These are just a few limited examples.

However, no matter the “content” of the sport entrepreneurship, it will always have to position itself along certain *general entrepreneurship parameters*, such as:

- > the level of competitiveness
- > the level of creating economy
- > the level of social missioning
- > the level of sport dedication (elite, amateur)

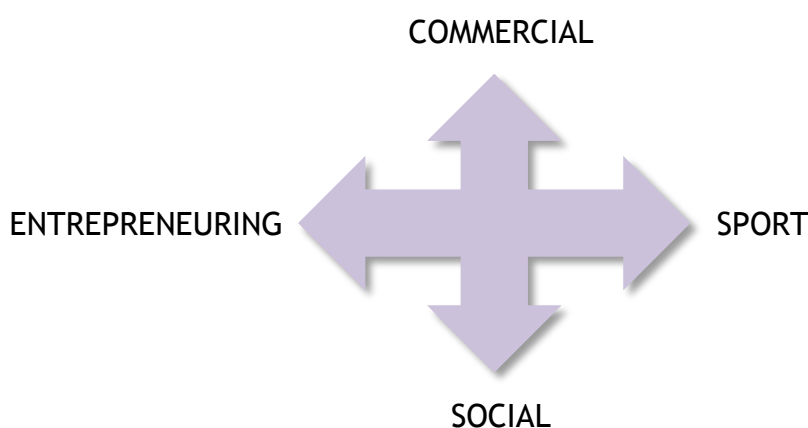
Therefore serious sport entrepreneurship will have to reflect on and give answers to such questions as:

- > Am I doing it for the sport?
- > Am I doing it for the money?
- > Am I doing it for my wider ambitions?

- > Am I doing it for myself?
- > Am I doing it to help others?
- > Am I doing it for the “game”?
- > Am I doing it for my career?
- > Am I doing it as a leisure activity?

The direction of the sport entrepreneurial initiatives will depend very much on those answers.

Most sport entrepreneurial initiatives will have to position themselves in this very simple “system”:



One positioning is not more “correct” than another, but knowing what you are doing will make your initiative more possible.

Typical sport entrepreneuring answers would most likely be:

- “I am in it for the business, and I use sport because it has great growth potentials”
- “I love sport and I would to make a living out of it”
- “I love sport, but I really don’t care about the money”
- “I am not interested in sport, but I can see that I can help other people through sport”
- “I would like to take my sport interest to a very ambitious level”
- “I just want to do this in my free time; it’s a lot of fun”
- “I am not doing so well in my education, so why not try to see what could happen with sport and making money at the same time”
- “I have no long-term plans; I will simply see where this takes me”



MIXED REALITIES - GOING INNOVATIVE

But there is more.

Young people today are virtual networks, they cross borders, they travel, they don’t pay much attention to what is “local”, “regional”, “national” or “international”.

Such categories are for academics, policy-makers and other animals.

For many young people “local” and “global” is very close; not only in their virtual worlds, but also because they increasing mix with young people from all over the world.

This has great consequences for any youth entrepreneuring, no matter the field or content.

And it has in particular consequence for sport entrepreneuring, as sport is by definition international and cross-cultural.

The local football team might include players with very different cultural backgrounds, and the elite club in the metropole certainly does.

This announces a very special and most interesting and dynamic dimension in sport entrepreneuring:

- > on one hand, sport is extremely physical and linked to physical locations
- > on the other hand, sport and its languages are extremely universal and therefore not bound to locations

Some time ago, the young people could do very little about this “dynamic tension”. Traveling was not easy and very expensive.

This has completely changed: the young people are connected virtually every day through social networks, through all sorts of communication tools (new apps emerging by the day) and increasingly through virtual gaming platforms offering social networking integrated in the gaming.

Obviously sport and gaming are very closely related.

This fact offers hitherto unexplored and unexploited opportunities to **link together physical sport and virtual gaming in new mixed reality activities.**

Such mixed realities are expected to have almost unlimited creative, innovative and also commercial perspectives, and in particular for ambitious and brave young sport entrepreneurs.

Such *mixed reality sport entrepreneuring* will - regardless of the level of the activity, small-scale and simple or large-scale and complex - link the virtual gameplay to physical sport actions and physical sport actions to the virtual gameplay.

In more limited mixed reality cases, physical sport activities can simply be recorded, described and otherwise integrated in various forms of virtual collaboration and networking.

Such 21st century sport entrepreneuring reminds us of a very important element in future sport entrepreneuring capacity building:

Media fluency, technology fluency, gaming fluency and social networking fluency will need to be a still more important and indispensable element in sport entrepreneuring capacity building among young people, in particular among ambitious young people for whom the limitations of the physical world is no longer acceptable.

Amazing news, this is: not only is sport entrepreneuring in itself an almost unlimited growth field, but adding *mixed reality sport entrepreneuring* takes sport entrepreneuring deep into 21st century creativity and commercial opportunities.