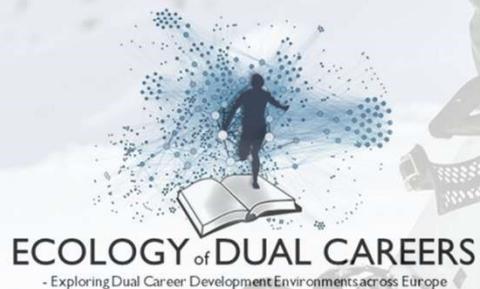




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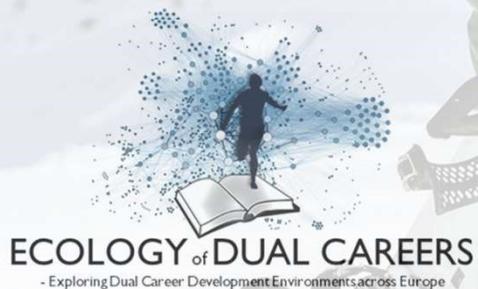
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Presentation 6: A holistic ecological approach to athletes' dual career

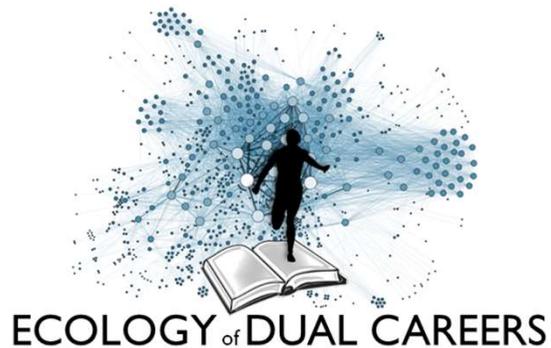
Louise Storm
University of Southern Denmark



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Shifting the Attention from the Individual to the Environment



Louise Kamuk Storm
lkstorm@health.sdu.dk

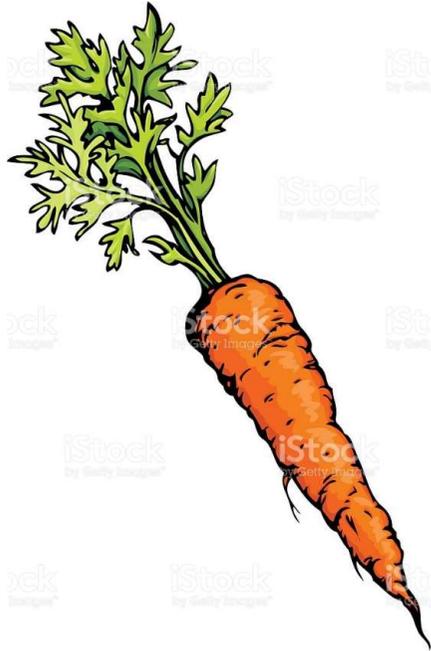


SDU  UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHERN DENMARK
Department of Sports Science and Clinical Biomechanics

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The Holistic Ecological Approach



The Holistic Ecological Approach



Shifts the attention from the individual athlete **to the environment** in which he or she is embedded

The Holistic Ecological Approach



Suggests that **some environments are more successful than others** in developing elite level athletes.

The Holistic Ecological Approach



Suggests a case study approach to the investigation of environments.

- Real-life phenomenon in its real-life context
- Multiple sources of data and multiple participants
- Thick case descriptions

The Holistic Ecological Approach



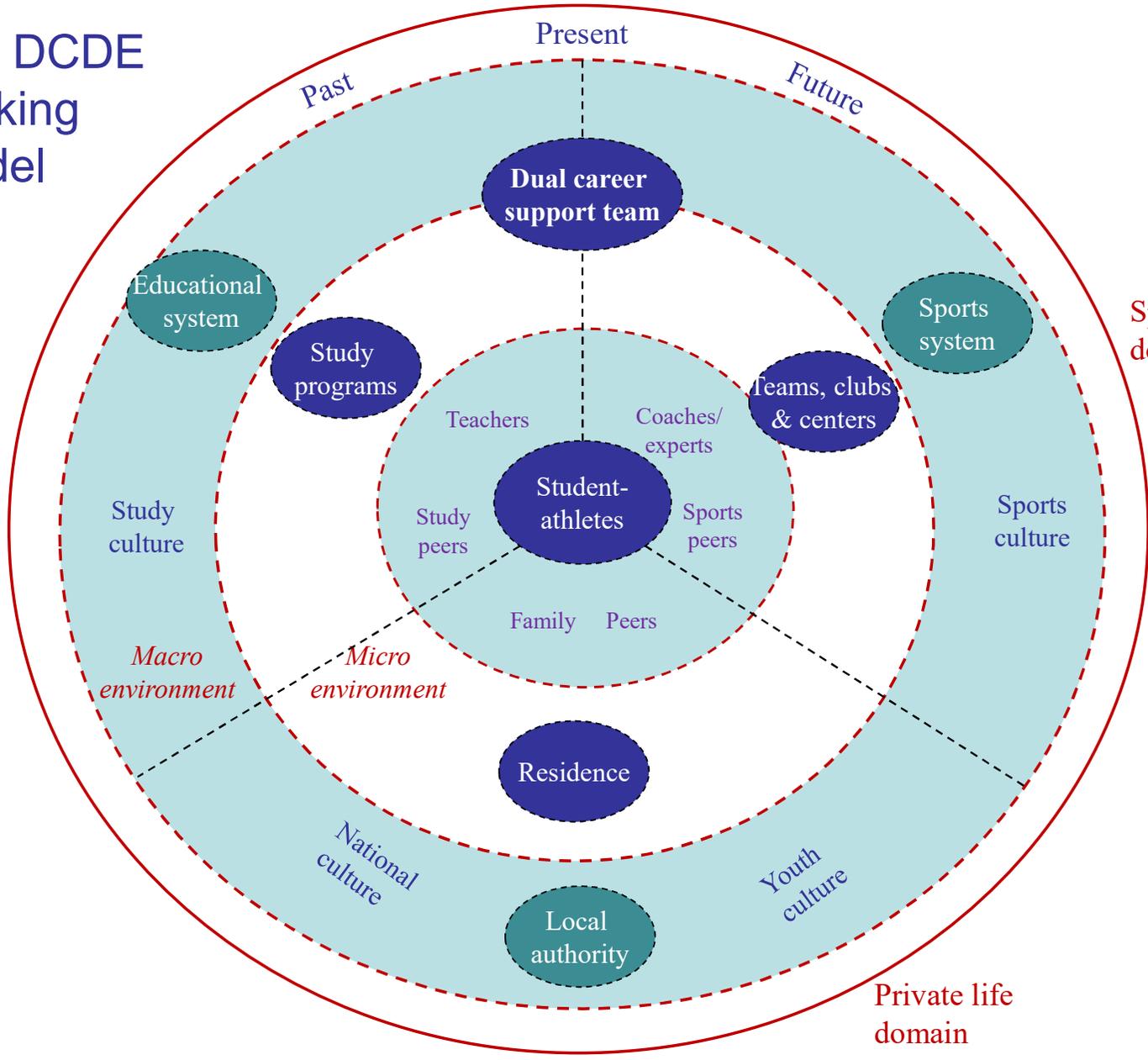
Has applied implications.

- Practitioners should work to optimize environments, not only to support individual athletes.

The DCDE working model

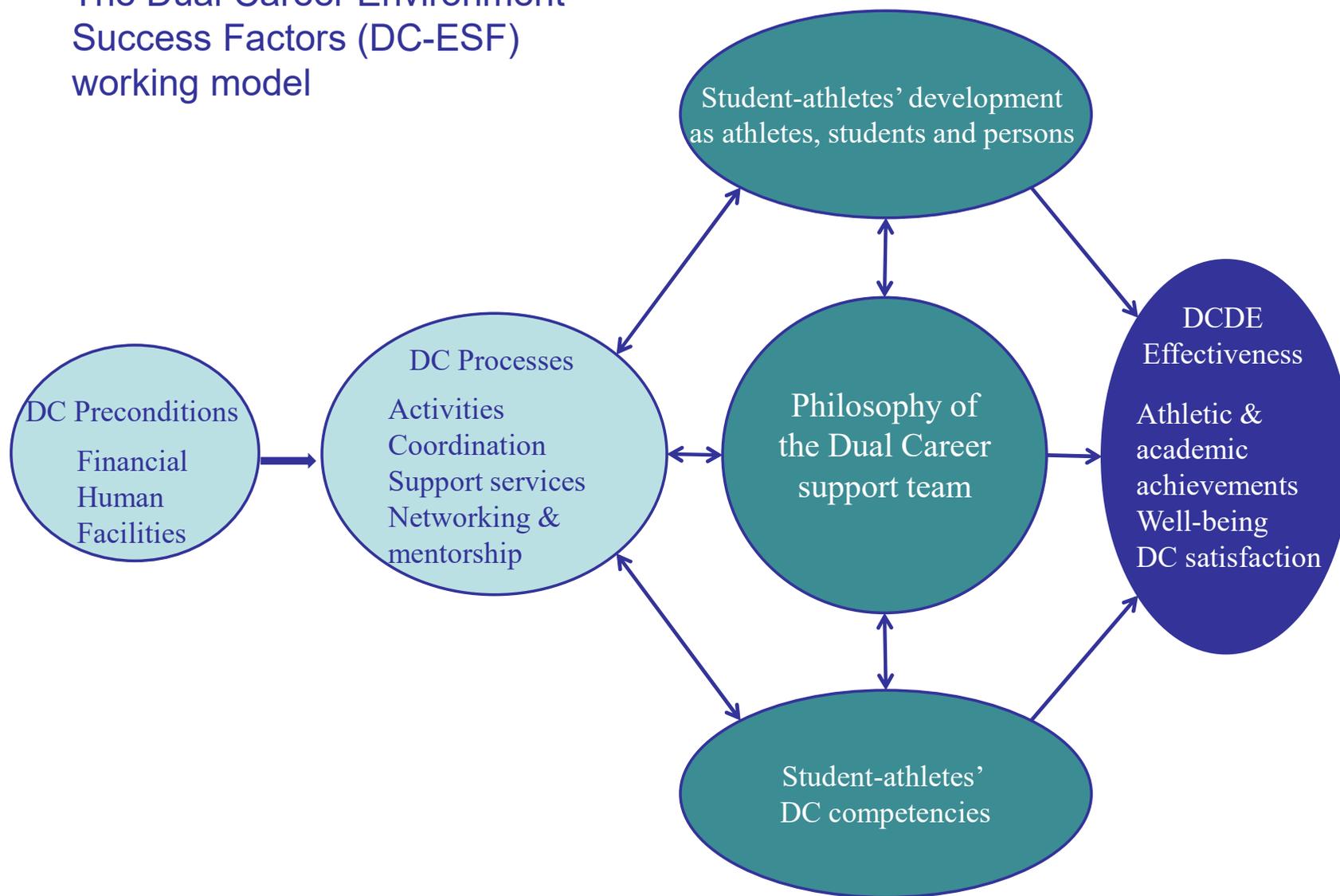
Study domain

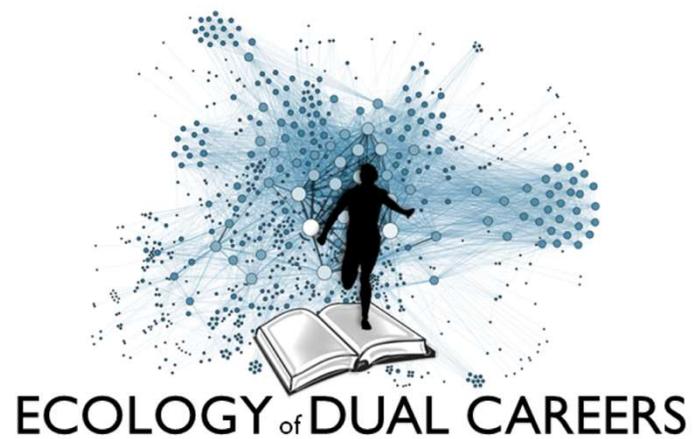
Sports domain



Private life domain

The Dual Career Environment
Success Factors (DC-ESF)
working model





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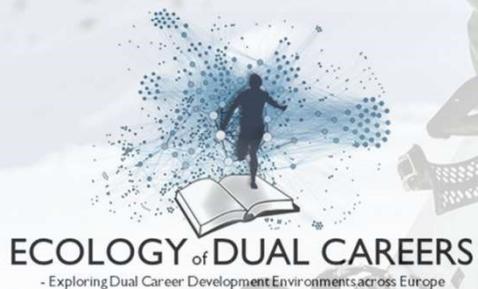
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Presentation 7: Case study of a Flemish Dual Career Environment

Sofie Smismans
Vrije University Brussels



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IN THE SPOTLIGHT!

Case study of a successful Flemish Dual Career Environment

SOFIE SMISMANS^a, SIMON DEFUYT^a, KOEN DE BRANDT^a, PAUL WYLLEMAN^a

^a Vrije Universiteit Brussel

Coordinators GYMFED: Lode Grossen, Valerie Van Cauwenberghe, Dominique Verlent
Dual Career Coordinator Sport Vlaanderen: Kristel Taelman

 <https://dualcareers.eu>  sofie.smismans@vub.be  [@ECODCERASMUS](https://twitter.com/ECODCERASMUS)

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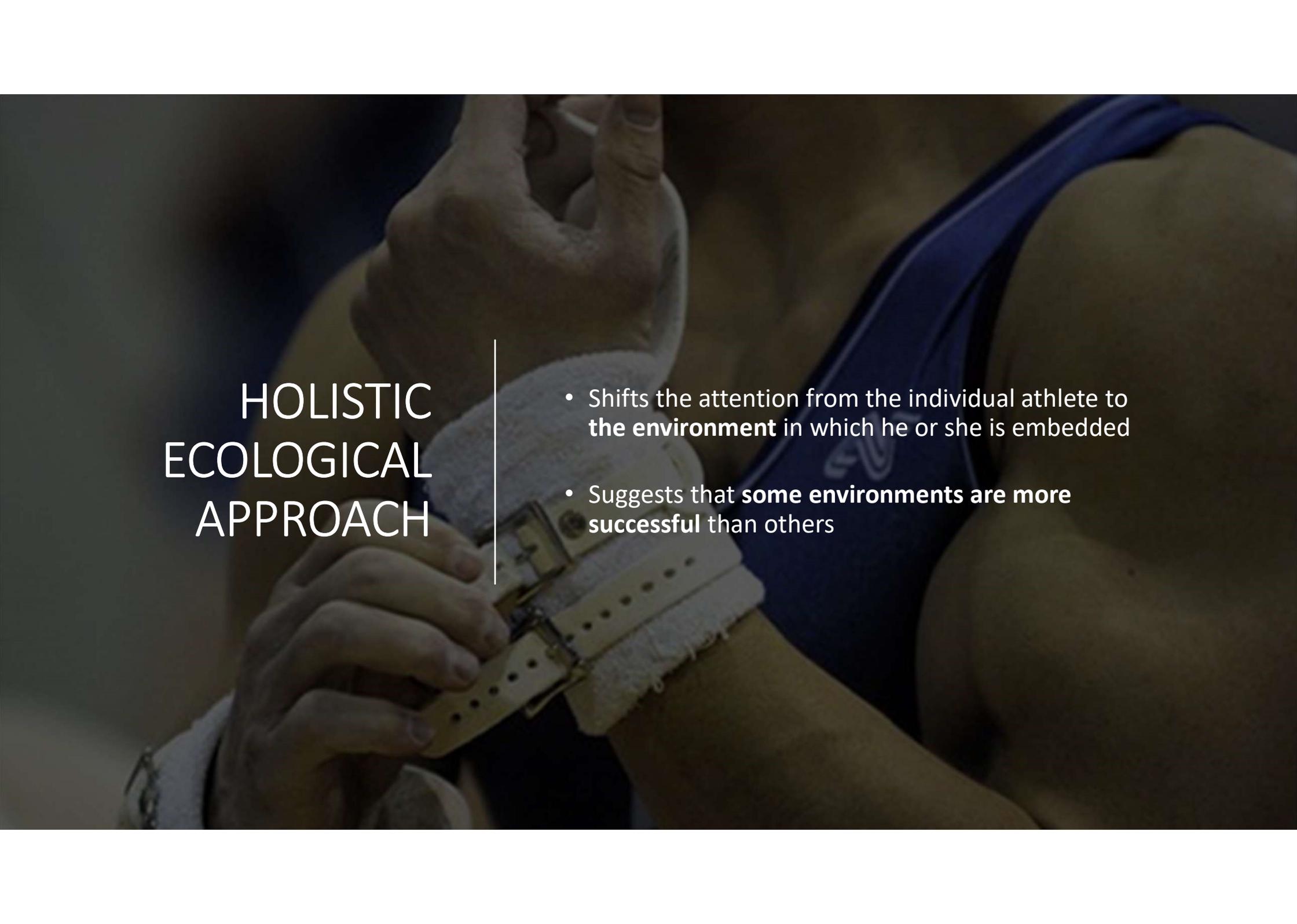
LONGINES

#GOGYMTASTIC

CASE STUDY BELGIUM: GYMFED

- Holistic ecological approach (Henriksen & Stambulova, 2017)
- 24 semi-structured interviews with athletes and DC actors
- On-site observations
- Document analysis

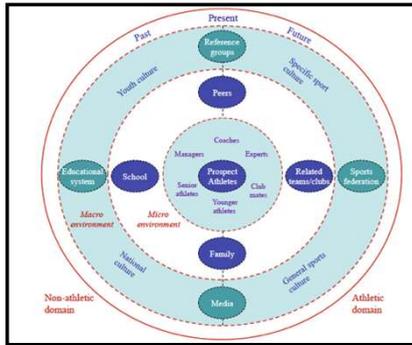


A close-up photograph of a person's arm being wrapped in a white medical bandage. A yellow strap with a buckle is visible, securing the bandage. The person is wearing a blue athletic top. The background is dark and out of focus.

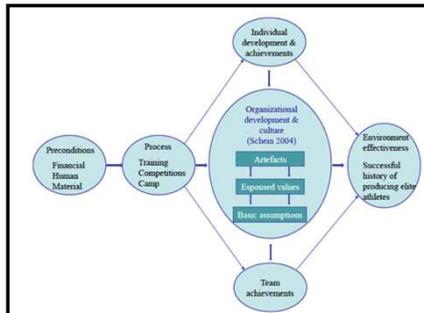
HOLISTIC ECOLOGICAL APPROACH

- Shifts the attention from the individual athlete to **the environment** in which he or she is embedded
- Suggests that **some environments are more successful** than others

Two working models are used throughout the holistic ecological approach to map the environment

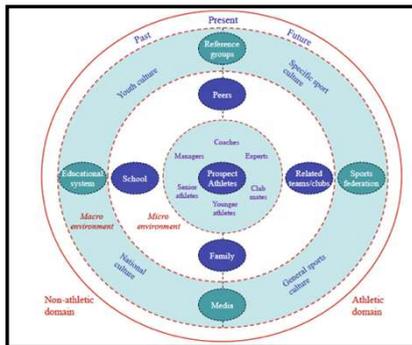


DCDE MODEL: Components, structure and relationships

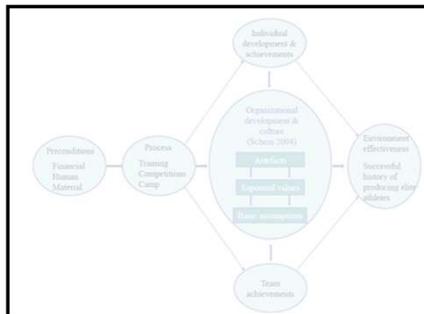


ESF MODEL: Preconditions, processes and culture

Two working models are used throughout the holistic ecological approach to map the environment

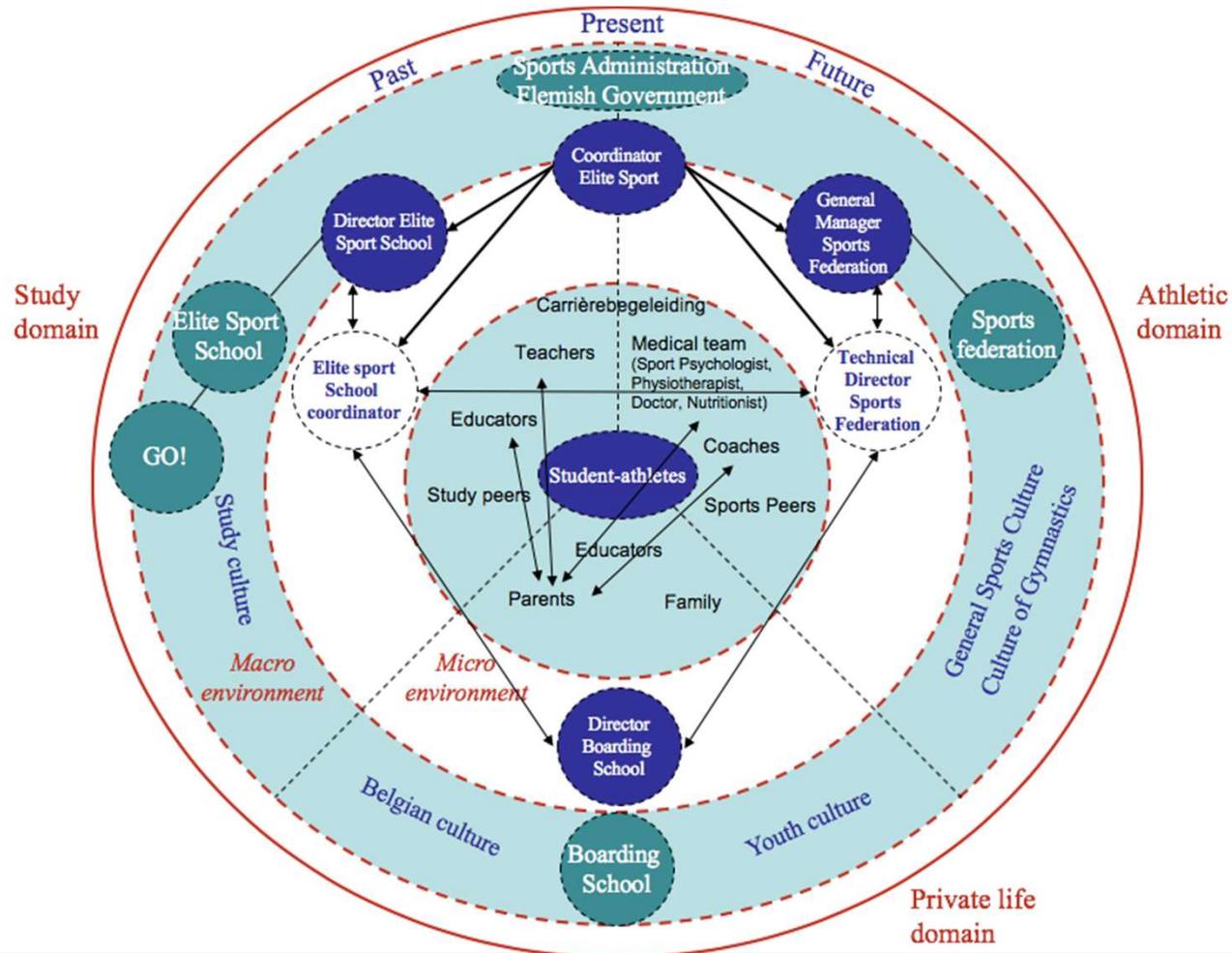


DCDE MODEL: Components, structure and relationships

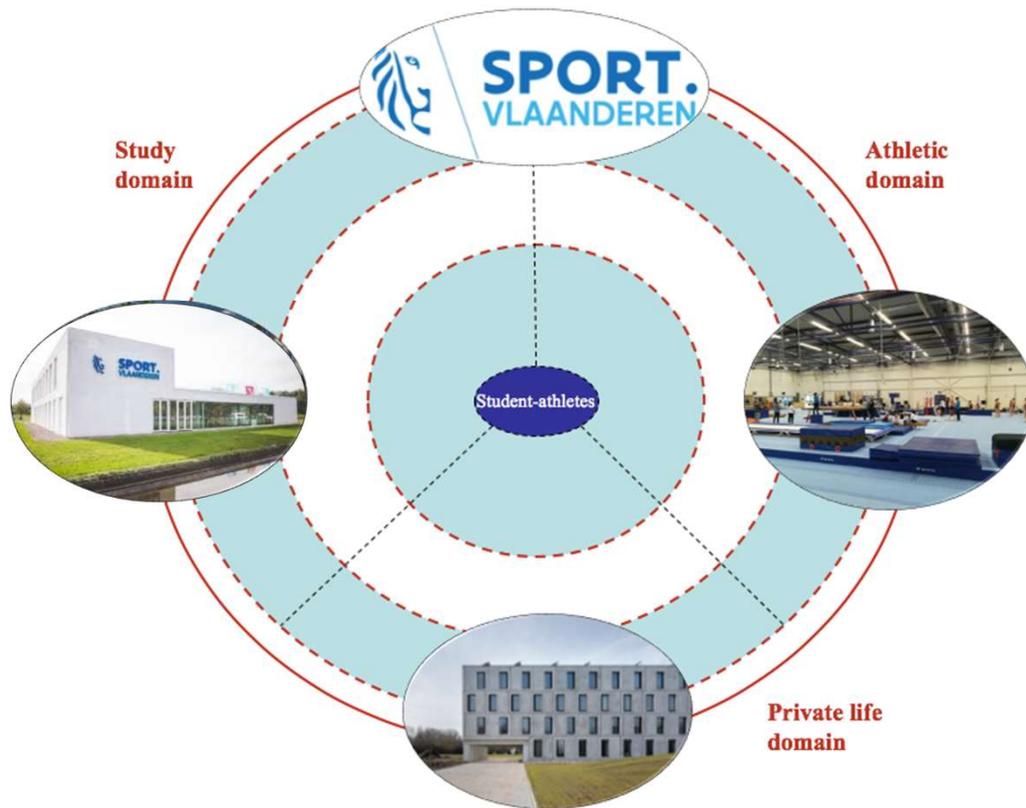
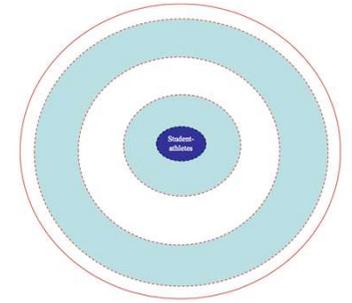


ESF MODEL: Preconditions, processes and culture

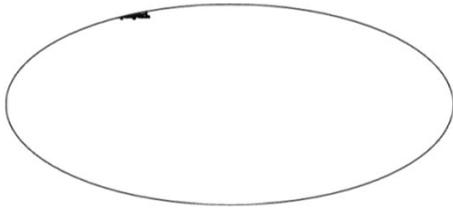
The DCDE working model for the Belgian GymFed



The **macro**-environment is characterized by **four different actors** on **three domains** striving for the same goal



"Everyone is very aware of the goal that those student-athletes have and tries to do everything so they can achieve their goals."



- Design and implementation of the dual career **policy**



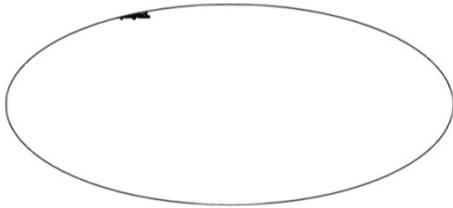
- Create a **motivational sporting climate** with a whole team (e.g., high-qualified coaches, sport psychologist, nutritionist, physiotherapist) behind every single student-athlete in a center of excellence



- Housing the student-athletes and creating a **homely atmosphere**
- Focus on **holistic well-being** of gymnasts



- Providing a necessary **safeguard** next to gymnastics
- Put education at the center but provides **sport-centered flexibilities and content**



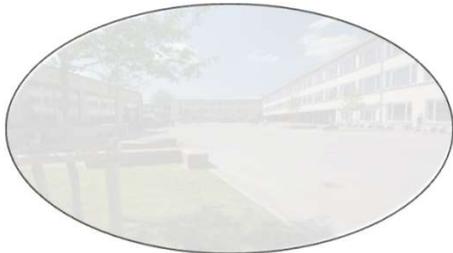
- Design and implementation of the dual career **policy**



SPORT IS PRIORITY



- Housing the student-athletes and creating a **homely atmosphere**
- Focus on **holistic well-being** of gymnasts



- Providing a necessary **safeguard** next to gymnastics
- Put education at the center but provides **sport-centered flexibilities and content**

The sports federation: GYMFED

Gymnastics Federation Flanders (GymFed)

- 3th largest unisport federation
 - 132.969 members
 - 320 clubs
 - 50 employees, a board of directors, CEO, administrative and financial manager, marketing – & event manager
 - All gymnastic disciplines (recreational, competitive and elite sport), rope skipping and free running



The sports federation: GYMFED

GymFed & Dual career

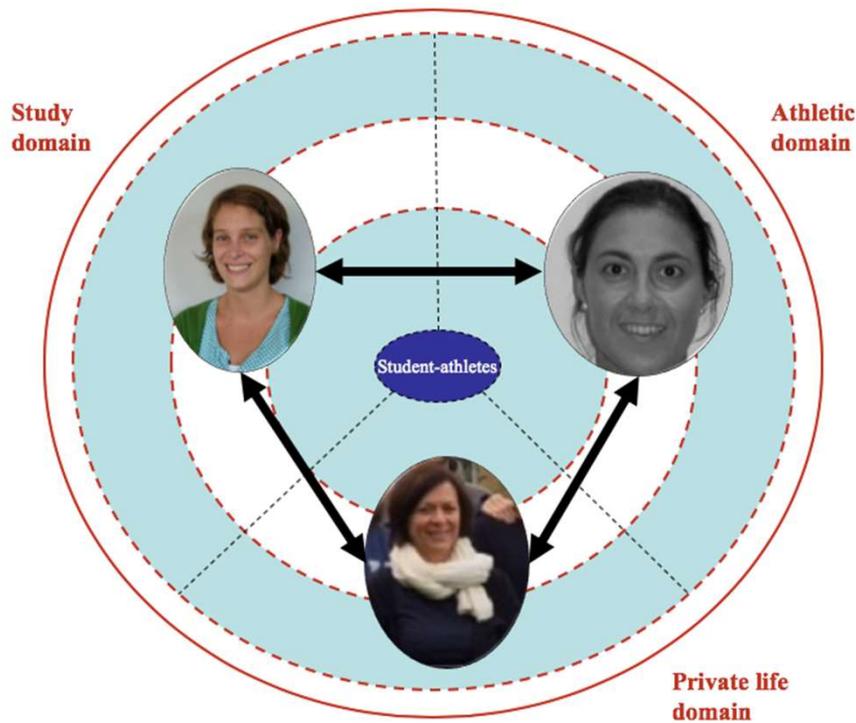
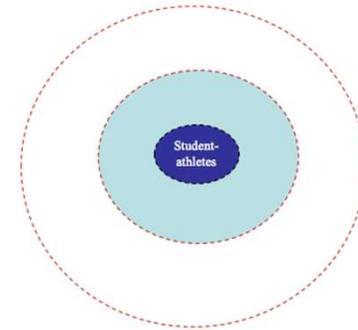
- Dual career environment in a centralised system since 1998 for artistic & acrobatic gymnasts
 - 20 coaches, about 70 gymnasts, and a (para-)medical staff
- Elite level coordinator and Youth Coordinators for WAG & MAG

→ **Sport + Study + Well-being!**

- Olympic disciplines (team qualification OG for WAG, finals with medal chances) and acrobatic gymnastics (medal chances at EC, WC, and World Games)
- Secondary school graduation

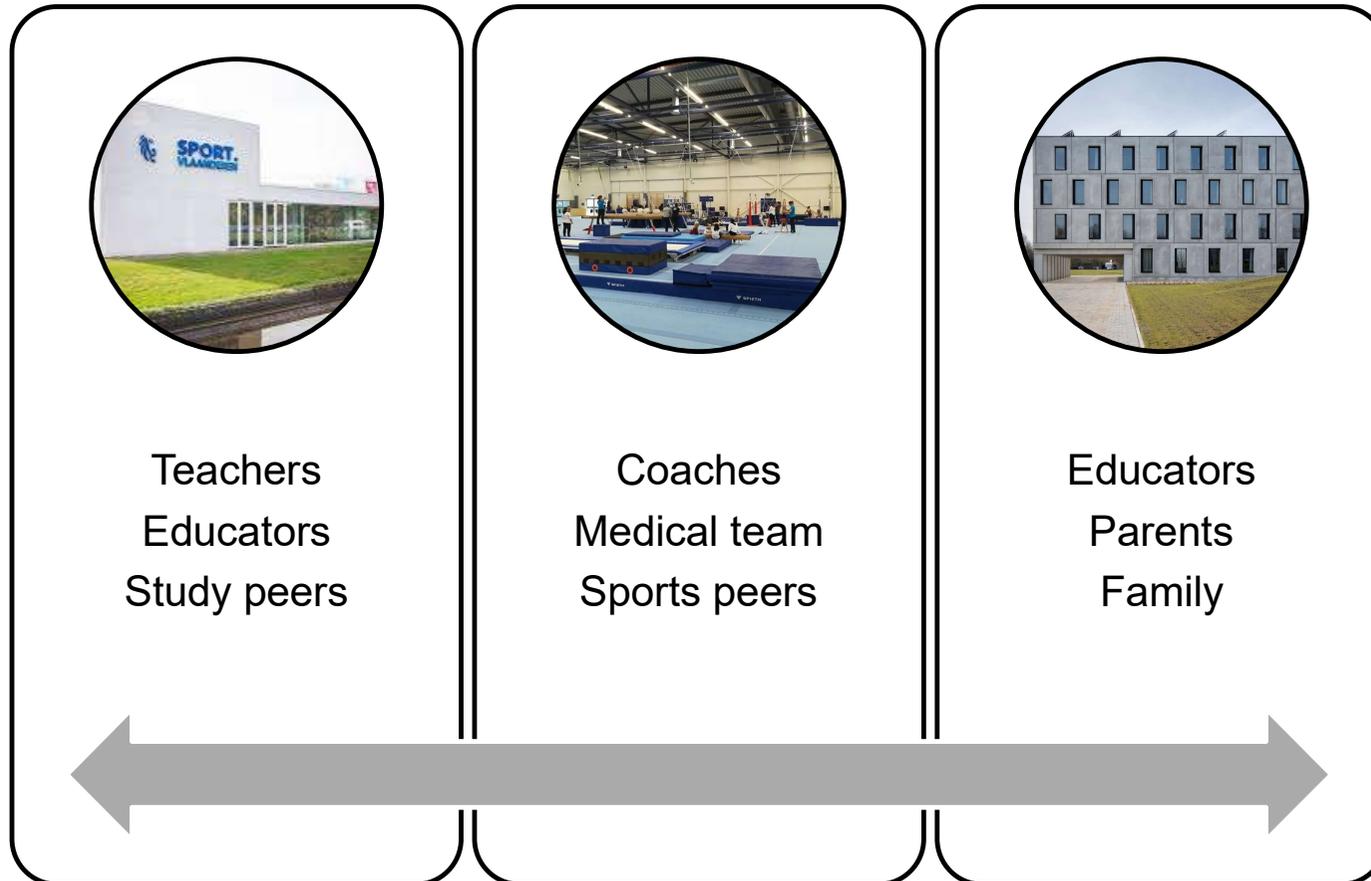
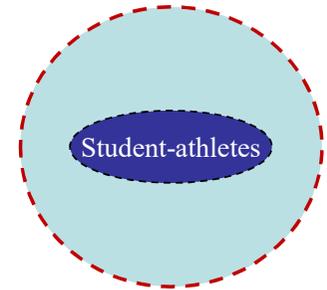


The **micro-environment** consists of a **well-oiled, coordinating, cross-domain** team

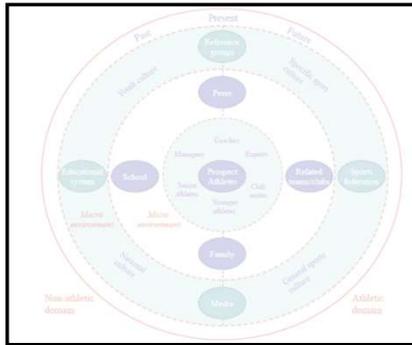


- **Efficient** system
- **Clarity** about contact points within each domain
- **Short communication** lines
- **Quick follow-up** if problems arise
- Adequate **feedback** to the macro-environment

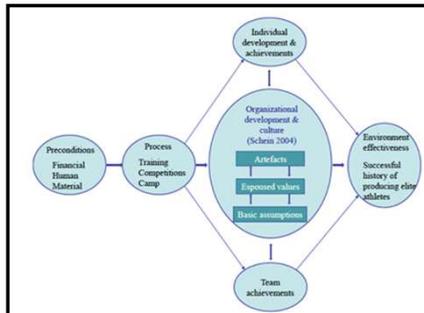
Within every domain, the **micro**-environment is characterized of a **dedicated, specialized team**



Two working models are used throughout the holistic ecological approach to map the environment

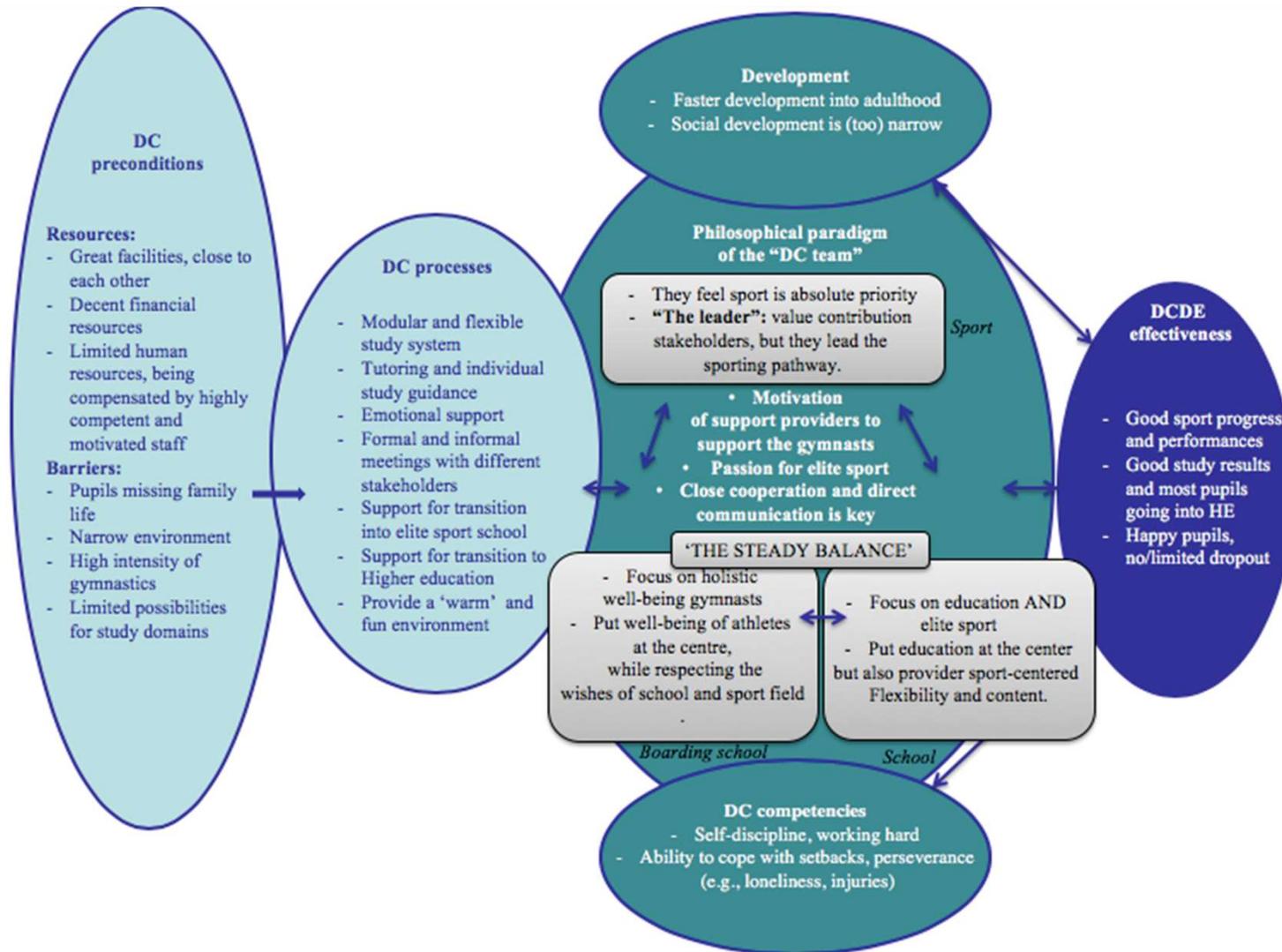


DCDE MODEL: Components, structure and relationships



ESF MODEL: Preconditions, processes and culture

The **ESF** working model for the Belgian GymFed



DC PRECONDITIONS

Resources

- Great facilities, close to each other
- Decent financial resources
- Limited human resources, being compensated by highly competent and motivated staff

Barriers

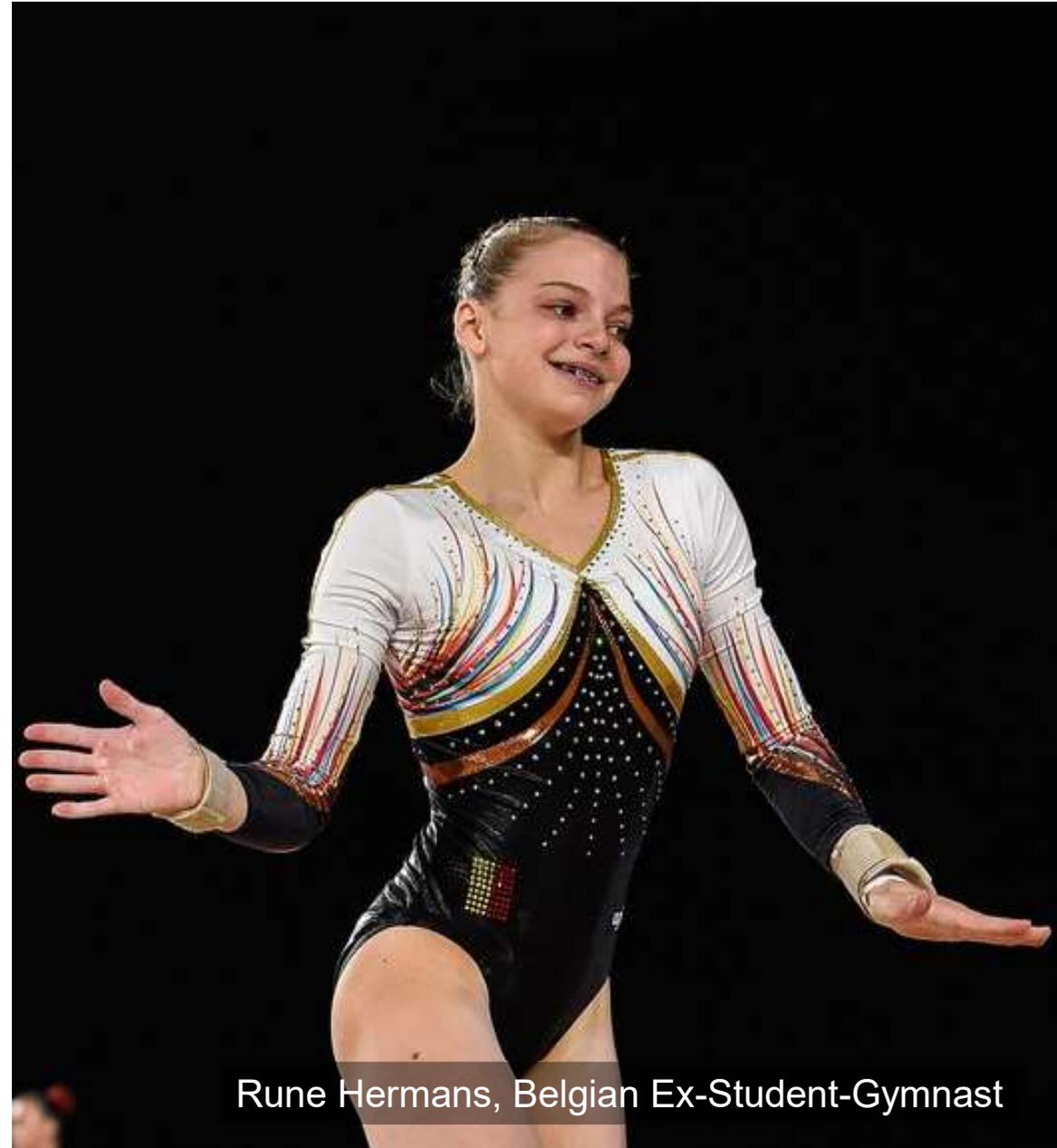
- Pupils missing family
- Narrow environment
- High intensity of gymnastics
- Limited possibilities for study domains



Gymnastics Hall Ghent

DC PROCESSES

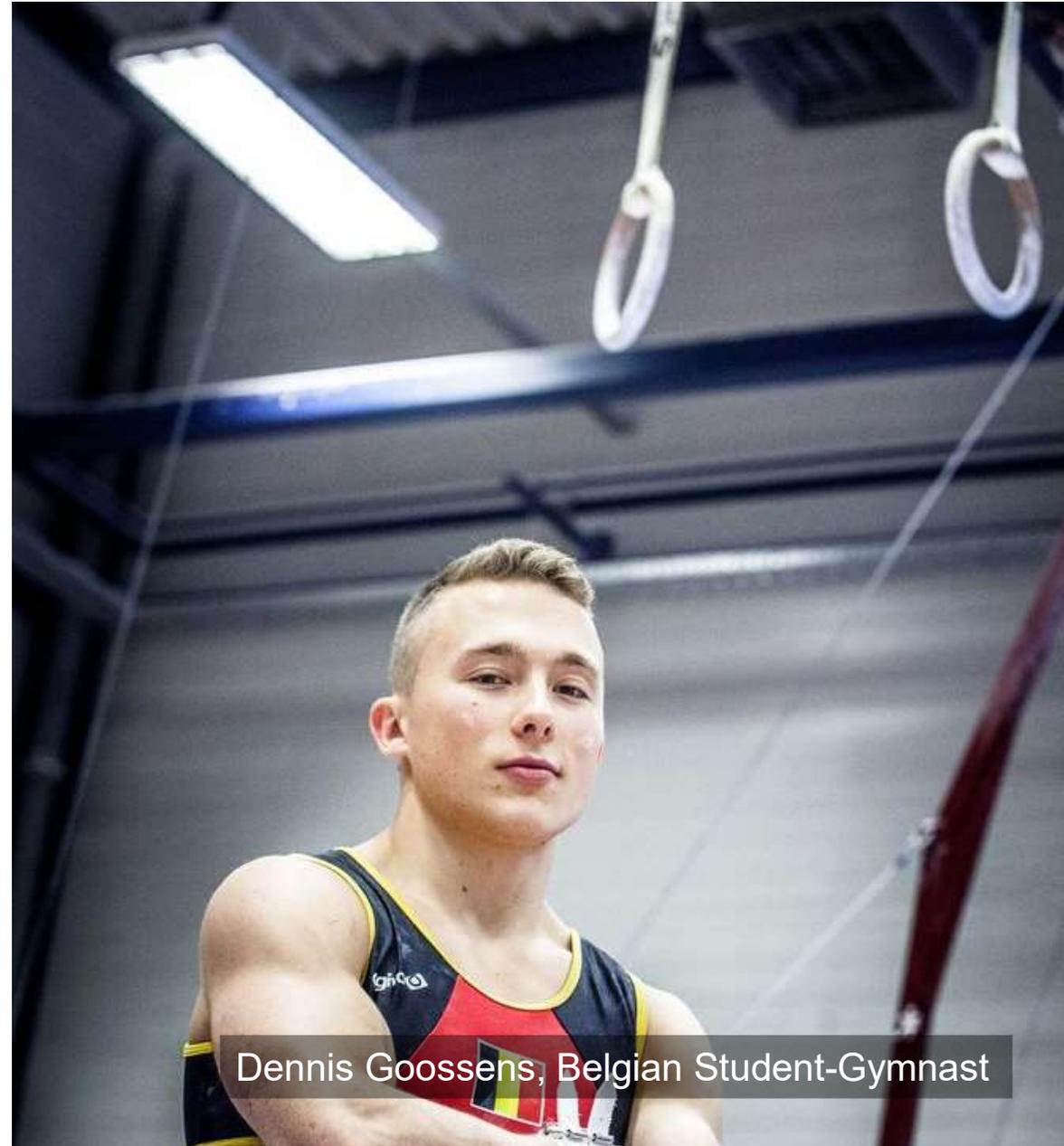
- Modular and flexible study system
- Tutoring and individual study guidance
- Emotional support
- Formal and informal meetings with different stakeholders
- Support for transition into elite sport school
- Support for transition to higher education
- Provide a 'warm' and fun environment



Rune Hermans, Belgian Ex-Student-Gymnast

DC DEVELOPMENT

- Faster development into adulthood
- Social development is (too) narrow
- DC competencies (e.g., self-discipline, working hard, ability to cope with setbacks, perseverance)



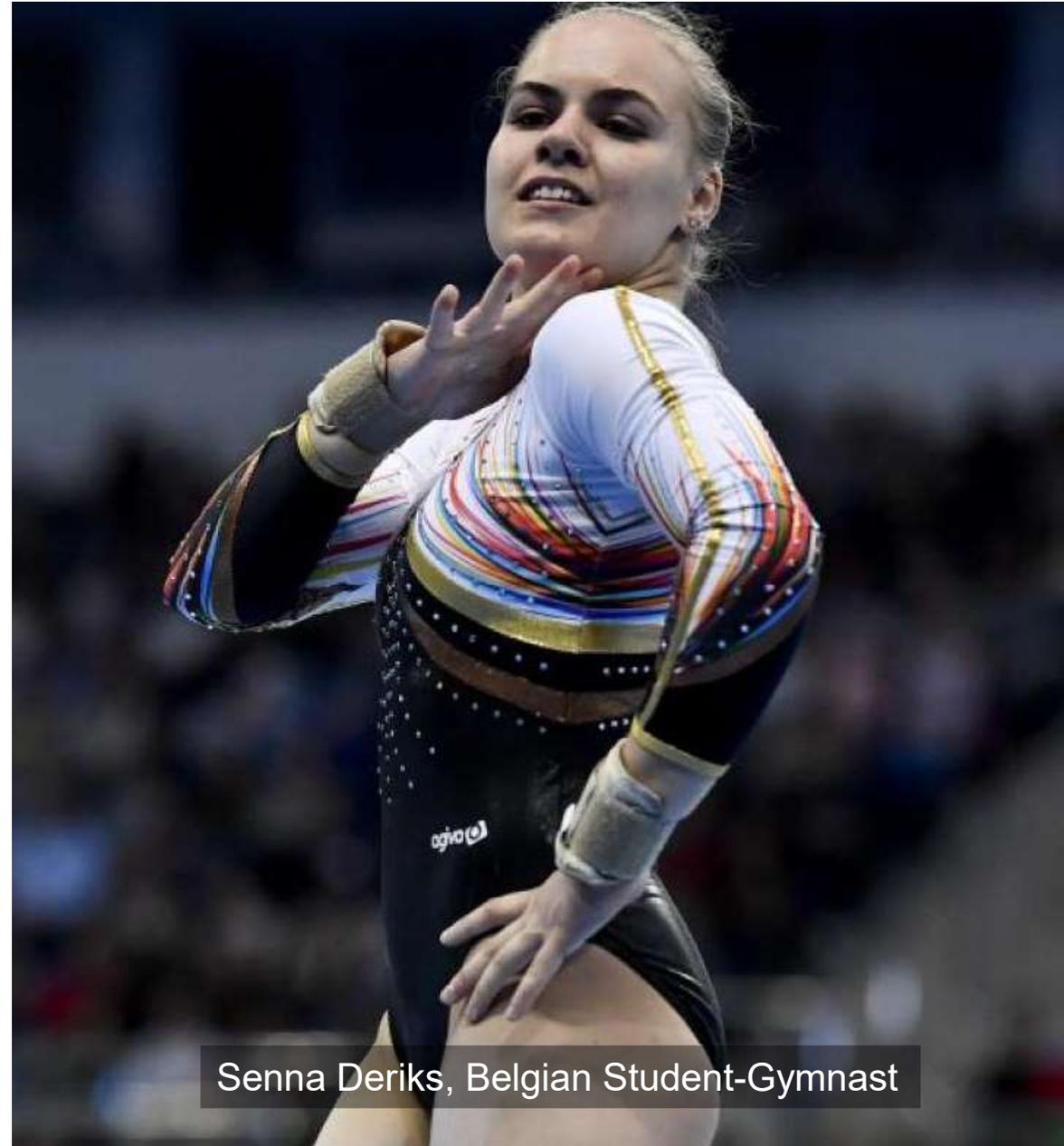
Dennis Goossens, Belgian Student-Gymnast

DC PHILOSOPHY

Shared philosophy across three domains:

- **Motivation** of support providers to support the gymnasts
- **Passion** for elite sport
- **Close cooperation** and direct communication

The sports federation is in charge of the sports domain and tries to get the maximum out of this, while respecting the other domains. The elite sport and boarding school provide a steady balance for the student-athletes with high-quality educational and well-being support.



Senna Deriks, Belgian Student-Gymnast

DC EFFECTIVENESS

- Good sport progress and performances
- Good study results with most student-gymnasts going into higher education



Nina Derwael, Belgian Student-Gymnast, World Champion



WHAT'S NEXT?

Dominique Verlent, GymFed Belgium

WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK FOLLOWING ORGANISATIONS AND PERSONS FOR THEIR COOPERATION THROUGHOUT THE CASE STUDY:



Gymnastics federation Flanders



Elite Sport School Atheneum Voskenslaan



Boarding school



The sports administration of the Flemish government





IN THE SPOTLIGHT!

Case study of a successful Flemish Dual Career Environment

SOFIE SMISMANS^a, SIMON DEFUYT^a, KOEN DE BRANDT^a, PAUL WYLLEMAN^a

^a Vrije Universiteit Brussel

Coordinators GYMFED: Lode Grossen, Valerie Van Cauwenberghe, Dominique Verlent
Dual Career Coordinator Sport Vlaanderen: Kristel Taelman

 <https://dualcareers.eu>  sofie.smismans@vub.be  [@ECODCERASMUS](https://twitter.com/ECODCERASMUS)

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Presentation 8: Cross- case Analysis

Natalia Stambulova
Halmstad University



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Cross-case analysis: Ten essential features of a dual career development environment

Natalia Stambulova

Ecology of Dual Careers – Exploring Dual Career Development Environments across Europe

Aim and method

Aim: To identify the essential features shared by seven DCDEs across Europe studied by the project partners

Seven case studies of DCDEs across Europe

- Based on the holistic ecological approach (Henriksen & Stambulova, 2017)
- Guided by the DCDE and the DC-ESF working models
- Interview and observation guides developed by the project consortium
- Aimed at describing the environment and exploring factors contributing to its effectiveness
- The analysis included transforming the working models into empirical DCDE and DC-ESF models grounded in the data
- Represented different types of DCDEs (e.g., educational level)

Cross-case analysis: Steps

1. Familiarization with the seven DCDE case studies through oral and video presentations done by partners

2. Provisional list of features compiled by project coordinators

3. Series of focus group discussions about the the provisional list and aimed at defining and describing the essential features of a DCDE

4. A designated working group led by the Danish partners consolidated the focus group reflections and refined the features

5. Final features were reviewed and confirmed by project partners

Resulted in two major themes with five features in each

Theme 1: Holistic Structure



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Dedicated DC support team

Descriptor

Designated team (or person) is a central entry point and responsible for coordinating sport and study domains.

vs.

Opposite Pole

Multiple contact points leave DC athletes uncertain about who to approach when they need assistance with DC issues.

Example from practice:



In the Swedish DCDE case, the Umeå School of Sports Sciences at Umeå University (who agreed to share their name) organized a DC support team with a DC-coordinator, a performance team coordinator, and coaches within their high-performance centers, working side-by-side in a shared office, communicating on a daily basis, and having divided their roles and responsibilities.



Integration of efforts across the whole environment

Descriptor

Coordination across sport and study domains and levels. There is on-going communication about solutions to DC athletes' challenges.

vs.

Opposite Pole

Lack of communication. Conflicting interests. DC athletes experience contradicting priorities in daily life.

Example from practice:



In the Belgium DCDE case, the elite sport school, the sports federation and the boarding schools were central pillars and provided a structure for integration. Three key persons representing the pillars, had close communication and integrated efforts across the domains.



A clear understanding of DC issues and support from across the environment

Holistic structure

Descriptor

People around the athlete acknowledge, accept, and support DCs. DC athletes are supported to focus on sport and study at different time points depending upon key priorities at that time.

Vs.

Opposite Pole

Stakeholders show lack of understanding of the demands involved in pursuing a dual career.

Example from practice:



In the Finish DCDE case, there was a non-flexible school system, coaches said they supported DCs but did not encourage the pursuit of academic accomplishments, and family reminded athletes about the importance of study.



Role models and mentorship

Descriptor

The presence of appropriate persons who DC athletes can get direct support (mentorship) or look up to and try to emulate (observational learning).

vs.

Opposite Pole

Impermeable boundaries between DC athletes. Rivalry and unwillingness to share.

Example from practice:



In the Danish DCDE case, a virtual community based on shared narratives (often spread by the DC support team) supported vicarious learning and a sense of belonging for DC athletes that typically never met.



Access to expert support

Descriptor

Access (or referral network) to experts and services, such as nutrition, physiotherapy, sport psychology, and medical services.

vs.

Opposite Pole

No access to experts. DC athletes who need expert support do not know how to get this help.

Example from practice:



In the British DCDE case, DC athletes had access to “TASS core services” with for example lifestyle, nutrition, sport psychology and physiotherapy support services and career planning workshops, delivered by qualified staff at a credited TASS delivery site. Additional expert services were coordinated within the sports domain.



Theme 2: Shared DC Philosophy



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A whole person approach

Descriptor

An acknowledgement of the influence of the different domains on DC athletes' lives, with a focus on developing the DC athletes holistically in whatever path they select.

vs.

Opposite Pole

People in the sport domain focus solely on sport, people in the study domain solely on education etc.

Example from practice:



In the Swedish DCDE case, coaches acknowledge studies and adapted training to DC athletes study load to achieve balance and wellbeing.



In the Belgium DCDE case, all stakeholders took an interest across domains, the structure of the environment provided the balance, and the boarding school had holistic wellbeing as a priority



ECOLOGY OF DUAL CAREERS

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An empowerment approach

Descriptor

Providing opportunities for DC athletes to develop personal resources to manage their own DC and become autonomous.

vs.

Opposite Pole

Excessive control. No active involvement of DC athletes in key decisions regarding their own DCs. Focus only on sport and study specific skills and not on DC competencies.

Example from practice:



In the Danish DCDE case, new DC athletes are approached and receive proactive support from the DC support team in the first year. Following this, the DC support comes as a response to the student-athletes request, and they grow as self-responsible student-athletes.



Flexible DC solutions

Descriptor

Recognition that DC athletes require individualized solutions to support their DC. This may include sport and / or academic flexibility, and flexibility with, for example, education assessments.

vs.

Opposite Pole

Dual career initiatives and services are not individualized but fixed. Support services are not appropriately contextualized to the different sport and to the needs of individual athletes.

Example from practice:

Study flexibility (e.g., exam flexibility, individual study plans) was found across all cases. Flexibility from the sports side was found in several, but not all cases.



Care of DC athlete's mental health and wellbeing

Descriptor

People in the environment recognize their responsibility, not only for the athletes' sport and academic achievements, but also for their wellbeing and mental health.

vs.

Opposite Pole

No recognition from the environment of responsibility for DC athletes' overall balance and mental health. Gladiator philosophy that sport is hard, and athletes should toughen up.

Example from practice:



In the Spanish DCDE case, a clinical psychologist and sport physiologist were embedded in the environment and responsible for mental health issues. DC athletes could get access to them and support providers could refer to them.



An open and proactive approach to the development of the environment

Shared DC philosophy

Descriptor

DC support providers engage in on-going development of their environment and their own competencies.

vs.

Opposite Pole

Lack of time for on-going professional development and evaluation.

Example from practice:



In the British DCDE case, the staff was open to feedback and evaluation, engaged with sports research conducted at the university, and evaluated their efforts at the end of each academic year to adapt the support provided.



Summary: Essential features of a DCDE

Holistic structure

- Dedicated DC support team
- Integration of efforts across the whole environment
- A clear understanding of DC issues and support from across the environment
- Role models and mentorship
- Access to expert support

Shared DC philosophy

- A whole person approach
- An empowerment approach
- Flexible DC solutions
- Care of DC athlete's mental health and wellbeing
- An open and proactive approach to the development of the environment

THANKS!

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- **AKU NIKANDER, University of Jyväskylä, Finland**
- **JENS BUNDGAARD, Team Danmark, Denmark**



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