

FUTURE LINKS FOR UNIVERSITY ATHLETES
WITH SPORTS CLUBS INTEGRATING ORGANISED NETWORKS



SURVEY ANALYSIS



Co-funded by
the European Union

Introduction

The FUSION (Future links for University athletes with Sportsclubs Integrating Organised Networks) Survey on sports behaviour and practice before, during and after higher education studies was carried out as an online survey between January 2025 and May 2025. It was available in 5 languages: English, French, Latvian, Lithuanian and Slovenian, using Google Forms.

Project website, as well as other centralised invitations and social media posts were made in English and offered links to all the language versions (<https://fusion.eusa.eu/survey>), while project partners were free to promote the surveys in their language and usually linked the survey only to their national language.

The survey contained 17 main content questions, and some demographics data-related questions. Most of the questions were closed questions with pre-defined selection choices, and four questions were of open type; one asking for additional feedback, where the respondents were able to enter the text on their own. None of the questions were obligatory to answer.

We received 183 valid responses in the research which we analysed and interpreted the results in this document.

The survey was part of data gathering in the project, aiming to raise awareness of the changes of sport behaviour and to understand how sports habits, involvement, and settings change when transitioning into university and later into professional life.

The results of the survey will be used to better understand the needs of the target population, and to tailor the contents and format for preparation and execution of the outputs of the project, including the workshops, open discussions, leaflet and others.

Survey analysis was performed on behalf of the FUSION project consortium by Patrice Giron from the University of Hamburg and Andrej Pisl from the European University Sports Association (EUSA) and its Institute.

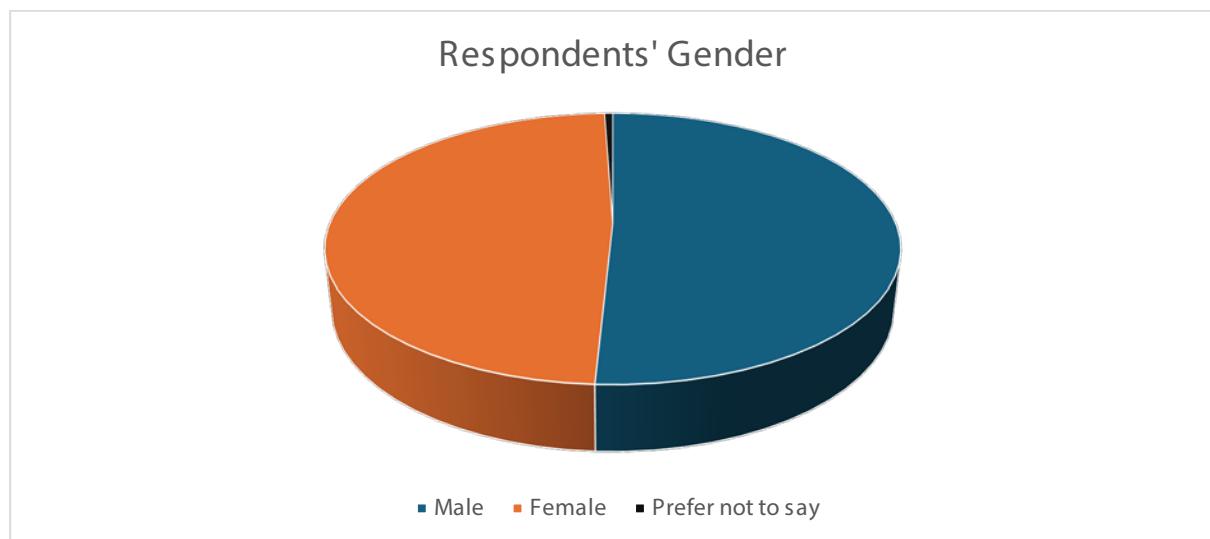
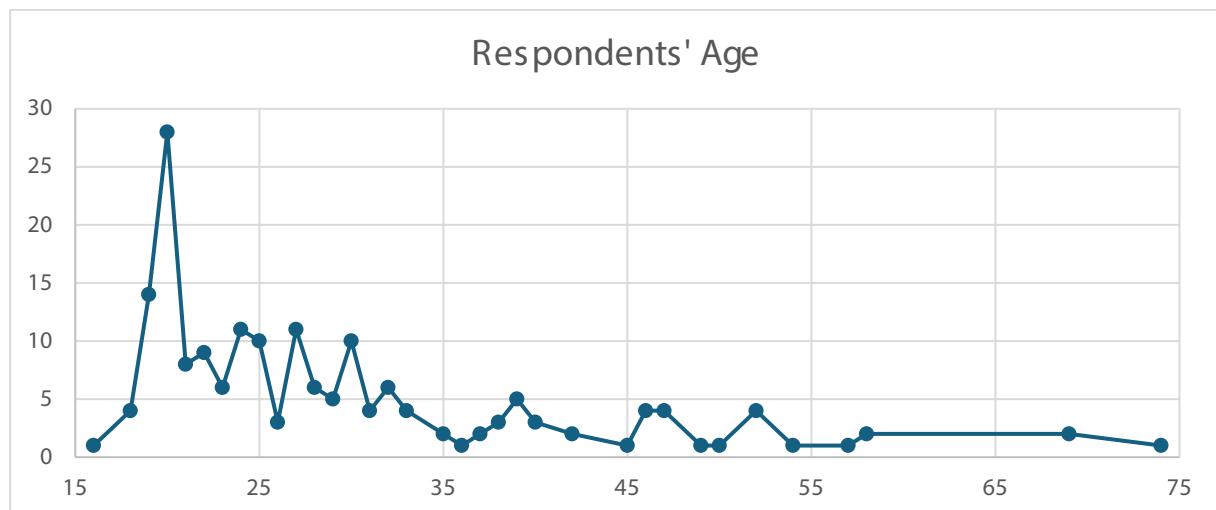
FUSION project is co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Respondents and Demographics

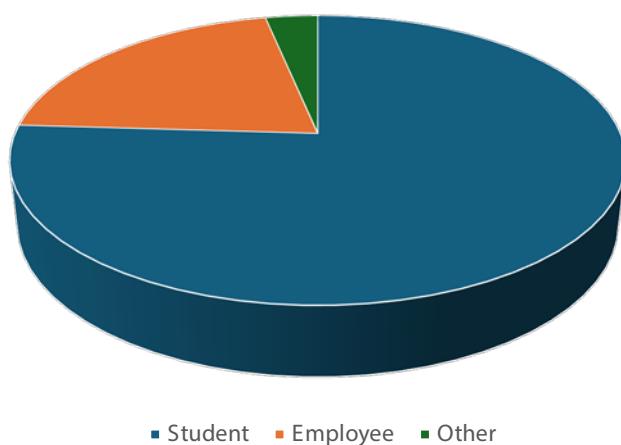
The survey includes a diverse group of respondents, primarily students and employees from partner countries (in alphabetical order: France, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia), also gathering some responses from other countries, namely Albania, Austria, Spain and Sweden.

The age range spans from late teens to seniors, with an average age of the respondents being 29. We gathered results from students, as well as alumni (employees), and also asked about the field of study of the respondents, but related to the former, analysis showed no significant differences or relevance related to sport engagement.

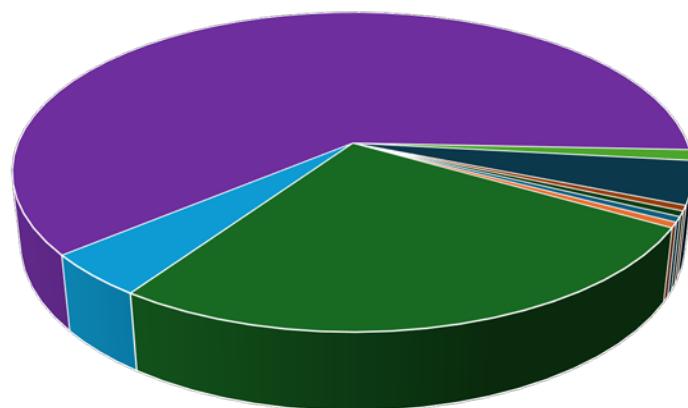
We are happy to report that gender distribution was very balanced, having 51 % male and 49 % female respondents.



Respondents' Status



Respondents' Country of Residence

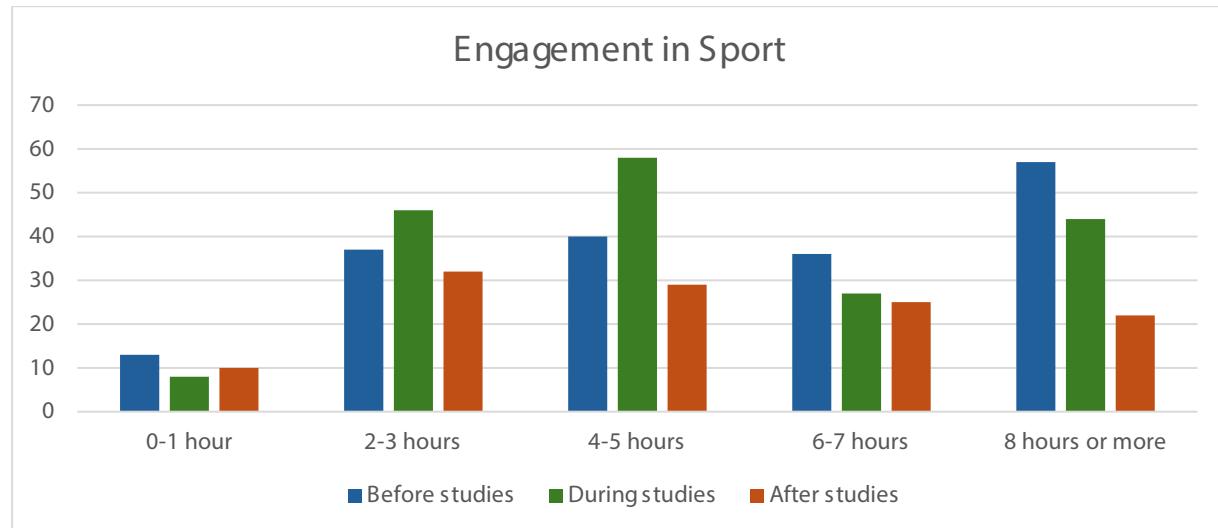


Participation in Sports

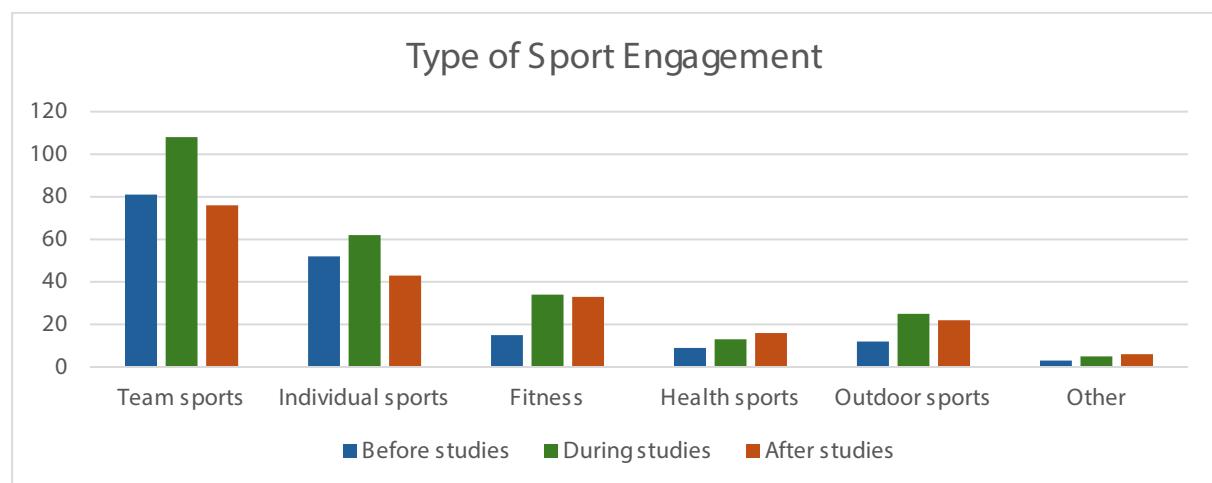
Many respondents had a history of active sports participation before their higher education studies, often dedicating 4-5 hours or more weekly.

During their higher education studies, sports engagement varied widely. Sport participation increased for those who were less active before studies, but at the same time, a decrease was noticed for those more active before the studies.

For those who are already out of studies, engagement in sport is still present, but a significant decline is noted – both in comparison before the studies, and also in comparison during the studies.



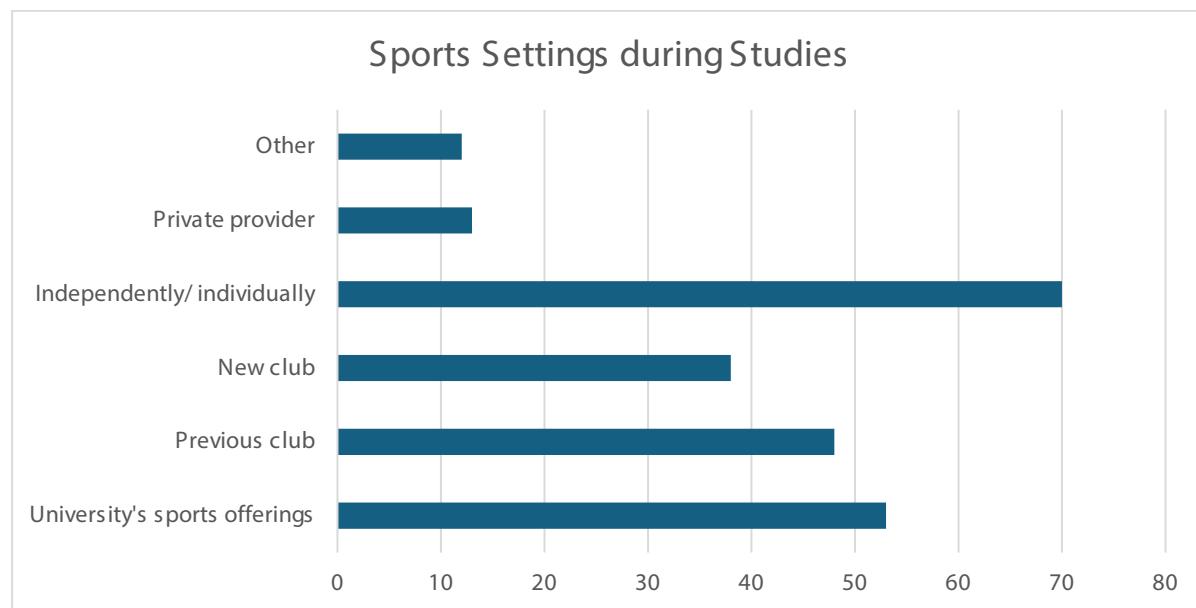
The sports preference – engagement and selection varied from team sports, individual sports, fitness, outdoor sports, and health sports, reflecting diverse preferences. During studies, increase has been recorded in all segments, and what is particularly worrying, is that after studies, there is a decrease in engagement reported in almost all sports segments, especially team and individual sports. Fitness and outdoor activities and engagement gained during studies seems to be stable also after studies, while respondents indicated an increased participation in health sports activities after studies, compared to their engagement during the studies.



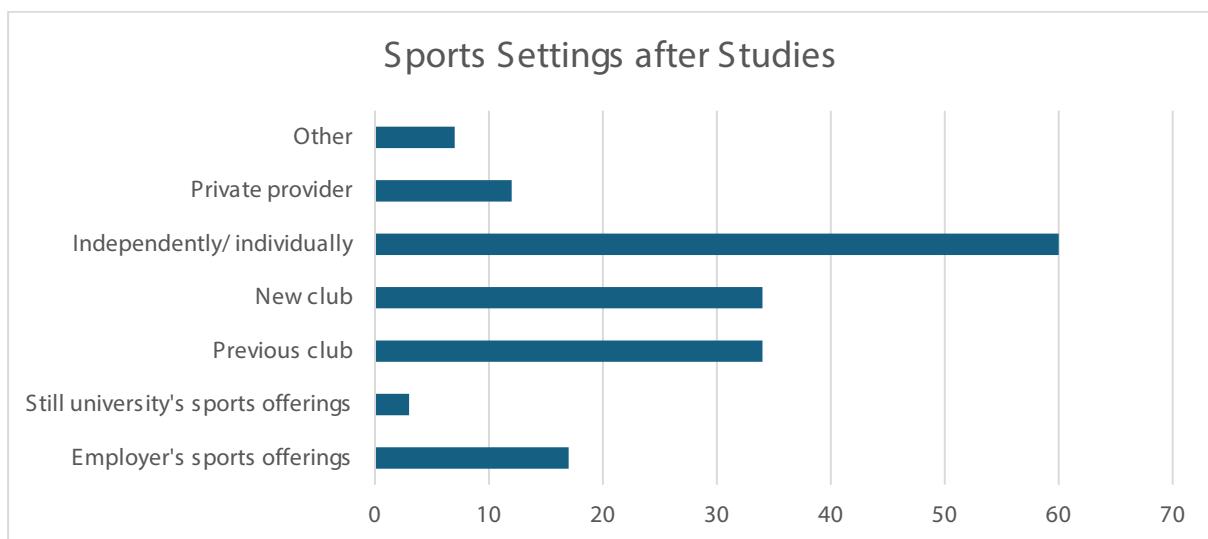
Settings of Sports Engagement

Participants engaged in sports in various settings, including university offerings, private clubs, employer-sponsored activities, and independent or self-directed activities.

Most respondents indicated that during studies their sport engagement was primarily on individual level (30 %), but university sport offerings also played an important role, comprising of over 23 % of engagement of the respondents, followed by engagement in previous clubs (20 %), as well as getting engaged in new clubs (16 %). Private providers and other options were mentioned less significantly, each having just over 5 % responses.

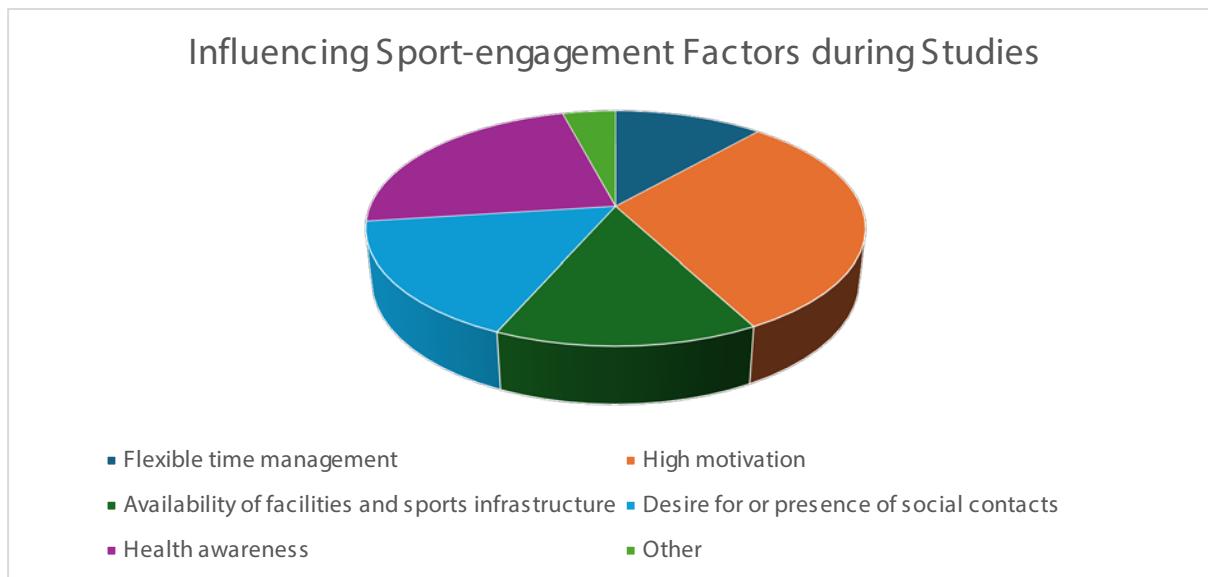


After studies the structure where respondents get engaged in sports changed, as several university sport providers do not cater to alumni, needing to find a new club. The changes also resulted in less engagement and sport dropout, resulting in decrease of sport participation and engagement. Individual engagement is still leading (36 %), followed by new and previous sports club having 20 % share each. But organised sports settings in form of university and also combined with employment sports offering barely reaches 12 % even combined. Private providers and other options also had lesser significance, having between 5 % of responses.



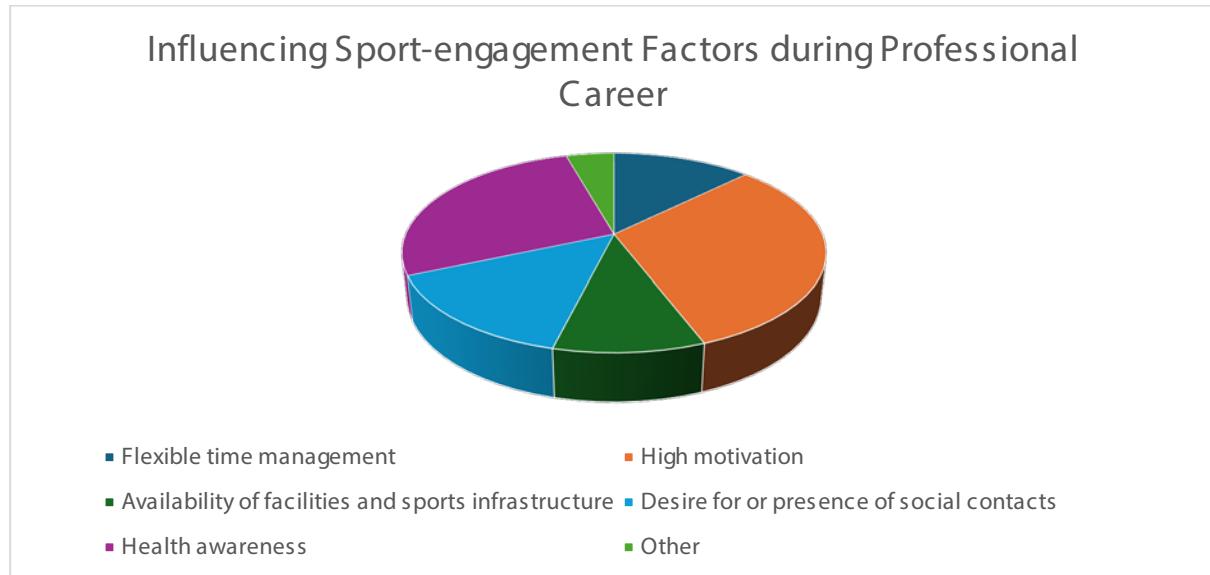
Influencing Factors for Engagement

During studies, high motivation and health awareness are most common recurring motivators for sport engagement, having 31 % and 23 % significance attributed. Desire for social contacts (16 %), availability and accessibility of sports infrastructure (14 %) and flexible time management (12 %) have been identified as secondary factors, while 4 % of respondents selected other influencing sport-engagement factors during their studies.



During the professional career after studies, the sport-engagement factors are very similar. High motivation remains the leading factor (same, 31 %), followed by health

awareness (with a slight increase, 27 %). Desire for social contacts (same, 16 %), flexible time management (with a slight increase, 13 %) and availability and accessibility of sports infrastructure (reduced, 10 %) have been identified as secondary factors, while 4 % of respondents selected other influencing sport-engagement factors in their professional career as well.



Barriers to Participation

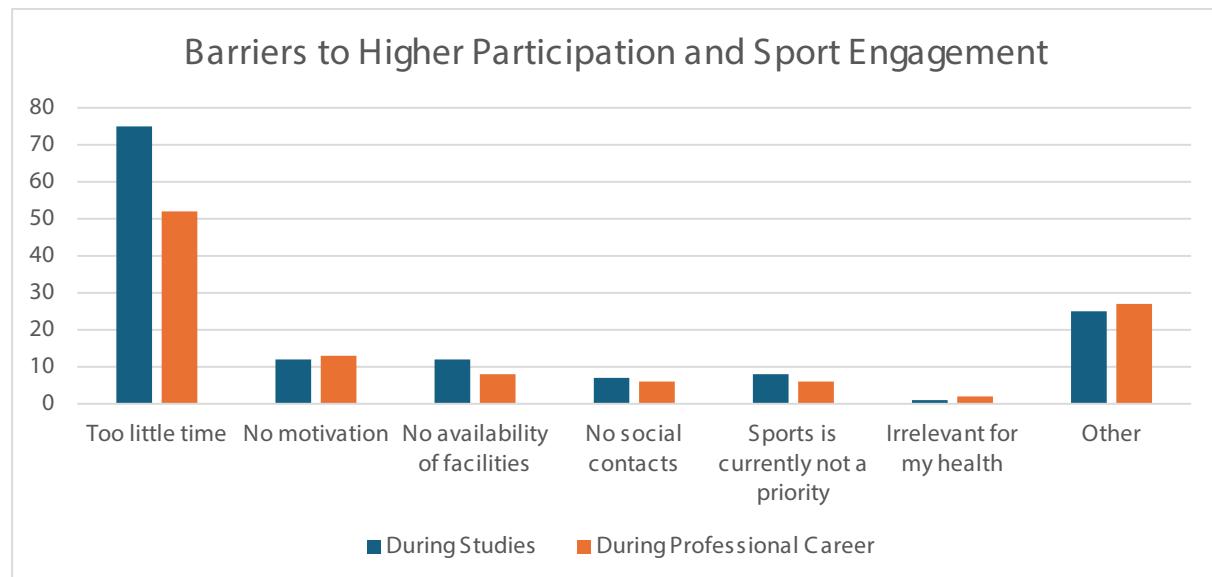
The most common barrier listed was not having enough time, often linked to studies and work afterwards, as well as other personal commitments. The relevance of the factor decreased after the studies, though (53 % to 46 %), likely to signal imbalance and challenges with time management during study period.

Other category was listed as the second most relevant factor, representing about fifth of the answers (18 % during studies, and 24 % during professional career). As this was usually not defined, it is hard to evaluate the specific factors.

Lack of motivation, and insufficient access to infrastructure were the next group of frequently mentioned barriers. During studies, lack of access to facilities (9 %) came prior the factor of not having enough motivation (8 %), while during professional career after studies, this order seems to be switched – lack of motivation (11 %) was identified as a slightly higher barrier than facilities access challenges (7 %).

Respondents indicated additional, but less significant barriers as sport not being priority at the time (6 % during studies, slightly reduced to 5 % afterwards); and not having the right social contacts to be engaged in sport (representing 5 % in both periods).

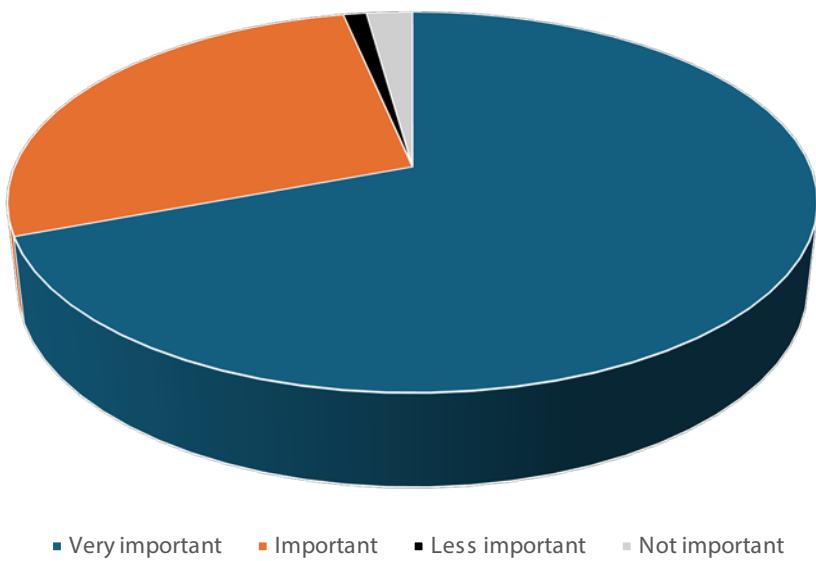
Only a few respondents indicated that sport engagement is irrelevant for their health (about 1 % in both period).



Perceived Importance of Sport

The majority of respondents (69 %) consider sports and an active lifestyle very important or at least important (28 %) value and relevant for their overall well-being. Only a small percentage expressed that sport is less important or not important to them (less than 3 % combined; 1 % and 2 %, respectively).

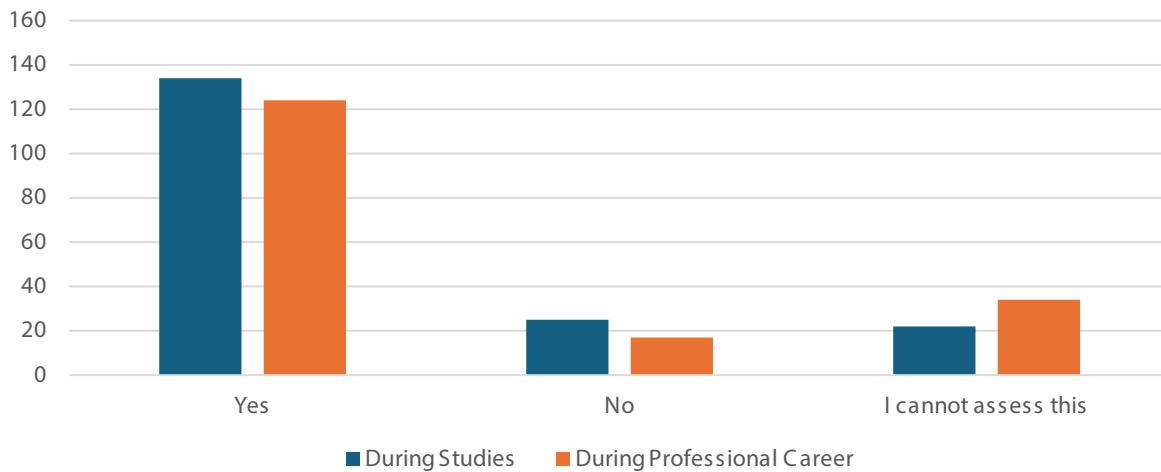
Sport and Active Lifestyle Value



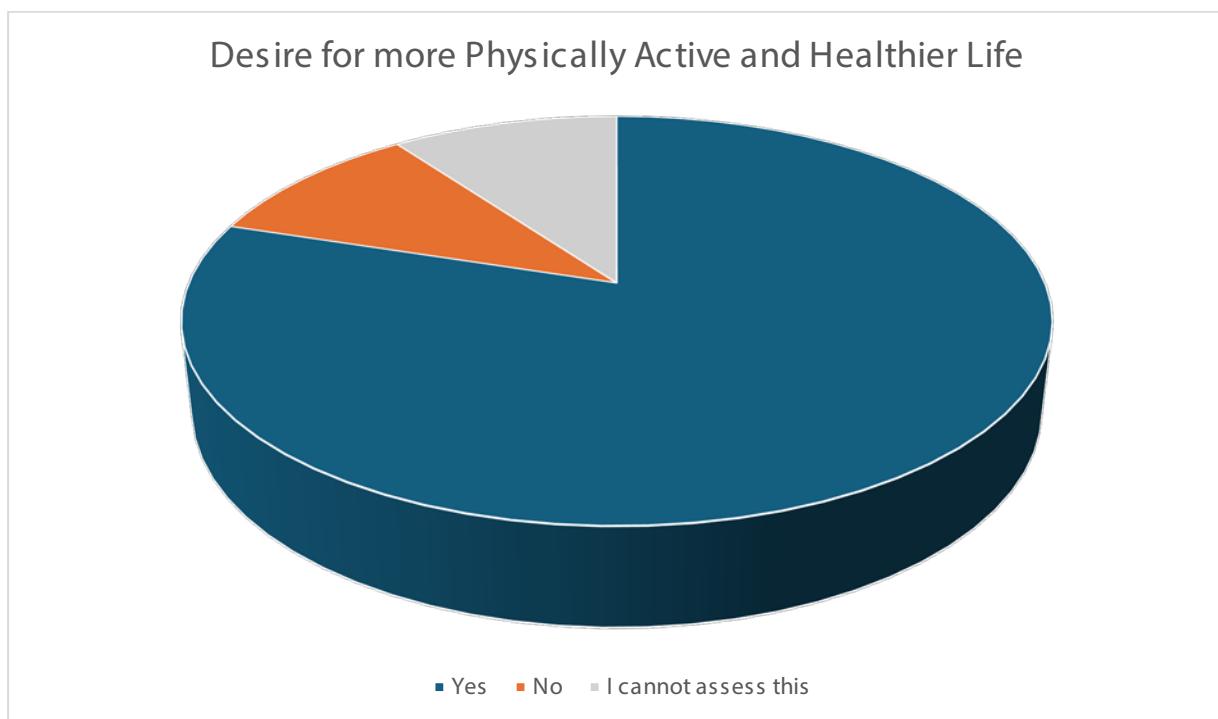
■ Very important ■ Important ■ Less important ■ Not important

Many expressed that they felt physically active and healthy during their studies (74 %), although some reported a decline in activity or health in their professional life (71 %).

Perception of Being Physically Active



There is a strong interest and desire in leading a more physically active and healthier life, supported by 80 % respondents. Such desire was not shared, or people could not assess this was marked by 10 % of responses each.



For the last open question we asked what could their university or employer do to help them lead a more physically active and healthier life. We received feedback from 61 respondents, and their input and suggestions vary.

Almost 20 % of those who gave their input think that the measures by their higher education institutions or employers are sufficient, so no additional action is needed from their side.

Several respondents proposed sport to be an obligatory element in higher education again, and also several respondents expressed the need to make sport financially more accessible, either as free activities or subsidized by the university, employer, city or government.

Some inputs from those still studying mentioned issues of having too many theoretical lectures and not enough practical activities, including sport. Also unbalanced schedules with obligations throughout the day were mentioned as an issue.

We also received some practical advice and suggestions how to support engagement of students and employees during study and work time – by recognising sport engagement and sport activities as part of their study/work obligations, offering facilities at the university or work place to change and shower, offering and supporting participation in sports events, organising or offering free sports activities, encouraging active and

sustainable transport to come to studies or work (like walking, cycling, etc.), covering or subsidising sports memberships, providing external motivation and even obligation to take part in sport activities.

Final Observations and Recommendations

The overall attitude of the survey respondents towards sports is positive, with high motivation, recognizing health benefits and social interaction as key benefits.

The primary challenges are time constraints and infrastructural limitations. There is a clear wish for more flexible scheduling, increased access to sports facilities, and supportive programs from universities and employers. Many respondents value sports highly and recognize its significance for their mental and physical health.

Project partners recommend to improve access to flexible sports programs and infrastructure, especially catering to those with tight schedules, during studies related to the educational programme, and after the studies to work commitments.

Accessibility of activities is important also from financial aspects, so activities should be made available at subsidised rates during but also after studies. Sports activities need to be promoted also from social aspects, to enhance motivation and social contacts.

Awareness about the health benefits of regular physical activity is present, but could be enhanced throughout the educational system, including in higher education, and also after the studies from the employers and other stakeholders.

Furthermore, targeted interventions is needed which addresses time constraints, possibly through shorter, more flexible activities or integrated programs into daily routines.

As decrease of sport engagement and dropout from sport has been observed after the completion of study programmes, higher education institutions are encouraged to either consider offering sports services also to their alumni, or foster cooperation with other stakeholders to promote and support sport engagement also after the study period.

Annex: Survey Questions

To facilitate interpretation of the survey questions, we are listing the questions in English as part of the survey analysis. A set of survey questions in project-related languages (also in French, Latvian, Lithuanian and Slovenian) is or will be made available as a separate output and deliverable, accessible at project website <https://fusion.eusa.eu> and Erasmus+ results platform <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu>.

General Information:

Age: _____

Gender: Male Female Diverse Prefer not to say

Status: Student Employee Other

Field of study: _____

Country of stay: _____

Sports Habits Before Studying:

1. How many hours per week did you actively participate in sports before starting your studies?

0-1 hours

2-3 hours

4-5 hours

6-7 hours

8 or more hours

2. In which sports were you active before starting your studies? (multiple options can be selected)

Team sports

Individual sports

Fitness

Health sports

Outdoor sports

Other _____

Sports Habits During Studies:

3. How many hours per week do you participate or have you actively participated in sports during your studies?

- 0-1 hours
- 2-3 hours
- 4-5 hours
- 6-7 hours
- 8 or more hours

4. In which sports are you or were you active during your studies? (multiple options can be selected)

- Team sports
- Individual sports
- Fitness
- Health sports
- Outdoor sports
- Other _____

5. In what setting do you participate or have you participated in sports during your studies? (multiple options can be selected)

- University's sports offerings
- Previous club
- New club
- Independently/ individually
- Private provider
- Other: _____

Sports Habits After Studies:

6. If you have already completed your studies and are currently in professional life, how many hours per week do you currently actively participate in sports?

- 0-1 hours
- 2-3 hours
- 4-5 hours
- 6-7 hours
- 8 or more hours

7. In which sports are you currently active? (multiple options can be selected)

- Team sports
- Individual sports
- Fitness
- Health sports
- Outdoor sports
- Other: _____

8. In what setting do you participate in sports in your current professional life? (multiple options can be selected)

- Employer's sports offerings
- Still University's sports offerings
- Previous club
- New club
- Independently/ individually
- Private provider
- Other: _____

Influencing Factors

9. What factors influenced your decision to engage in sports during your studies?

(multiple options can be selected)

- Flexible time management
- High motivation
- Availability of facilities and sports infrastructure
- Desire for or presence of social contacts
- Health awareness
- Other: _____

10. What factors influenced your decision not to engage in sports or to engage in less sports during your studies? (multiple options can be selected)

- Too little time
- No motivation
- No availability of facilities
- No social contacts

Sports is currently not a priority

Irrelevant for my health

Other: _____

11. What factors influenced your decision to engage in sports during your professional life? (multiple options can be selected)

Flexible time management

High motivation

Availability of facilities and sports infrastructure

Desire for or presence of social contacts

Health awareness

Other: _____

12. What factors influenced your decision to engage in less or no sports during your professional life? (multiple options can be selected)

Too little time

No motivation

No availability of facilities

No social contacts

Sports is currently not a priority

Irrelevant for my health

Other: _____

General Assessment:

13. How important is sport and an active lifestyle to your overall well-being?

Very important

Important

Less important

Not important

14. Did you feel or do you feel physically active and healthy during your studies?

Yes

No

I cannot assess this

15. Do you currently feel physically active and healthy in your professional life?

- Yes
- No
- I cannot assess this

16. Would you like to lead a more physically active and healthier life?

- Yes
- No
- I cannot assess this

17. Are there things that your university or employer could do to help you lead a more physically active and healthier life, please tell us?

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