

# Educational value of Sport: Promoting motor activity Valore formativo dello Sport: Promuovere l'attività motoria

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DOUBLE BLIND PEER REVIEW

## ABSTRACT

The following work is aimed at the study of the practice of sport as an instrument of social wellbeing, prevention of illnesses and a source of sociability. It aims to offer an interpretative framework of the Italian Constitution and to propose an examination of good practices already existing at national and international level. Examples of good practice include the Dual Career of student athletes. The continuous expansion of the sports movement in general has meant that it has become part of many and varied sectors of society, and consequently, society has also had to adapt to this new reality. It is for this reason that sport has established itself as a component of fundamental importance and no longer placed on the margins of multiple contexts of social interaction.

Il seguente lavoro è rivolto allo studio della pratica sportiva come strumento di benessere sociale, prevenzione delle malattie e fonte di socialità, vuole offrire un quadro interpretativo della normativa della Costituzione italiana e proporre una disamina sulle buone pratica già esistenti a livello nazionale ed internazionale. Tra gli esempi di buona pratica viene proposta la Dual Career degli studenti atleti. Il continuo espandersi del movimento sportivo in generale, ha fatto sì che esso entrasse a far parte in molteplici e variegati settori della società, e di conseguenza, anche quest'ultima si è dovuta adattare a questa nuova realtà. È per questo motivo che lo sport si è affermato come componente di fondamentale importanza e non più messa ai margini di molteplici contesti di interazione sociale.

### KEYWORDS

Sport, health, well-being, regulation, Dual Career  
Sport, salute, benessere, normativa, Dual Career

**Citation:** Maietta, M.C. & Martiniello, L. (2024). Educational value of Sport: Promoting motor activity. *Formazione & insegnamento*, 22(15), 38-45.  
[https://doi.org/10.7346/-feis-XXII-01-24\\_06](https://doi.org/10.7346/-feis-XXII-01-24_06)

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**Conflicts of interest:** The Author(s) declare(s) no conflicts of interest.

**DOI:** [https://doi.org/10.7346/-feis-XXII-01-24\\_06](https://doi.org/10.7346/-feis-XXII-01-24_06)

**Submitted:** March 26, 2024 • **Accepted:** May 13, 2024 • **Published:** December 2, 2024

**Pensa MultiMedia:** ISSN 2279-7505 (online)

## 1. Introduction

The Italian Constitution has recently recognised sport as a universal right; we will look at what has changed. We will analyse how the practice of sport can direct citizenship towards an educational, socio-relational and personal well-being dimension; in this regard, we will discuss Dual Career support as a good practice for a greater diffusion of sport.

The habit of practising motor activity is a behaviour that is learned from childhood and, as such, tends to become an integral part of a person's life or not (Nicolosi, 2015). Scientific works have long since ascertained the contribution of physical activity in the achievement of harmonious individual psychophysical development (Kulinna, 2008), recent research has demonstrated the existence of a favourable correlation between movement and the acquisition of cognitive abilities (Nicolosi et. al., 2016). It therefore seems extremely important to promote movement from an early age and, in this perspective, the school system must play a fundamental role through effective play-motor initiatives (Werner & Burton, 1979). Bearing in mind the fundamentally healthy and social aims of movement activities, both "adapted physical activity" and "structured physical exercise" are to be considered as belonging to the group of physical (and non-sporting) activities. The first definition concerns

"physical exercise programmes, the type and intensity of which are defined by means of professional and organisational integration between general practitioners (GPs), paediatricians of free choice (PFC) and medical specialists and calibrated according to the functional condition of the persons for whom they are intended, who have clinically controlled and stabilised chronic pathologies or physical disabilities and who carry them out in groups under the supervision of a professional with specific skills, in places and structures of a non-healthcare nature, such as 'health gyms', in order to improve the level of physical activity, well-being and quality of life and to encourage socialisation" (*Linee di indirizzo sull'attività fisica*, 2021).

Structured physical exercise, on the other hand, is understood to mean

"planned and repetitive physical activity programmes specifically defined through professional and organisational integration between general practitioners (GPs), paediatricians of free choice (PLS) and medical specialists, on the basis of the clinical condition of the individual subjects for whom they are intended, who present pathologies or health risk factors and who perform them individually under the supervision of a professional with specific skills, in places and facilities of a non-healthcare nature, such as "health gyms", in order to improve or maintain physical fitness, physical performance and state of health". (D.Lgs. 36/2021, Article 2, paragraph 1, letters e – t).

Physical activity has an educational and inclusive value for every person, at every age and in every con-

dition. Sport and movement are understood, in this sense, as a fundamental and functional tool for physical well-being and health, which means "feeling good" and "existing well". Sport undoubtedly has a high social impact, and it has become clear how sport is an expressive manifestation, a lifestyle, a behavioural model and above all a communicative and relational vehicle (Besozzi, 2005).

As a tool for health-enhancing physical activity, the sports movement has more influence than any other: sport attracts people's attention and has a positive image. The undoubted capacity of the sports movement to promote health-enhancing physical activity, however, often remains underutilised and needs to be developed. The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends a minimum of 30 minutes of moderate physical activity (including but not limited to sport) per day for adults and 60 minutes for children. Public authorities and private organisations in the Member States should all contribute to the achievement of this goal, but the most recent studies generally show a lack of noteworthy progress (*White Paper on Sport*, 2007).

Sport can be defined as something extraordinary that goes beyond the mere practice of any physical activity, as it allows one to dream and thus, in concrete terms, to create life projects for adolescents, young people and adults.

Today's world of sport is diverse and open, with the emergence of new games and sporting practices compared to the past, and the presence of lifestyles that allow us to understand the horizons we are moving towards, both as athletes and as citizens. Sport is seen as a means to improve health, but above all, it gives women the opportunity to participate in the cultural and social life of the community, fostering interpersonal relationships, freedom of expression, a greater opportunity for education, and a broadening of useful skills for everyday life. The possibility of women's participation in sporting life challenged all the gender discrimination and stereotypes that had been formed over the years, thus becoming a means of promoting and spreading gender equality and consequently the emancipation of women.

The recent programming of the European Union for the period 2014 – 2020, has once again highlighted the importance of equal gender opportunities, but, in Italy, despite the efforts made, equal opportunities still remain an issue to be resolved, in fact, problems concerning equal gender opportunities also exist in the sports context, suffice it to say that in Italy women are not recognised as professional athletes due to Law 91/1981, which regulates and defines professional sportspeople, including not only athletes, but also coaches, technical staff and trainers, and the rights/duties arising from their employment relationship equated to that of a subordinate worker.

The problem, unfortunately, is that no mention is made of women, who are consequently excluded, and that the law refers to the regulations of CONI (Italian National Olympic Committee) and the sports federations for the distinction between agonists and amateurs. What has been said highlights a real gender discrimination, and as far as team sports are concerned, the difference between men and women is further increased by the disparity in economic treatment,

in fact, with the same discipline, on average, the remuneration for a male athlete is 50% higher than that of a female athlete, which is true as a result of his working relationship being equal to that of a subordinate worker.

Another discriminating point, as far as the employment relationship of female athletes is concerned, is the presence of an anti-maternity clause which favours the legal termination of the contract. In Italy, therefore, work is still being done from a governmental point of view to eliminate this disadvantage for women, while in Europe the athlete - company relationship does not give rise to any problems because the latter was eliminated at birth by not creating any distinction between professional and amateur athletes.

## 2. Italian legislation

The Italian legislation, with D.Lgs 36/2021—implementing the Law 86/2019—in its Article 2 of the decree itself defines physical activity or motor activity as “any movement exerted by the musculoskeletal system that results in an energy expenditure greater than that required in resting conditions”, which is different from the concept of sport, which is identified with

“any form of physical activity based on respect for rules that, through organised or unorganised participation, has as its objective the expression or improvement of physical and psychic condition, the development of social relationships or the achievement of results in competitions of all levels”. (D.Lgs 36/2021, Article 2).

The legislation also speaks of high-level sport, i.e. “sporting activity performed by athletes recognised as high-level by the National Sporting Federation by the Associated Sporting Discipline or by the relevant law”. Sport enters into the Constitution of the Italian Republic as one of the values protected by the Charter. The Chamber of Deputies definitively and unanimously approved the proposed constitutional law that inserts the protection of sport into the Constitution, with 312 yes votes. The measure had already received the green light from the Senate at second reading (170 yes, 1 abstained) on 17 May and at first reading on 13 December 2022 (145 yes, 4 abstained).

There had already been unanimous approval in the Chamber of Deputies on 4 April. The text consisted of a single provision that added to Article 33 of the Constitution, where art and science are mentioned, “The Republic recognises the educational, social and promotional value of sporting activity in all its forms for psychophysical well-being” (Legge Costituzionale 1/2023). In the original text, effective as of 1948, the Constitution contained no references to sporting activity (Costituzione della Repubblica Italiana, 1947). The only circumscribed references to sport in sources of constitutional rank were provided for by two special Statutes: that of Trentino-Alto Adige, which assigns to concurrent legislative power the subject “sporting and recreational activities with the relative facilities and equipment”; that of Friuli-Venezia Giulia,

which assigns to primary regional legislative power the subject “sporting institutions”.

With the reform of Title V of the Constitution, carried out in 2001, sport entered into the Constitution, albeit for the limited purposes of the division of legislative competences between the State and the Regions: in fact, Article 117, paragraph 3 lists “sports organisation” among the subjects of concurrent competence (Legge Costituzionale 3/2001). In the last legislature there had already been an attempt to pass the constitutional law: it was approved on first and second reading in the Senate, and only on first reading in the Chamber of Deputies, where it did not complete its process due to the early dissolution of the Chambers.

The choice of the verb “recognises” recalls the linguistic formula of Article 2 of the Charter, hinting at the vision of sporting activity as a “pre-existing” reality, which the Republic is called upon to acknowledge, while offering it protection and promotion. The content of sporting activity, then, is declined along three complementary lines. The *educational value*, linked to the development and training of the person; the *social value*: sport often represents a factor of aggregation and an instrument of inclusion for people in conditions of disadvantage or marginality of various kinds: socio-economic, ethnic-cultural or physical-cognitive. The correlation of sport with health is undeniable, especially in its most modern conception of the person’s integral psycho-physical well-being. The formula according to which the value of sporting activity “in all its forms” is recognised appears to be intended, moreover, to make it clear that the provision embraces sport in its broadest sense. Looking at the charters of the twenty-seven EU Member States, provisions on sport are present in nine legal systems: Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Spain.

Thus in “second-generation”, or “young” constitutions, which are affected by the sensitivities of the historical and cultural contexts in which they were adopted. Sometimes it is a genuine “right to sport” (in Portugal), often a promotional activity on the part of the public authorities (Bulgaria, Croatia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Spain, Hungary), defined in the case of Greece as a fundamental mission of the State. Sometimes it is linked to the protection of health (Bulgaria, Poland, Spain), in others to the protection of young people (Romania, partly Poland), in others still it takes on an autonomous position (Portugal). As reported on the Chamber’s website, “the wording of the proposal reflects the substantially homogeneous contents of the numerous texts deposited. The main aspect of differentiation was the choice of subject matter location.

The inclusion in Article 33 prevailed over the alternative hypotheses of Articles 9 and 32. On the one hand, in fact, it was preferred not to intervene on the fundamental principles, on the other hand, Article 33 was considered the most suitable location, due to its broader content (art, science, education, high culture). The preceptive scope of the provision should also be emphasised. “The choice of the verb *recognises* recalls the linguistic formula of Article 2 of the Charter”, considering “sporting activity as a “pre-existing” reality, which the Republic is called upon to ack-

knowledge, offering it protection and promotion". That which "emerges" is essentially the educational value linked to the development and formation of the person. Sport as a factor of aggregation and an instrument of integration. The link with health, understood in its most modern sense as the integral psychophysical well-being of the person, rather than the mere absence of disease". Art. 33 states:

"Art and science are free[,] and teaching is free. The Republic lays down the general rules on education and establishes state schools for all levels and grades. Entities and private individuals have the right to establish schools and educational establishments at no cost to the State. In establishing the rights and obligations of non-state schools that apply for parity, the law must guarantee them full freedom and their pupils equal treatment at school with that of pupils in state schools. A state examination is prescribed for admission to or completion of the various orders and grades of schools and for qualification for professional practice. Institutions of high culture, universities and academies, have the right to give themselves autonomous regulations within the limits established by the laws of the State" (Costituzione della Repubblica Italiana, 1947, Article 33).

The new Constitutional Law adds:

"The Republic recognises the educational, social and psychophysical wellbeing-promoting value of sporting activity in all its forms" (Legge Costituzionale 1/2023, Article 1, section 1).

### 3. Analysis of the "Sport 2023 Report"

According to the Sport Institute in its annual "Sport 2023 Report", which is a system research on the sport sector, based on the criteria of the European Union, it reports that the sport sector, after having suffered economic damage from the Covid 19 pandemic and the energy crisis, is now on the upswing and capable of generating around 22 billion euros, with a contribution to the national GDP of 1.3% with a large incidence at the employment level in fact it has 400 thousand employees and 15 thousand private companies and 82 thousand bodies. The "Sport 2023 Report" presented in association with Sport and Health is a systemic survey that aims to highlight the great potential of the sports industry, not only considering GDP but also the demand for sports practice, the state of the national facility stock and the impact dimension of sport; the Sport Report is therefore a tool and a support for sports policies because it reports the reference information base for determining the economic and social value of the sports industry as it uses complete data respective to the methodological framework recommended by the European Commission. This work ratifies the collaboration between ICS (SCI sports credit institution) and Sport and Health for the development of the territories and the wellbeing of citizens through the promotion and support of sports practice. These values are now recognised by the Ita-

lian Constitution, which from 20 September 2023 recognises, in its Article 33, "the educational and social value and promotion of psychophysical wellbeing of sporting activity in all its forms" (Legge Costituzionale 1/2023).

Certainly, it is necessary to point out the negative points that concern above all the sports infrastructures in Italy, mostly located in the north of the country, mostly built in the 1970s and 1980s and not very sustainable on an economic and environmental level; in the south there are about 26% of facilities; However, these negativities could represent the starting point of an improvement, orienting interventions towards the green and digital transaction, also making the infrastructures more efficient and attractive to a wider public, which would also mean combating the state of sedentariness that in Italy has reached more than 38 million people, who do not practice any kind of motor activity.

Only a quarter of the population takes part in sporting activity on an ongoing basis. Data from the *Rapporto Sport 2023* (2024) also show that 27% of the population exercises at least once a week compared to the European average of 44%. (*Rapporto Sport 2023*, 2024). Analysing the "Report on the Indicators of Equitable and Sustainable Well-being 2024" (also known as the BES report) edited by the "Economic and Financial Analysis and Research Directorate of the Department of the Treasury", which describes the evolution of the state of well-being of the country, through 12 indicators: gross disposable income per capita; income inequality; absolute poverty; healthy life expectancy from birth; excess weight; early exit from the education system; non-participation in employment; employment of mothers with pre-school children; CO2 emissions; civil justice efficiency; predatory crime index; and building abuse. We will focus on indicators 4 and 5, i.e. those concerning health (*Relazione sugli Indicatori di Benessere Equo e Sostenibile 2024*, 2024).

Excess weight shows substantial stability resulting from an increase to 0.3 % for women and - 0.2 % points for men. It is estimated that in the period 2023 - 2026 after the first period of increase in excess weight in 2023, a steady decline will follow. This could be due to accelerating inflation of cheaper but less healthy and more caloric foodstuffs. In the later years of the period, disposable income is expected to change positively and become more stable as inflation slows down (ISTAT, 2024).

Excess weight is defined by the WHO on the basis of BMI (Body Mass Index). BMI classifies individuals into categories: underweight (BMI < 18.5), normal weight (18.5 < BMI < 24.9), overweight (25.0 < BMI < 29.9), obese class I (30.0 < BMI < 34.9), obese class II (35.0 < BMI < 39.9), obese class III (BMI > 40.0).

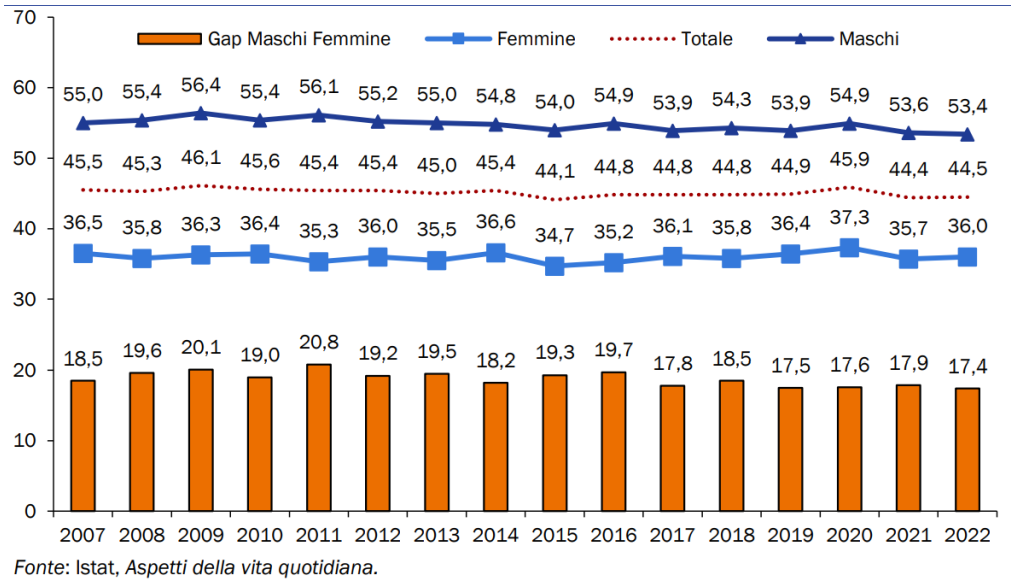


Figure 1. Population aged 18 and over in standardised excess weight and gender breakdown (percentage values) (ISTAT, 2024)

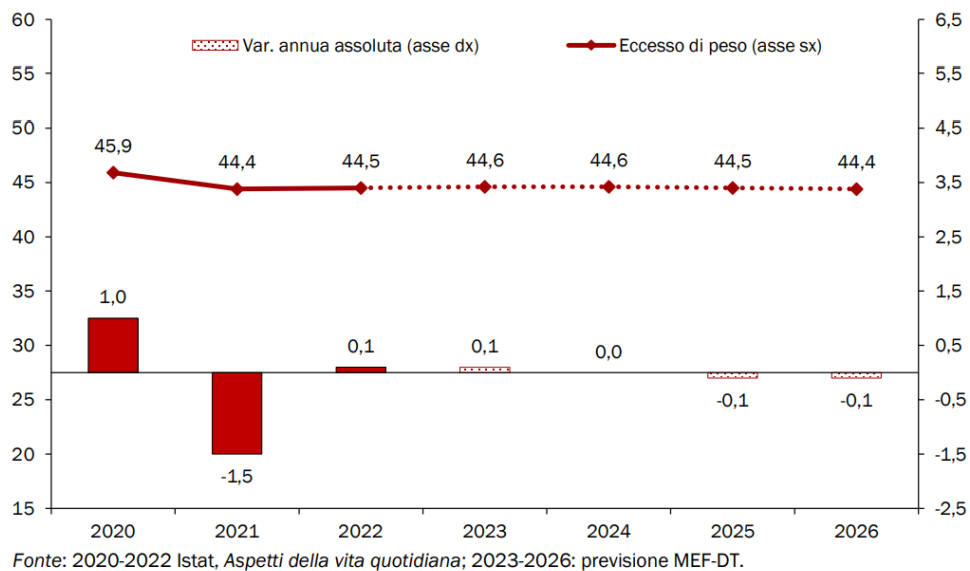


Figure 2. Population aged 18 and over in excess weight with relative forecasts (ISTAT, 2024)

In *Figure 2*, we can see that in 2023 a marginal increase in excess weight is estimated, while in 2025-2026 a marginal decrease in the indicator is expected.

Through the observation of ISTAT data, the Italian institute that deals with statistics, concerning excess weight, the need to encourage programmes aimed at the implementation of sporting practice is evident; in this work we have chosen to speak of Dual Career.

#### 4. Promotion of sport through Dual Career

Promoting the practice of sport today also means supporting those who already practise it and those who make a living from it, we are talking in particular about student athletes and high-level athletes recognised by their respective Federations. The Ministry of Education, Universities and Research, through the programmatic strategy of the so-called school autonomy,

provides that each individual school can illustrate in the POF (Educational Offer Plan) “the instruments of internal and external flexibility intended to promote the full development of pupils’ personalities and to enhance their potential.

(DPR 275/1999, Article 4).

A talent-oriented school (Margiotta 2018) is one that matures the awareness that teaching goals centred on the enhancement of individuality must be introduced into the curriculum, just as the teacher’s intervention in managing them with a certain educational wisdom is indispensable in everyday teaching. The logic to switch to is that all learners have, in a certain sense, special educational needs that must be recognised and treated within the school system. A school that follows the educational model of talent formation is one that, then, refers to customised teaching strategies and differentiated educational pathways that are tailored to the potential and needs of

each individual. In support of Dual Careers, the *EU guidelines on dual careers of athletes* (European Commission & KADA, 2013) were approved in Europe in 2012 by MIM (Ministry of Education and Merit), CONI (Italian National Olympic Committee), CIP (Italian Paralympic Committee) CUSI (Italian University Sports Centre) ANDISU (National Association for the Right to University Studies), and CRUI (Italian University Rectors Conference). As of 2018 on the UNISPORT website—i.e. the network of the Italian national university sports system—it is possible to evaluate the offer of Dual Career programmes in Italy by consulting existing programmes at the numerous public and private Italian universities. In several Italian regions on the portal of each individual university, it is possible via the intended link to consult the 35 programmes available. Telematic universities also support dual career programmes, thanks to the very nature of online universities, which offer distance learning and provide students with qualified tutors. The objective and basis of the Dual Career programme is sporting success and the protection of the rights of the athlete, understood as a person, with needs and requirements to be respected and guaranteed. The programme, according to the European Guidelines, is activated from the moment an athlete is recognised as a talented athlete with the potential to develop an elite career, in other words able to obtain a professional contract with a sports organisation or employer (European Commission & KADA, 2013). Providing support to athletes through Dual Career means activating a customised programme, tailor-made for the individual, building not only a sports programme, but above all a programme and a life project. Analysing the various university programmes supporting the Dual Career, we find various facilities including: diploma supplement, sports facilities and accommodation, flexibility of lessons and examinations, university credits and extra points, possibility of suspending studies for periods of time, tuition fee reductions with scholarships, platform-based tuition. With reference to secondary school, for example, in 2013, an agreement between the Ministry of Education and the Italian National Olympic Committee (CONI) established the Sports-oriented high schools, which aim to enhance sports culture in secondary school (DPR 52/2013). And again, Law 107/2015 identified, among the priority educational objectives, the protection of the right to study of students practising competitive sport (Law 107/2015, Article 1, paragraph 7). This protection takes place through the compilation of a customised educational plan in which the class council participates and is shared with the sports tutor from outside the school; Paralympic student athletes can also benefit from this tool even though they already have the Individualised Educational Plan provided for by Law 104/1992 for students with disabilities or even students who already use a Customised Educational Plan resulting from support for students with learning difficulties, protected by Law 170/2010. The Transversal Skills and Orientation Tracks can also be included in the project in order to reconcile the sports activities practised by high-level students with the school-to-work alternation activities. As far as teaching methodology is concerned, particular attention is paid to cooperative learning, the e-learning delivery method, the use of

sharing platforms and simultaneous work is favoured, but also the possibility of following lessons in asynchronous mode. Fundamental are the teaching practices of peer education, the Flipped Classroom, Cooperative Learning.

Ultimately, it is through networking that it is intended to give talented athletes the opportunity to combine their sporting career with study/work without unreasonable effort and in a flexible manner, so as not to compromise their sporting and educational career goals; it is in relation to the above that the concept of dual careers in sport fits into the broader framework of achieving the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy, such as preventing school and university drop-outs, increasing the number of university graduates, raising European employability rates and supporting and developing individual talents, including in sport. The Life Project, especially for disabled athletes, is a guide to living one's life according to one's needs, interests, characteristics and talents. It has an individual basis and then opens up to the community, to the social sphere, it extends over the vast horizon of life, and it is therefore essential, in planning, to seek and establish educational alliances to ensure the Global Development of the Person. The Life Project is a pedagogical approach according to which each person plans his/her own life, understands what he/she can become and be by experiencing and redesigning him/herself along the way. A Life Project is composed of a series of proposals aimed at the realisation of the Individual in awareness of his/her potential and limitations. It must be prepared by adopting a global vision of the person in consideration of his or her needs, peculiarities, feelings and, above all, uniqueness (Nigris, 2018). The overall development of the person, their integral promotion, is the motive and goal of all human beings, always, without exception. It follows that such a path cannot be designed extemporaneously, but requires an educational, scientific and concrete reflection that takes into account the different figures surrounding the athlete, which is the fulcrum around which the programme revolves (Yale, 2020). Therefore, Dual Career is fundamental to the integrated development of individual athletes in sport, education and employment in the post-sports career. In the school context, Law 107/2015 identified, among the priority educational objectives, the protection of the right to study of students practising competitive sports (Law 107/2015, Article 1, paragraph 7). In implementation of the provisions of Article 1, paragraph 7, letter 'g' concerning the right to study of student-athletes on 24 July 2015, the Italian Football League Serie A presented the "WebSport 3.60" Project to the Directorate General for School Regulations in order to reduce the school dropout of student-athletes. The first year the experimentation involved the student-athletes of the Lega Calcio Serie A, then it was taken up by the MIUR (Ministry of University and Research), which with Ministerial Decree No. 935/2015 extended it to student-athletes of all sports disciplines, starting an experimentation for the three-year period 2015 – 2018 with the aim of "identifying actions aimed at providing educational support to school institutions that have, among their enrolled students engaged in competitive sports activities" (MIUR, 2015). In the 2021 – 2022 school year, 1,974 schools participa-

ted in the experimental project with 27,577 students, of which 124 were involved in Paralympic sports. The regions with the highest number of participating students were Lombardy with 18%, Lazio with 13% and Emilia-Romagna with 11% of the total. The schools with the highest incidence are: scientific high schools with 36%, technical high schools with 26% and sports-oriented high schools with 14%. Analysing the sports aspect, the largest number of applications came from athletes registered with the FIGC (Federazione Italiana Giuoco Calcio), followed by the FIP (Federazione Italiana Pallacanestro), the FIN (Federazione Italiana Nuoto), the FIPAV (Federazione Italiana Pallavolo) and the FIDAL (Federazione Italiana Atletica Leggera), which together account for over 60% of the total. (MIUR 2022).

## 5. Conclusions

Sport plays a fundamental role in the lives of all people through the many bodily experiences, in the various contexts of everyday life, people can become aware of their bodies and make the most of these abilities. The practice of sporting activity inevitably entails respect for the values inherent in sport. The relationship between sport and the educational and social growth of a young athlete is by no means obvious and simple, in fact, certain social and cultural criticalities must be overcome, such as the idea of sport exclusively in terms of competitive, technological and profit-making purposes, or in some cases discriminatory, as in the case of women not recognised as competitive athletes by law, or of persons with disabilities. Constant physical exercise should be considered an effective tool for prevention and treatment, but we cannot delegate only health specialists to disseminate the culture of movement. In support of the fundamental value of physical and psychic health, the Italian government has recently legislated to support the implementation and protection of a physical culture; the educational and social values of sport are now also taken into account to a greater extent in the light of data on the health status of citizens. This increased focus on the correlation of physical activities and bio-psycho-social wellbeing is expected to lead to a marked improvement in the currently negative values regarding excess weight, values that were examined by the "Sport 2023 Report". At school and academic level, important steps have been taken by promoting and disseminating the good practice of dual-career support programmes, which sanction the recognition of the fundamental values of sport and health and also prevent dropping out of school or a sporting career.

Dual-career programmes aim to improve the wellbeing of student athletes, help them achieve sporting goals and scholastic objectives; they also foster the careers of students with disabilities who can count on practical, economic and psychological support. Infrastructure and sports facilities in particular need to be improved on a national level, and a fairer distribution of funds for the modernisation and creation of new sports and health venues is therefore hoped for.

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