

ATHLETES4SOCIETY PROJECT

EMPOWERING THE PUBLIC VALUE OF SPORT THROUGH ATHLETES AS ROLE MODELS

**RESULTS REPORT:
EUROPEAN ATHLETES4SOCIETY CHALLENGE**

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This report would not have been there without the contribution of the Athletes4Society consortium.
Thank you!



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WORK PACKAGE 5

STIMULATING THE PUBLIC VALUE OF SPORT



1. SETUP OF THE 'EUROPEAN ATHLETES4SOCIETY CHALLENGE'

1.1 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Over the past decade, sport policy research (e.g., De Rycke & De Bosscher, 2019) illustrates that there is no longer any doubt about the societal impact that elite sports brings. Consequently, a trend is seen of sport organisations being more interested in actively managing their societal impact (Taks et al., 2015). Unfortunately, despite this interest, sport organisations often lack the inspiration or capacity to do so (Taks et al., 2015). It remains difficult to develop successful practices or campaigns that exploit the potential leveraging power of athletes for their sport and society (Grix & Carmichael, 2012). Therefore, there is a clear need for inspiration and peer-learning (Backer, 2001; Blumenthal, 2003). Hence, with the European **Athletes4Society challenge**, the Athletes4Society project **launched an open call** to athletes and sport organisations (e.g., sport federations, Olympic committees) in Europe to reveal their programme and **inspire others** to develop a programme collaborating with athletes as role models for a positive societal purpose.

The goal of the Athletes4Society challenge was twofold. The first objective was to **stimulate** sport organisations to **develop an athlete role model campaign or programme** with a positive societal value. The Athletes4Society toolkit – developed in an earlier project phase – was provided to help sport organisations in developing such a campaign and programme. The toolkit provides concrete examples of inspirational practices as well as a practical set of guidelines, recommendations and a programme logic which identifies the key components and mechanisms of athlete role model programmes. The second objective included helping sport organisations in **creating more awareness** regarding the societal problem they tackle with their project, to **create a bigger reach** for their project and to **award them for their efforts** made for society.

To achieve the above-described objectives, the Athletes4Society consortium created an **interactive online platform** which provides an open educational resource (OER) for project partners, sport organisations, and elite athletes to exchange ideas. The interactive, open-access online platform provided an ideal tool to widely promote the (participants of the) Athletes4Society challenge. To emphasize the international nature of the challenge, the OER was designed in English. Nevertheless, to make sure that language was not a barrier in potential participation, materials participants had to deliver in the context of the challenge could be delivered in the participant's native language. The project partners ensured an English alternative was provided for the OER (e.g., English subtitles were added to a Polish video).

1.2 PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

In order to reach a diverse, European-wide community of relevant participants in the challenge, participant recruitment included:

- Announcement of the challenge on the interactive, open-access online platform;
- Announcement of the challenge on the Athletes4Society social media channels;
- Wide promotion of the Athletes4Society challenge by the project partners via their own communication channels (e.g., website, social media);
- Personal communication by project partners to potential participants within their network.



2. LAUNCH OF THE 'EUROPEAN ATHLETES4SOCIEY CHALLENGE'

The launch of the Athletes4Society challenge (A4S) Challenge took place on the ninth of February 2023 in Portugal, Cascais during our third Athletes4Society Multiplier Sports Event (MSE). The MSE included an international conference covering following main topics: 'research on the impact of elite sport on society', 'managing the social impact of elite sport: necessary steps and good practices' and 'challenges and opportunities for social impact of elite sport'. The conference was held for athletes, sport organisations (e.g., sport federations) and students who were interested in the topic 'Athletes4Society'.

Before the A4S Challenge was officially launched at the end of the MSE, the whole procedure of the A4S Challenge was presented to the audience. First, the audience was informed about the timings of the A4S challenge. The A4S Challenge would start at the ninth of February 2023, the application window would end at the 28th of April, and the finalization of the A4S challenge was planned on the first of May 2023. Second, the specific goal of the A4S Challenge was clarified: *to develop a programme that leverages athletes as role models for a positive societal purpose and to help participants to get more awareness of their programme*. Subsequently, the scope of the challenge was clarified. Concretely, it was explained that the A4S Challenge was for both already existing programmes who might want to create a bigger reach for their programme, as well as for new programmes who want to contribute to the impact of elite sport on society. Next, the two assignments participants had to provide were demonstrated:

- Assignment 1 – Video
Participants were asked to create a video of a maximum of two minutes, where the programme was explained or showed. This could be done by showing the role the athlete would have and/or examples of already implemented programmes.
- Assignment 2 – Infographic
Participants had to create an infographic where the contents of their programme were displayed in a visual and attractive way (see Figures 1, 2, and 3 for examples).



Figure 1
Infographic A4S challenge participant 'Don't Break the Game'

IMPACT THROUGH ATHLETES AS ROLE MODELS



GOAL

“TO PREPARE ATHLETES TO BE SOCIETAL ROLE MODELS”

Elite athletes are increasingly expected to be socially engaged and active. However, do they actually want to be socially engaged and more importantly, how and for what social issues?

In this programme, athletes explore their own societal identity, mission and vision. We don't talk **about** them, but **with** them. For which societal issues are they willing to go the extra mile? This prepares them to really make a difference in society. As an athlete, role model or even as a societal entrepreneur.

PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES



Awareness

Raising awareness about the value of sport to society and the possible role of the athlete in it. In this session several examples, tips and advice are provided.



Creation

During an interactive session athletes will develop their own personal societal identity card.



Development

In this phase, athletes will further develop their personal story based on their 'societal identity card'. Athletes know better what they stand for (social mission).



Skills

There is room for active and interactive practice with an expert. Athletes learn to communicate their story in the best possible way. They gain various skills and abilities.

PROCES



RESULTS



All the athletes report having found a societal theme that fits them well.



8 out of 10 athletes state that as a result of this program they can now communicate their story well and concisely.

Get in touch about this program? aukje@more2win.com

Figure 2

Infographic A4S challenge participant 'More2Win'



Figure 3
Infographic A4S challenge participant 'I run for pure fun'

After presenting the assignments, the procedure of applying for the A4S Challenge was shown. The participants who were interested in applying for the A4S Challenge could fill in a registration form on the A4S website (Figure 4), which would be reviewed within a week after applying for the A4S Challenge. This review verified the participant met the inclusion criteria, being relevance of the participant's programme in the context of 'Athletes4Society', and being able to fulfil the assignments. If inclusion criteria were met, participants received a message that they were officially participating in the A4S Challenge. All important information for participating in the Challenge would be included in this message.

Information on how participants could win the A4S Challenge was presented as well. On the A4S website, a voting system would be set-up to enable 'fans' to vote for their favourite programme. Next to this, all participants would be shown on the A4S social media channels, at which people could 'like' posts of their favourite programme. After the end of the A4S challenge, the top five participants with the most votes cross-platform would be evaluated by an expert panel to award a winner. This expert panel existed of eight persons, one member of each partner of the A4S consortium.

After presenting the timings, goal, content, and procedure, it was time to officially launch the A4S Challenge by publishing social media posts on the A4S social media channels (Instagram and LinkedIn respectively; See Figure 5). At the same time, the application procedure on the A4S website was published online for participants. Dissemination of the launch of the A4S Challenge was promoted by supplying QR-codes on screen at the MSE which led to the A4S social media channels. Both the A4S consortium partners and the audience were encouraged to scan the QR-code, to like and to share the posts regarding the A4S Challenge to create an as wide and diverse as possible reach for informing relevant organisations and possible participants.

Athletes 4 Society Challenge Registration form

Please fill in this registration form completely.

First Name *

Last Name *

Email Address *

Who are you? *

Azwite

Member of an organisation

Other

Please specify if you chose 'Other':

Please provide the name of the organisation if you chose 'Member of an organisation':

Is your idea or project an existing practice? *

Yes

No

In the next box you can explain your idea or project. Please provide us with the name and the goal of the project. What is the target group and reach of the project? What athletes will be participating and what role do they have? *

Figure 4
Registration form for the Athletes4Society Challenge

Athletes4Society
154 followers
2m +

🎯 Make an impact on society together with your athletes!
👉 Want to create a bigger reach for your project?

👉 **Join the Athletes 4 Society Challenge!**

With this challenge we launch an open call to all athletes, sport federations or sport organisations in Europe to reveal their programme and inspire others to develop a programme collaborating with athletes as role models for a positive societal purpose.

👉 The challenge will, amongst others, help you to get more awareness, award you for your efforts made for society!

JOIN THE CHALLENGE HERE: <http://inkd.io/gprow/1704>

#Athletes4society #SPUSS #Erasmusplusport #Euprojects #rolemodels #publicvalue #empowering

Kinetic Analysis SPUSS Vrije Universiteit Brussel Universiteit Utrecht Sport Evolution Alliance Kenniscentrum Sport & Beweging Institute for Sport Governance Helsingin yliopisto KIHU - Finnish Institute of High Performance Sport KIHU Český olympijský tým Blendi & respond!

ATHLETES 4 SOCIETY

Figure 4
Example of the Social Media post that was being shared by all consortium partners on their social networks



3. PARTICIPANTS OF THE 'EUROPEAN ATHLETES4SOCIEY CHALLENGE'

A total of 16 European participants applied for the A4S Challenge. Of these participants, two were new projects (Poland = 1, the Netherlands = 1) and 14 were already existing projects (Belgium = 1, Finland = 2, Poland = 5, Portugal = 2, the Netherlands = 4).

After reviewing the participants on the inclusion criteria, six participants were excluded due to not being able to fulfil the assignments (N = 5) or applying after the deadline of the application window (N = 1).

The 10 programmes included as participants of the Athletes4Society (A4S) Challenge were 'Sportaround' (Belgium), 'Don't Break The Game' (Finland), 'Soni Foundation' (Poland), 'I run for pure fun' (Poland), 'Route 66 Project' (Poland), 'Sport Against Match Fixing' (Portugal), '4 Me 4 All' (Portugal), 'More2Win' (the Netherlands), 'Pest mij maar' (the Netherlands), and 'Smartpool' (the Netherlands). All included programmes were already existing projects.

See figure 6 for an overview of these participants across Europe.

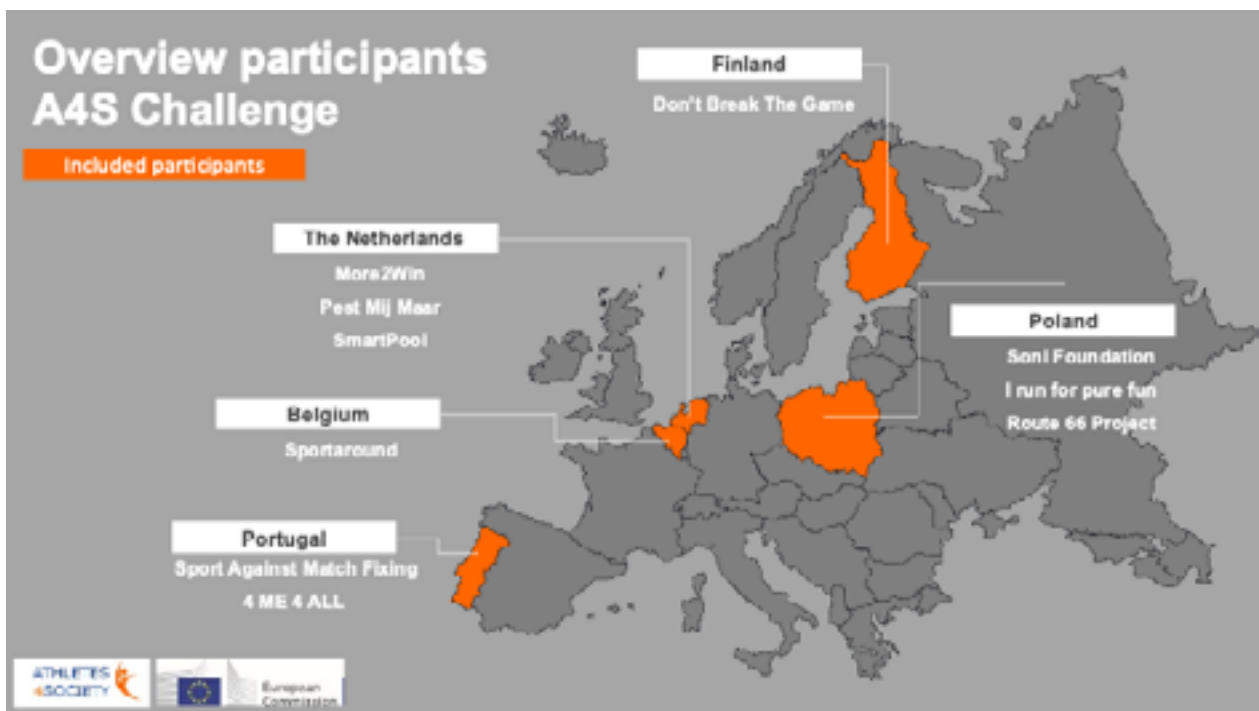


Figure 6
Overview of the included participants of the Athletes4Society Challenge across Europe

In the following section, a more detailed overview of each participant will be presented in random order.

3.1 SPORTAROUND (BE)

Sportaround wants to give everyone the opportunity to develop through sport and exercise. Sportaround was founded in 2012 in Ghent by Bashir Abdi and Bert Mispion. During sports afternoons, they got children from vulnerable neighborhoods to exercise. In the meantime, the organisation provides after-school sports at almost 50 schools, are on squares with a sports cart in the summer months, offer neighborhood sports camps and have developed a variety of low-threshold sports activities and events (e.g., basketball training, half marathon, outdoor play day).



After the success of the first years, Sportaround is now broadening its focus. After all, children still find their way to regular sports clubs too little. Sportaround advises sports clubs, federations and organisations on a threshold-lowering effect. All this is financed with a mix of own resources, subsidies, voluntary work and fundraising. They also like to be part of local projects and temporary implementations to give them a sporty approach.

Coordinator Bert Mispion: *“We notice that children from vulnerable home situations often do not get into a sporty leisure activity and try to get them to exercise and adopt a healthy lifestyle. Sport is also a very suitable means of integration, not only for the children but also for our volunteers. Mario, who fled the war in Syria, learned Dutch in Ghent and studied at Ghent university. With great pleasure he now gives basketball training to children from the Moscouwijk.”*

Website: <https://sportaround.be/>

3.2 DON'T BREAK THE GAME (FI)

“DON'T BREAK THE GAME” (Älä riko urheilua) is a campaign launched by The Finnish League for Human Rights (Ihmisoikeusliitto) highlighting human rights issues in sports. The campaign started in November 2021 and is still ongoing. The core message of “Don't Break the Game” is that human rights belong at the heart of sports. With their goal of reaching equal opportunities for people with disabilities, protection of children's rights, gender equality, systematic action against racism, violence, and harassment, they want to put an end to the discrimination of sexual and gender minorities and human rights guidelines and encourage the implementation of those guidelines in sports international governing bodies.

The primary target groups are athletes, coaches, fans, parents, and especially people and actors in positions of power and leadership within sport. To reach those target groups, eight well-known athletes were invited to be spokespeople for the campaign: Tim Sparv, Kiira Korpi, Shawn Huff, Amanda Kotaja, Awak Kuier, Senni Salminen, Linda Sällström, and Aapeli Räsänen. Among them are national team captains, national record holders, and medalists in World and European championships and the Paralympic Games.

The athletes have raised human rights issues in media interviews and social media. They have also been invited to draft and sign joint public statements with Ihmisoikeusliitto on different human rights themes. Their activism was vital to attracting attention to the campaign and highlighting the responsibility of authorities and sport's governing bodies to guarantee that human rights are protected at all levels of sports.

Website: <https://alarikourheilua.fi/en/>



3.3 SONI FOUNDATION (PL)

The goal of the Soni Foundation was to optimise the participation of athletes with intellectual disabilities in the VIRTUS Global Games, which took place in June (4-10) 2023 in Vichy (France).



Due to the lack of funding for this type of projects from public funds, the total cost related to participation in the competition is borne by participants. Planned activities included: recruiting athletes and coaches, registering them for competitions, organising preparations (training and sport workcamps), transport, representative outfits, coordination of the participation of the Polish national team in the competition and carrying out a media campaign promoting sports of intellectual disabled athletes. The project is a continuation of the support for the participation of athletes with Trisomy 21 in international sport competition launched in 2018.

Website: <https://www.virtus.sport/virtus-global-games>

3.4 I RUN FOR PURE FUN (PL)

The Polish Anti-Doping Agency's project titled "I run for pure fun!" is the first project in Poland based on the idea of advocating clean sport. The goal is to promote doping-free sport, and equal and fair competition, while helping those in need. The initiative is for athletes and about athletes, for health and for clean sport.

While the run is dedicated to amateur runners, professional athletes (i.e., sports champions, Olympic medalists, Paralympians) were asked to promote the event. At present, 30 former and current elite athletes act as ambassadors for the event. The first edition (2021) provided support for the physical rehabilitation of young athletes with injuries. In 2022, funding was provided to the foundation of former female handball players fighting against depression in sport. In the third edition (2023), resources were allocated to the foundation of athlete Monika Pyrek for scholarships for talented athletes. In total, the programme collected nearly 130 000 PLN (+ €29 000) for charity actions.



The third edition of the event was held in the Śląski Stadium, the largest track and field facility in Poland. Multiple stakeholders support and/or are involved in the organisation of the project: the Foundation "Education through Sport", the Ministry of Sport and Tourism, the Polish Olympic Committee, the Polish Paralympic Committee, and the World Anti-Doping Agency.

Website: <https://biegamczystąprzyjemnością.pl/>

3.5 ROUTE 66 PROJECT (PL)

The Route 66 Project, launched by Polish athlete Edyta Lewandowska, is fueled by the ambitious goal of conquering the iconic American Route 66. With a distance spanning 3940 km, Edyta aims to etch her name in the Guinness Book of Records as the first woman to complete this renowned route in a groundbreaking time of 50 days. Beyond personal recognition, the project's ultimate objective is to showcase the indomitable strength and resilience of women in pursuit of their dreams, while emphasizing the importance of physical activity for overall well-being.



Central to the Route 66 Project is its focus on a specific target group – individuals affected by brain, neck, and head cancers. Edyta's personal connection to the cause, spurred by her mother's battle with brain cancer, has ignited her passion for raising awareness. Through her run, she aims to underscore the significance of preventive cancer screenings and general health check-ups, all while exemplifying the power of determination in the face of adversity.

Motivated by her mother's unwavering support and encouragement, Edyta embarks on this journey to honor her memory and uplift others facing similar challenges. She aspires to inspire individuals, instill hope, and garner support for the fight against cancer. Edyta extends an open invitation for others to join her in promoting prevention, celebrating strength, and uniting in the common pursuit of triumph over adversity. Together, they strive for a finish line marked not only by personal accomplishment but also by a shared sense of triumph and joy.

Website: www.route66project.com

3.6 SPORT AGAINST MATCH FIXING (PT)

Sport Against Match Fixing is a European Union funded Sport Project coordinated by the Portuguese Football Federation. The project aims to raise awareness among young individuals about the critical issue of Match Fixing. Through a multi-faceted approach and collaborative efforts, Sport Against Match Fixing strives to safeguard the spirit of fair play, integrity, and honesty within the realm of sports, ensuring a positive and authentic sporting experience for all.

To accomplish this objective, the project transfers valuable knowledge to 18 elite athletes from various sports disciplines. These athletes act as ambassadors and trainers, equipped with the necessary expertise to effectively engage with and educate the target audience.

The project aspires to make a significant impact by reaching out to six partner countries, engaging with 54 grassroots sport clubs, and reaching a total of 1620 youngsters from diverse backgrounds and genders. By targeting such a wide audience, the project seeks to create a comprehensive understanding of the dangers associated with Match Fixing, empowering young individuals to make informed choices and uphold the integrity of sports.

Website: www.sportagainstmatchfixing.com



3.7 4ME4ALL (PT)



4ME4ALL is an esteemed European Union funded Sport Project coordinated by the European Federation of Sport Psychology, a renowned organisation dedicated to the advancement of sports psychology in Europe. This initiative aims to foster the participation of children and adolescents facing challenging circumstances in the realm of sports.

A unique aspect of the project involves the engagement of active and former elite athletes acting as tutors for vulnerable individuals. Collaborating closely with the target group, these accomplished athletes will facilitate internships within sports clubs, providing an opportunity for personal growth and development.

In addition to their mentoring roles, the athletes will actively champion the principles of equality, ensuring that children and adolescents at risk are afforded equal opportunities, unrestricted access, and inclusive treatment in all aspects of their lives. By promoting equity, this initiative strives to empower young individuals and enhance their overall well-being, enabling them to thrive both within and beyond the realm of sports.

Website: www.4me4all.eu

3.8 MORE2WIN (NL)

At More2Win, the belief in the potential of sports to create a positive societal and sustainable impact has led to the development of a pilot program for elite athletes in the North of the Netherlands. In collaboration with the organisation Topsport Noord, the program aims to support and guide athletes in actively engaging with a societal theme that aligns with their values. The ultimate goal is to empower athletes to make a genuine difference in society and further cultivate their social mission.

The program spans four half-day sessions, during which athletes work towards discovering their own social identity, mission, and vision. Rather than simply talking about athletes, the emphasis is on engaging in meaningful conversations with athletes. The initial focus is on raising awareness about the value of elite sports and the potential role an athlete can play within it. Subsequently, athletes are guided to identify a personal social mission—identifying the societal theme they are passionate about and willing to dedicate themselves to. This mission becomes the foundation for the following sessions, where athletes develop their unique story that they can share with the world. Furthermore, the program addresses communication skills and techniques, collaborating with experts from the field to ensure athletes can effectively convey their narratives.

Through this comprehensive program, More2Win and Topsport Noord provide athletes with the necessary tools and support to become active agents of change within their communities. By encouraging athletes to embrace their social responsibilities and utilize their influence, the program empowers them to make a lasting impact and create a positive legacy beyond their athletic achievements.

Website: <https://www.more2win.com>



3.9 PEST MIJ MAAR (NL)

"Pest Mij Maar" – founded by the former professional basketball player Henk Pieterse - uses sports to teach various groups about the negative effects of bullying in the context of both prevention and intervention. Henk began playing basketball at age 16 after being bullied for his length. Sport helped him turn his life around. From his own experience, 'Pest Mij Maar' aims to help improve group dynamics, empower participants and promote respect, acceptance, and tolerance through sports workshops.



The "Pest Mij Maar" foundation has been running for over 14 years in primary and secondary schools, special education, and youth institutions, reaching between 40,000 and 50,000 children annually. The foundation works with municipalities, educational institutions, and social organisations and sports clubs in the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany. Testimonials and examples of the program's activities can be consulted on the website.

Website: www.pestmijmaar.nl

3.10 SMARTPOOL (NL)

SmartPool combines pool and snooker billiards with mathematics/ arithmetic for young students (9 to 15 years). SmartPool's goal is to make beta courses more attractive through the combination with pool and snooker. For schools, a curriculum is developed in which the elements of pool and snooker have been translated into mathematical issues (for example, calculating with billiard balls (number concept and basic arithmetic), hitting the right point (geometry) or finding the correct angle (geometry with angles), for example by visualizing pool and snooker situations. The reason for this is that children often don't think math is cool. By introducing SmartPool, the pupils not only improve their skills in the field of mathematics and numeracy, but also improve their precision and concentration skills in an accessible and fun way.

Research shows that 96% of students like math through SmartPool and 82% of the math teachers indicated that with SmartPool they are better able to teach math. Besides the benefits for math, SmartPool introduces children to the precision sports of pool and snooker in a unique way. Doing so, the project supports the development of fine motor skills and promotes the sport at the same time.

SmartPool was started in the Netherlands by Erik van Haren and Willem La Riviere, two former athletes (top sixteen pool players). In the Netherlands, SmartPool has been expanded with Snooker and is now called SmartCue. The teaching material has recently been translated into several languages and started in Finland, Bulgaria, Cyprus and Germany.

Website: www.smartpool-europe.eu





4. EVALUATION PROCEDURE OF THE SUBMITTED 'EUROPEAN ATHLETES4SOCIETY CHALLENGE' PROJECTS

Participating projects were evaluated in two phases: public voting (see also 2. Launch of the Athletes4Society challenge), and evaluation by an expert panel. Votes from the public were gathered using a voting system on the A4S website, and the number of likes on the A4S social media channels. After the end of the A4S challenge, the five participants with the most votes cross-platform were evaluated by an expert panel to award a winner. The expert panel consisted of eight evaluators, one member of each partner of the European A4S consortium.

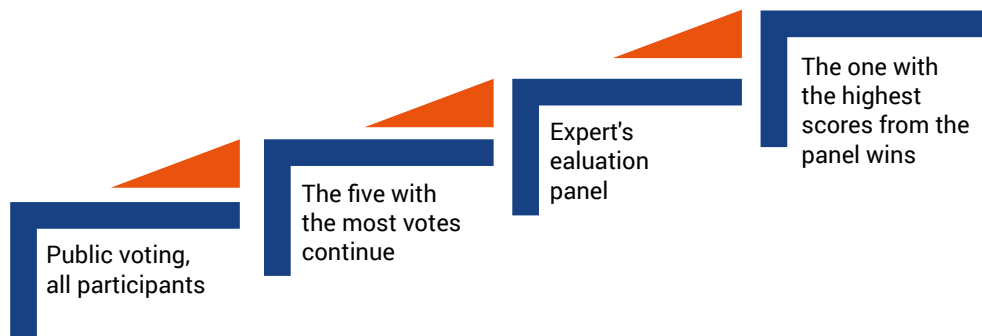


Figure 7
Steps of the evaluation and choice of the winner

4.1 PUBLIC VOTING

A total of 2,778 votes were cast in the public vote. The five projects with the most votes included:

- I run for pure fun (Poland): 262 votes
- Route 66 project (Poland): 791 votes
- Pest mij maar (the Netherlands): 355 votes
- Don't break the game (Finland): 786 votes
- Smartpool (the Netherlands): 471 votes

4.2 EXPERT PANEL

To ensure a robust evaluation procedure by the expert panel, an objective scoring form with relevant criteria was developed. The development of this criteria form was a collaborative task in which all A4S consortium partners were involved. Two partner meetings and one dedicated meeting dealt with the development of an adequate, fair, transparent, and objective scoring form with relevant criteria. The six criteria for programme evaluation – as mentioned in the A4S toolkit – were used as starting point to develop the scoring form. During the meetings, project partners discussed (a) what and why criteria would be usable or not (e.g., assessing concrete impact was beyond the scope of this project and was therefore left out of the scoring form) and (b) which additional criteria should be considered (e.g., visual & accessibility). After the online meeting, suggestions were implemented and sub-criteria were proposed for each criterium. All members of the expert-panel were asked to provide their feedback on the proposed concept-criteria form, after which the final criteria form with corresponding sub-criteria was created. To ensure unambiguous interpretation, the form contained clear advice on how to interpret the scores of the individual sub-criteria.

The criteria and their corresponding sub-criteria that were used for scoring the participants of the A4S Challenge can be found in table 1. For each sub-criterium, evaluators were asked to provide – independently - a score on a 5-point Likert scale (e.g., 1 = not relevant at all – 5 = highly relevant). The final score consisted of the scoring of the expert panel, added to the combination of the votes on the website and social media. For example, the winner of the A4S challenge received a total of 786 points cross-platform and received 579 points from the expert panel. This resulted in a combined score of 1365 points. Based on the two-phase evaluation procedure, our first A4S challenge winner was **Don't break the game (Finland)**.

Table 1
Criteria and corresponding subcriteria for scoring the participants of the A4S challenge

CRITERIA	SUB-CRITERIA
1. Visual & accessibility	1. The infographic provided is visually attractive.
	2. The video provided is visually attractive.
	3. The table, photo's and/or figures clarify the content of the project.
	4. The website and/or social media are clearly presented.
	5. The use of colours is accessible.
	6. The used font sizes are clearly readable.
2. Project mechanics	7. The information that is provided is understandable.
	8. The goals are clearly and SMART defined.
	9. The target group is clear.
	10. The scale of the project is clear (including numbers).
	11. The societal problem the project wants to 'tackle' is clear.
	12. The activities held within the project are clear.
	13. It is clear the project seeks to create direct impact or create awareness.
3. Athlete's involvement	14. The athlete is involved as role model in the project.
	15. The role of the athlete is clearly depicted. (Please note that this can be active or passive, actively involved is not better per se. However, the role of the athlete should be clear).
4. Relevance	16. The project is relevant within the (scope of the) Athletes4Society Project. (Scope A4S: policies, campaigns or programmes successfully put athletes to good use towards positive societal impact).
5. Replicability	17. Is it easy to follow/replicate the project in practice?



5. AWARDING THE WINNER OF THE 'EUROPEAN ATHLETES4SOCIEY CHALLENGE'

On the 12th of May, the final conference of the A4S project took place. This event provided an ideal opportunity to award the 'Don't break the game' programme – the winner of the first A4S challenge. The closing part of the final conference included an award ceremony consisting of several parts. First, the audience (i.e., 61 participants from different countries) was informed about the A4S award goal, procedure, and evaluation criteria. Second, the top 5 of projects - based on the public voting – were presented in more detail in random order. Lastly, the name of the winning programme/campaign or project - Don't break the game - was revealed.

After announcing and awarding the winner, campaign manager Tommy Lindgren got the chance to present the Don't Break the Game project to the audience. During his presentation – in line with the project's outcomes - Tommy emphasized how important it is to find athletes who fit the goals and look of the project. On the one hand and reciprocally, the campaign must be adapted in such a way that the athlete can be truly himself/herself when appearing in it for the cause he/she is talking about. This is also in line with the wider goal of the 'Don't break the game' campaign, i.e., play sports safely as ourselves. These issues are agreed upon in discussions with the various athletes. A number of well-known Finnish athletes who had previously worked for human rights were selected as campaign faces. Well-chosen role models and extensive support from partners as well as versatile and high-quality communication made it one of the most visible public campaigns in Finland.





6. SUSTAINABILITY OF THE 'EUROPEAN ATHLETES4SOCIEY CHALLENGE'

In order to ensure the sustainability of the outcomes of the Athletes4Society project, project partners agreed on trying to make the A4S challenge an annual event. As such, the first edition provides an important source of information to improve following editions. Based on formal (i.e., online surveys administered to participants and project partners) and informal feedback, we listed some key strengths, as well as the most important lessons learned underneath:

6.1 STRENGTHS

- Evidence-based concept
- Networking opportunities
- Sharing of best practices
- Practical examples of the scientific approaches used in the project
- The opportunity for athlete role model practices to increase their reach and publicity
- Professional venue

6.2 LESSONS LEARNED

- As the award ceremony was the closing of a complete day of presentations and workshops, it was difficult for people to keep concentration levels high during the ceremony. Despite receiving mainly positive feedback on the final MSE, a less full programme might help to raise the numbers of participants, as well as the levels of concentration during the award ceremony
- More marketing and communication is needed
- Introducing the possibility of hybrid participation to have more international participants
- Invite press
- Prolongue the participation window of the A4S challenge
- Divide tasks and responsibilities between different partners of the project/event/initiative
- Create more engagement from the public (for example, introducing a voting system during the award ceremony)
- Try to encourage all A4S challenge participants to be present during the award ceremony. Invite the top three to present on the award ceremony

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