



Co-funded by
the European Union



— PART 01 · STEP GUIDE · ERASMUS+ KA210-ADU

Understanding the landscape

Sport as a lever for inclusion, a portrait of the young people concerned and what they say themselves - the foundations of the STEP project.

CH. 01 · SPORT AS A LEVER

CH. 02 · NEETS IN EUROPE

CH. 03 · YOUNG PEOPLE'S VOICES

Part 1 contents

01

Sport as a lever
for
entrepreneurship

02

Portrait of young
people: NEETs &
barriers in Europe

03

What young
people say -
field study

Sport as a lever for entrepreneurship

1/5

young people aged 15-29 in Hauts-de-France is not in employment, education or training (Insee, 2026)

11%

of 15-29 year-olds in the European Union were NEET in 2025 (Eurostat)

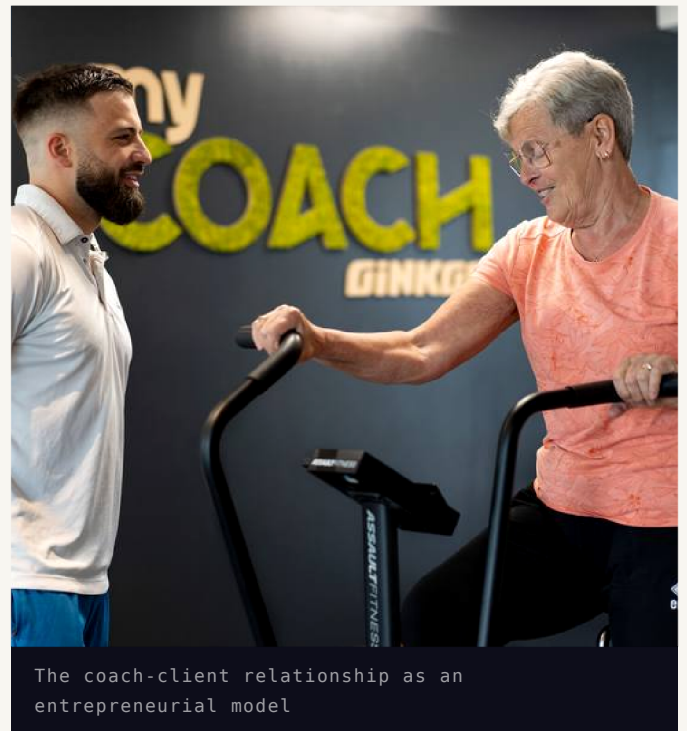
12

young people trained at the first STEP workshop in Tourcoing (June 2026)

Sport is not a side leisure activity. It is a **complete learning space**: it builds discipline, how to handle failure, team spirit, and the ability to set goals and stick to them. All skills that transfer directly to entrepreneurship.

In priority neighbourhoods, sport is often one of the few places where a young person can **experience success**, be recognised, progress and lead. It creates group dynamics, bonds of trust and an active attitude towards life.

It is no coincidence that many entrepreneurs in wellness and coaching come from tough areas. They learned on a football pitch, in a boxing gym, on a parkour spot - and they carried those lessons into their professional activity.



The coach-client relationship as an entrepreneurial model

The **sports coach** is often the first entrepreneurial role model a young person from the neighbourhood sees up close. Someone who works for themselves, manages clients, sets prices, builds a reputation. A concrete, accessible, visible model.

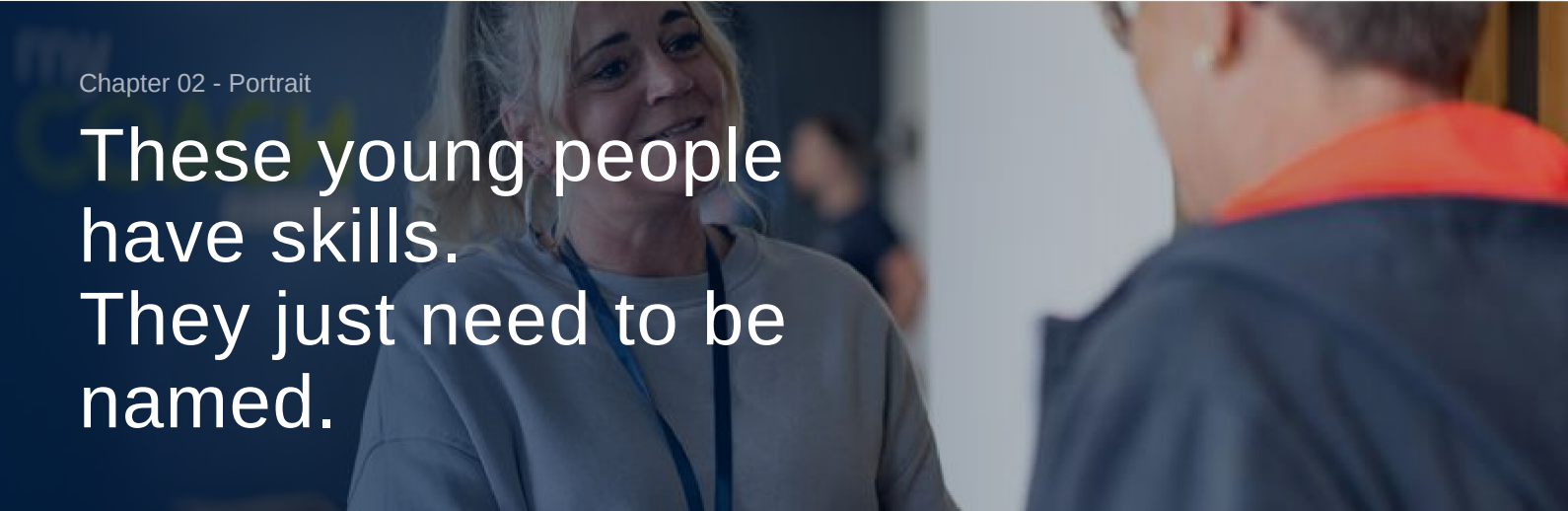
In France, people increasingly talk about the **socio-sports coach** - a new profession that blends social support, sports practice and life-skills development. This is exactly the crossover the STEP project wants to build on.

► TESTIMONY · PODCAST FIGHT LAB / GINKGO SPORT

Cédric & Quentin - Does sport help you succeed in life?

"Physical activity builds a certain mental balance - you could call it a mindset. And that mindset is everyday life too. You don't need to be an entrepreneur to develop it. Action creates motivation, not the other way round."

Chapter 02 - Portrait



These young people
have skills.
They just need to be
named.

Portrait of young people: NEETs & real barriers



The network as first entrepreneurial capital

The young people STEP targets are not defined by failure. They are defined by a **context that has piled up obstacles** in their way - and by a resilience that institutions often underestimate.

In France as in Cyprus, the profile is similar: young adults aged 18 to 30, often from **priority urban neighbourhoods**, with a complicated relationship with school, strong experience of the informal economy (organising events, informal coaching, small trading) and creativity that goes unrecognised.

The concept of **NEET** (Not in Education, Employment or Training) is useful as a statistical tool - but it does not capture the complexity of people's paths. Many of these young people learn, create and run projects off the institutional radar.



Lack of nearby role models

Few visible entrepreneurs in their immediate circle. Success seems distant, reserved for others.



Perceived financial barrier

"Starting a business costs money" - a deep-rooted belief that holds people back from exploring even the free options.



Administrative complexity

Legal statuses, VAT, social contributions - vocabulary and procedures that discourage people without suitable support.



Personal legitimacy

Impostor syndrome is especially strong among young people the school system has rarely valued.



Geographic & social isolation

Distance from city centres, no professional networks, limited access to existing support organisations.



Residual digital divide

Informal use of digital tools (social media) but limited command of professional and administrative online tools.



Marked gender gap

In priority neighbourhoods, women remain under-represented among business founders compared with the rest of the country - a gap even sharper in sport, a historically male sector.



Invisible borders

Few young people consider an experience or a partnership abroad, for lack of information about European schemes open to them without a diploma or start-up capital.

— EUROPEAN DIMENSION - FRANCE & CYPRUS

In France, Ginkgo Sport works mainly in the **priority neighbourhoods of Tourcoing** (Hauts-de-France), an area with structurally high youth unemployment and a large population with a migrant background.

In Cyprus, ARISTA DEKA supports young people in a post-crisis economic context, with inclusion challenges specific to small island economies. **Both contexts share the same paradox:** young people with potential, few organisations to tap into it, and sport as common ground.

The same is true on the Cypriot side: Cyprus has set up a **national grant scheme for young and women entrepreneurs**, showing that both partner countries identify the same priority groups. The schemes are compared in more detail in Part 3.

03

— VOICES FROM THE FIELD

What young people say: field study

Before offering tools, the STEP project wanted to listen. These quotes, collected during field sessions in France and Cyprus, paint the portrait of a generation that is not short of drive - but short of ways in.

"

I know I'm capable. I see people around me succeeding in sport. But I really don't know where to start. Nobody ever explained the steps to me.

HIND, 22 • TOURCOING • FRANCE

"

Sport taught me everything. Discipline, teamwork, how to manage a group. But in my head it wasn't a real job. It took a while before I told myself I could make a living from it.

KYRIAKOS, 26 • NICOSIA • CYPRUS

"

I tried to set up my business but I got lost in the paperwork. I needed someone to show me. Not someone telling me "go look it up online". Someone actually there.

RYAN, 24 • ROUBAIX • FRANCE

► TESTIMONY • PODCAST FIGHT LAB / GINKGO SPORT

Christophe, founder of TheySport - Growing a local business

"There's still room for the small players. Over 50% of brick-and-mortar businesses close within 3 years. The ones that last are those who understand that service and proximity are their real added value."

— WHAT THE FIELD TELLS US FOR WHAT COMES NEXT

Three key lessons shape the following parts of the guide:

- 1. The need for concrete, relatable role models.** Generic resources are not enough. These young people need to see people like them succeed - and understand how they did it.
- 2. Human support before digital tools.** Access to information is not the problem. Connections, presence, long-term follow-up - that is what makes the difference.
- 3. Recognising informal skills.** What these young people have learned through sport, in their neighbourhood, in life - that is already capital. They need help to name it, formalise it and showcase it.



Co-funded by
the European Union



CO-FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION · ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME · KA210-ADU · STEP PARTNERSHIP · 2025–2027 · GINKGO SPORT
(FRANCE) · ARISTA DEKA (CYPRUS)

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 ERASMUS+ FRANCE /
EDUCATION TRAINING AGENCY. NEITHER THE EUROPEAN UNION NOR THE GRANTING AUTHORITY CAN BE HELD
RESPONSIBLE FOR THEM.