




Development  
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# FINAL CONFERENCE REPORT

**CREATING LIFE CHAMPIONS**

**DATE:**  
November 2024



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# Creating Life Champions - LC2023

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## Overview

The Final Conference of the Life Champions took place in Strumica, North Macedonia from November 29 to December 1 (travel days included). The Conference was designed as a culmination of the consortium's collaborative efforts, serving as a platform to showcase the module developed, discuss project outcomes, and plan future activities. The event engaged a diverse group of almost 50 participants, including federations, clubs, researchers, expert groups, youth organizations, academia and media representatives. Through interactive sessions, audio-visual presentations, and participatory methods like buzz groups and open space discussions, the conference aimed to ensure active involvement from all stakeholders. The event also included a final press conference to disseminate

the project's main messages to a broader audience via media and live streaming.

Special guests attending the Conference brought additional credibility to the project and highlighted its significance in their respective countries. The distinguished attendees included His Excellency, Fatih Ulu-soy, the Ambassador of the Republic of Turkiye; Her Excellency Nives Tiganj, Ambassador of the Republic of Croatia; Mr. Vladimir Gjorgjevski, Head of the Local RYCO Office; and Mr. Aleksandar Andov, Head Coach of the North Macedonian Women's Senior National Team. In addition, one of the opening speeches had been held by the high-level representative of the Municipality of Strumica, as well.

## Objectives

- To introduce the Life Champions module, discuss its content, and gather feedback from key stakeholders.
- To evaluate the results achieved during the project, using measurable qualitative and quantitative indicators of success.

- To develop follow-up plans, expanding the concept to new levels and formats while involving additional relevant actors.
- To share the project’s messages with a wider audience through a press conference and live streaming, ensuring broader outreach and impact.
- To conduct a final consortium meeting for evaluating project activities, strengthening relationships, and planning the continuation of the initiative.

## Opening and Introduction

**The conference officially began with an opening ceremony hosted by Aleksandra Knežević, project leader,** where representatives of the consortium welcomed participants and set the tone for the event. The session highlighted the significance of the Life Champions project in fostering societal impact and collaboration.

A family photo and media interaction followed, creating an opportunity to emphasize the project’s achievements and engage the media in disseminating key messages.

**The concept of Life Champions was presented** in a concise and engaging session, outlining its goals, methodology, and significance. The main project outcomes were then shared, supported by audio-visual materials produced during the project. This presentation demonstrated how the

project met its objectives, aligning with the expectations set by the European Commission.

**The research team presented** the printed version of the brochure, which has been published to summarize the key findings and recommendations of the study. The brochure was designed to be accessible and easy to understand, ensuring the information is practical for a wide audience. The team also explained the comprehensive process that led to these results. The primary goal of the research was to conduct a detailed analysis of how football coaches perceive the educational and pedagogical role of sports and to identify ways to strengthen this role. The research resulted in a written report in English, presenting findings from desk analysis, semi-structured interviews with coaches, and two fo-

cus groups with parents of children playing football.

**Mr. Daniel Simões from Equipa de Projectos ERASMUS+, Ginásio Clube Português, and Professor Mustafa Levent İnce from Middle East Technical University, Faculty of Education, Physical Education & Sports Department, delivered a presentation** on the development process and content of the modules. They provided an in-depth overview of the steps taken to ensure the module’s relevance and practical application across diverse contexts.

Their presentation highlighted key recommendations drawn from the module development process. One emphasized the importance of offering coaches more opportunities for learning and professional development to empower them in delivering holistic, child-centred training. This additional education should

include topics such as ethical decision-making, setting SMART goals, and creating personal development plans. These tools aim to strengthen coaches’ approaches and enhance their capacity to support the personal and athletic development of young athletes.

Another critical recommendation underscored the need for different materials to be translated into local languages, ensuring cultural adaptation to make the content more accessible and contextually relevant. During the implementation phase, it was suggested that coaches should further customize the materials to align with their specific contexts and cultural settings. This approach would enable a more effective and meaningful application of the module in diverse environments.

Participants agreed with a set of 10 recommendations presented.

## **Panel Discussion: “Traces That Life Champions Leave on Society –Personal Stories”**

This dynamic panel featured individuals whose lives were positively impacted by the project. Their personal stories offered compelling evidence of the project’s tangible benefits,

resonating deeply with participants and reinforcing the project’s value. Panel discussion included representatives of 3 sector – sport, education and youth. Coaches talked about

how the project helped them improve their work, attract more young girls to join football programs, and communicate better with parents. It was underlined that these changes created a stronger connection between coaches, families, and young athletes, showing the value of the project in making football more inclusive and supportive.

Representatives of academia under-

lined the benefits the concept of life champions brought into the educational work in the sport sector, while representative of youth organization emphasized how youth sector tools and methodological approaches had been integrated into the project implementation.

## **Expert Lecture: Handling Emotions in Creating Life Champions**

An expert lecture delivered by a licensed psychotherapist Milena Gajović provided valuable insights on emotional intelligence and its importance in nurturing life champions. This session was highly interactive and offered practical takeaways for participants. It is important to un-

derline that, although not initially planned, this session was included into the Conference agenda afterwards, upon direct lobbying from the Conference participants, and based on the feedback obtained from this lecture during the International camp.

## **Collaborative workshops and future planning**

Participants engaged in small group discussions to explore follow-up strategies for the project. Four working groups had been established addressing institutional, educational, field and project-based perspectives,

generating actionable ideas for expanding the concept. The results of these discussions were later presented in plenary, allowing for further refinement and consensus-building.

- Coaches emphasized the need to work collectively to address

barriers in local legislation and club structures. They suggested forming networks to advocate for policy reforms that support inclusive and sustainable youth development programs in sport.

- Participants recognized the value of exchanging experiences with others facing similar challenges. They proposed creating a platform for regular communication, where coaches from different regions can share best practices and practical solutions.
- The group stressed the importance of tailoring educational content to fit local contexts. Coaches highlighted that training should include both technical and ethical components, ensuring they are equipped to navigate complex challenges in their environments.
- Coaches discussed strategies to improve communication and collaboration between clubs, parents, schools, and local communities, aiming to create a more supportive ecosystem for young athletes.
- Participants proposed establishing mentorship programs where experienced coaches guide those in regions with less developed structures. This would help bridge gaps and build capacity over time.
- Expand the module's focus to include topics like mental health support and more conflict resolution for young athletes.
- Pilot the module in schools and/or community centres to test its application beyond football clubs.
- Develop online resources (videos, guides, or webinars) to make the module accessible for coaches who cannot attend in-person sessions.
- Host more camps inclusive both to boys and girls due to extremely positive impact this gender-mixed experience held within the project made.
- Develop monitoring tools to track the module's impact on young athletes and their communities, ensuring measurable results over time.
- Start with the clubs – they need to adapt module and new approach.
- Make module available to UEFA coaches' education in the project countries.

## Evaluation and closing

The conference concluded with a summary of key insights and an evaluation of the event and overall project. Participants reflected on the outcomes and provided feedback on areas for improvement. This was followed by the official closure, marking the successful completion of the Life Champions project's final milestone.

- 40 participants from 10 formal and 4 informal partners, as well as special guests.
- At least 90% active participation in all plenary discussions and workshops.
- Live streaming reached over 10,000 viewers.
- 10+ media mentions across regional platforms.
- 12 actionable recommendations developed during workshops.
- At least 3 follow-up strategies outlined, focusing on institutional, project, field and educational context.
- Average participant satisfaction score: 4.7/5.
- Almost 100% of participants reported confidence in implementing the Life Champions module in their local contexts and joint project continuation.
- 3 new collaborative ideas proposed for potential partnerships and expansions.
- Informal peer-support network established during the conference.
- Coaches shared how the project improved their work, increased the number of girls joining football, and strengthened their communication with parents.
- The attendance of ambassadors and senior officials added credibility to the project and sparked interest in future institutional collaborations.
- Participants expressed a strong sense of ownership of the Life Champions concept, with many committing to apply the module in their regions.

## Outcomes

- The developed module was introduced effectively, with valuable input gathered for future enhancements.
- Personal stories and project outcomes illustrated the significant societal influence of Life Champions.
- Workshops produced actionable strategies for expanding the initiative across different levels and involving new stakeholders.
- The live-streamed press conference and media coverage increased the project's outreach to broader audiences.
- The final consortium meeting evaluated achievements, aligned on next steps, and reinforced partnerships, ensuring sustainability beyond the project's formal timeline.

## Conclusion

The Final Conference served both as a platform for showcasing the project's results and a springboard for future initiatives. The event demonstrated the consortium's commit-

ment to the Life Champions concept and its potential for long-term impact.

It is confirmed that:

- The philosophy and aim of Creating Life Champions are focused on the holistic development of young athletes.
- The philosophy and aim of the Creating Life Champions design are aligned with the program's content, implementation, and outcome evaluation elements.
- The focus is on long-term athletic development, communication, holistic quality preparation, alignment of expectations, and support networks.
- The use and value of autonomy-supportive teaching methods are encouraged.