



Sports University Model

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SPORTS UNIVERSITY MODEL

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PREFACE

Today, athletic success is the result not only of physical performance but also of strategic management, centralized coordination, and a science-based ecosystem. Models recognized in the international literature demonstrate that countries that have achieved sustainable success centralize their resources in “centers of excellence” and professionally manage the athlete’s entire life cycle. Although Turkey possesses significant potential in this field due to the massive facility investments made over the past twenty years and its young population, the current fragmented educational structure makes it difficult to fully translate this potential into medals.

This study goes beyond the scope of existing Sports Science Faculties in Turkey to propose a “sports university” model that would resolve the conflict between athletes’ academic education and elite performance goals. Thematic sports universities worldwide have proven their decisive impact on the Olympic Games. These institutions not only train athletes but also work closely with federations to bring the laboratory environment to the field. The model we propose for Turkey is based on a “one-stop shop” center that houses federation headquarters on campus, conducts data-driven performance tracking, and supports athletes with a holistic psychosocial approach.

In addition to being a physical facility, this planned university also carries the vision of an “academy that trains educators.” A structure that synthesizes coaching education with modern science, defines new-generation fields of expertise ranging from performance analysts to sports

technologists, and is equipped with the “living laboratory” concept will form the scientific backbone of Turkish sports.

This study, prepared under the auspices of the Center for Public Policy Research and Development (KAPGEM), aims to ground Turkey’s aspirations in the international sports arena on a scientific foundation. We hope this report will serve as a guide for policymakers in this field and open the door to a revolutionary era in our country’s sports culture. We extend our gratitude to all the scientists and stakeholders who contributed to this visionary work.

Prof. Dr. Fatih KIRIŐIK

Editor/KAPGEM Coordinator

INTRODUCTION

This report analyzes the scientific necessity of establishing a centralized and specialized "Sports University" in Türkiye, similar to the models in Germany (DSHS Köln) or the United Kingdom (Loughborough), in order to go beyond the current structure of sports education (Faculties of Sports Sciences) and to ensure the sustainability of international sporting success and to address athlete health with a holistic approach.

In Türkiye, the academic education of athletes is generally carried out through sports science faculties distributed across different universities. Many athletes are unable to participate fully in their studies at their universities due to the intensity of their training. These athletes, who do not receive adequate training, prepare for the Olympics and other major events (world championships, intercontinental championships, international and national tournaments, etc.), where psychological, mental, and stress management are also very important, generally through physical training. This situation can lead to defeat in team or individual competitions, where athletes, despite their opponents being physically weaker, may suffer due to inadequate stress management, falling behind in psychological competition, and ultimately becoming mentally weak. International literature proves that sporting success is not a matter of chance, but a result of strategic management and centralized coordination. The SPLISS (Sport Policy Factors Leading to International Sporting Success) model, developed by De Bosscher et al. (2006) and accepted worldwide, reveals that the most important components of success are an "integrated management structure" and "elite sports development systems". The current structure leads to inefficient use of resources; however, Digel (2005) states that successful sporting nations (such as China, Australia, and Germany) achieve success by centralizing their resources. Furthermore, Sotiriadou (2013) argues that in the development of elite athletes, macro (state policy), meso (institutional infrastructure), and micro (athlete environment) levels must work in harmony; and that a specialized sports university is the most effective "meso" structure that combines these three levels. What Türkiye needs is a center of excellence that not only provides training but also manages the entire life cycle of the athlete, as defined by Oakley and Green (2001) as a "one-stop shop".

Based on successful examples, a sports university should be established in our country, and this university should conduct its education, training, and educational activities by entering into protocols with specific institutions and organizations (state and foundation universities, sports

federations, and ministries such as the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Ministry of National Education). The planned university will develop a special training policy for athletes, which will help student athletes demonstrate their potential more effectively in competitions. It is also believed that this valuable training they receive at the end of their sporting careers will enable them to produce exemplary athletes and will make a significant contribution to achieving more successful results in major organizations.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Athlete Training Policies in Türkiye

The athlete training system in Türkiye is primarily based on Athlete Training Centers (SEM) and Turkish Olympic Preparation Centers (TOHM). Although the foundations of SEMs were laid in the 1970s to address the lack of success in Turkish wrestling, their implementation could not begin then due to changes in government and federations at the time. These centers, which came to the forefront again in later years with the project of integrating the potential of Karakucak wrestling in Anatolia into modern wrestling, were first opened in 1987 and gradually expanded, transforming into SEM structures that enable children to become high-level athletes without disrupting their education (İmamoğlu, Dilek, Türkmen, 2017).

Table 1. Number of Athletes in Sports Training Centers by Sport Branch (GSB, 2024).

SPORTS BRANCH	NUMBER OF ATHLETES
Shooting	40
Athletics	935
Badminton	142
Cycling	0
Boxing	75
Gymnastics	82
Curling	24
Mountaineering	43
Fencing	87
Wrestling	1.285
Weightlifting	127
Judo	346
Canoeing	135
Skiing	89
Rowing	12
Archery	11
Water Polo	89
Tennis	2
Sailing	6
Swimming	940
Total	4.470

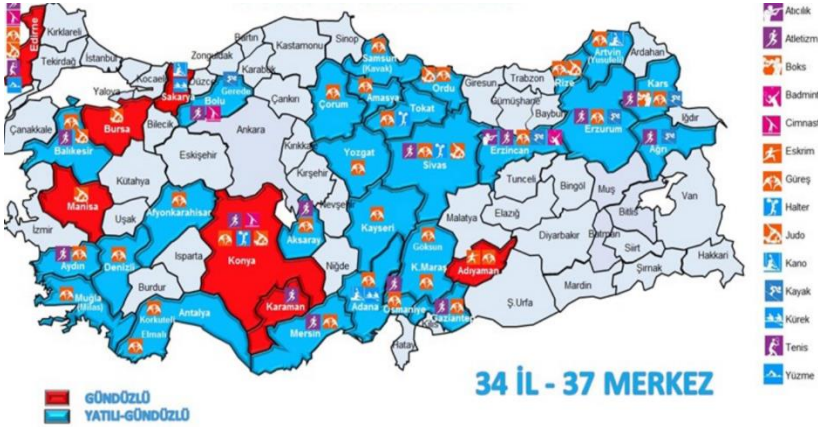


Figure 1. Distribution of Athlete Training Centers in Türkiye by Province

Established in 2013 with the aim of strengthening the elite performance component of the system and training athletes for the Olympics, the Turkish Olympic Preparation Centers (TOHM) are positioned as the most strategic project shaping the future of Turkish sports. Today, TOHM, operating in 25 provinces and 23 different Olympic branches, trains "the champions of the future" with a total of 1516 athletes (643 residential and 873 non-residential) and 314 expert coaches (GSB, 2024). Strengthened by scientifically based training programs, performance analyses, and academic support such as the "National Athlete Scholarship," this structure has won 1693 medals in the international arena to date.

37 athletes trained at Türkiye's Olympic Preparation Centers have successfully qualified for the Paris 2024 Olympic Games. TOHM athletes won 1 silver and 2 bronze medals at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, 1 silver medal at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, and 1 gold and 3 bronze medals at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. 52 athletes from TOHM participated in the 2018 Mediterranean Games. The athletes won 28 medals in total at the event, including 12 gold, 5 silver, and 11 bronze. They also won 1 silver and 2 bronze at the 2019 European Games, 8 gold, 3 silver, and 5 bronze at the 2019 EYOF, and 2 gold, 2 silver, and 4 bronze at the 2022 Islamic Solidarity Games. To date, TOHM athletes have won a total of 1693 medals in international competitions (GSB, 2024).

Table 2. International Achievements of TOHM Athletes.

COMPETITION	NUMBER OF ATHLETES	MEDAL
2016 Rio	16	1
2018 Mediterranean Games	52	28
2019 EYOF	37	3
2020 Tokyo Olympic Games	37	4
2022 5. Islamic Solidarity Games	13	8
2024 Paris Olympic Games	37	3
2025 ISF U15 Gymnasiade Games	15	11
2025 EYOF	29	12

While these centers play a significant role in shaping the Olympic athlete pool, existing reports and planning documents indicate that the system has structural limitations in terms of institutional coordination, facility management, scientific support, and education-sports integration. In particular, the lack of coordination between institutions, the fragmented and inefficient use of facilities, and the pressure on athletes to choose between their education and sporting careers negatively affect the sustainability of the system.

In this context, the proposed Sports University Model does not aim to eliminate the existing structure; rather, it aims to integrate existing resources, primarily SEM and TOHM, under a scientific, academic, and institutional umbrella.

Academic Education Processes of Athletes in Türkiye

University students in Türkiye who participate in elite-level sports face what is called a "Dual Career" in the literature: the necessity of both achieving high athletic performance goals and fulfilling academic requirements. However, the current higher education structure often presents these two areas as two separate, conflicting worlds rather than integrating them. Extensive research conducted within the European Union by Aquilina (2013) reveals that athletes need flexible and supportive institutional structures to pursue their sports careers without sacrificing their education. Studies conducted specifically in Türkiye reveal a negative correlation between the academic and athletic achievements of student athletes, and the system forces athletes into a "school or sports" dilemma (Yüce, 2021). This situation, in the absence of a specialized university model, leads to a loss of talent or academic failure.

The biggest challenge for elite athletes is the intense time pressure

created by training, competition, travel, and recovery processes. In a study conducted by Tekin and Taşgın (2009), it was found that elite athletes had difficulty focusing on their lessons and postponed their academic responsibilities due to physical fatigue resulting from the intensity of their training. When you add the commute times between campus and the training field for an athlete who trains twice a day, the time and energy they can dedicate to academic work is reduced to a marginal level. The lack of access to elite sports facilities within existing university campuses increases the logistical burden and creates a predisposition for athletes to experience chronic fatigue syndrome (Sığırı & Başar, 2020).

The academic calendars and regulations of universities in our country are not compatible with the dynamic nature of elite sports. Athletes, especially those involved in team sports or international camps, face the risk of failing courses due to universities' strict "attendance requirement" rules. Pepe and Bingöl (2018) emphasize that the academic failure of student athletes stems not from a lack of intelligence or talent, but from systemic rigidities such as absenteeism and the clash of exam dates with competitions. In some universities, the initiatives provided to national athletes are more at the individual discretion of the faculty member than a formal institutional policy. This uncertainty causes athletes to perceive their academic life not as a source of security, but as a source of stress.

Failing to strike a balance between academic and athletic identities creates significant psychological pressure on student athletes. Kocaekşi (2016) states that athletes primarily define themselves by their "athlete" identity, but experience a decline in self-esteem when they cannot fulfill the requirements of the "student" role in the university environment. This situation, described as "role conflict," causes the athlete's mind to be on their studies during training and on their studies, leading to decreased performance in both areas. According to Wylleman and Lavallee's (2004) developmental model, university years (psychosocial transition period) are the period when athletes need the most support; however, the current fragmented structure in Türkiye is far from providing athletes with the mentoring and psychological support they need in an integrated manner during this period.

Student athletes often become isolated from the university's social environment due to their demanding schedules, negatively impacting their social development. Furthermore, the short duration of active sports careers and the risk of injury create significant anxiety about the future for athletes, particularly regarding their "post-athletic careers.". Atar and Özbek (2020) found that athletes are concerned about not acquiring sufficient professional skills in the fields they are trained in, which reduces their motivation for both sports and school. A specialized sports university

model has the potential to minimize this concern by adapting not only athletic but also academic career planning to the nature of sports (flexible, distance learning supported, modular).

In conclusion, the literature shows that the current higher education system in Türkiye is inadequate in meeting the needs of elite athletes. The time pressure experienced by athletes, attendance problems stemming from strict legal regulations, and the psychological stress created by dual careers force athletes to choose between "school or sports.". In light of scientific data, establishing a "Sports University" model that integrates the athlete's training and practice environment, allows for flexibility in the academic calendar to match the sporting calendar, and offers holistic support (academic, psychological, and athletic) is not a choice but a necessity for sustainable sporting success and healthy athlete development.

EXAMPLES OF INTERNATIONAL SPORTS UNIVERSITIES

Loughborough University (United Kingdom)

Corporate Profile

With over a century of academic and practical experience in sports, Loughborough University has been ranked as a global leader in the QS World University Rankings – Sport-related Subjects since 2017 (QS Top Universities, 2025). The university sets an example by offering sports science, elite athlete training, and high-performance infrastructure in an integrated manner within a single campus..

Facilities and Technology Infrastructure

The university campus boasts high-standard facilities designed to meet the needs of elite athletes. These include:

- Elite Athlete Centre and Hotel offers 44 specialized bedrooms, 20 of which are specially equipped to simulate altitude of approximately 5,000 meters above sea level.

- Fitness centers, performance laboratories, sports medicine and physiotherapy clinics, and athlete-specific rest and recovery areas are integrated and located within the campus.

- It has an Olympic-standard swimming pool and a football stadium with hybrid turf technology.

Corporate Integration and Olympic Impact

The presence of numerous national sports federation headquarters within the Loughborough campus has ensured a strong and continuous university-federation partnership. The university served as Team GB's official training center prior to the 2012 London Olympic Games. At the 2016 Rio Olympic and Paralympic Games, university-affiliated athletes won a significant number of Olympic and Paralympic medals.

Athletes Sent by Loughborough University to the Olympics

It is the most transparent institution in terms of athlete monitoring. Its data, current students, graduates, and athletes who train full-time at its facilities are publicly accessible as “Loughborough-affiliated” (Loughborough University, 2024).

Paris 2024

Number of Athletes: More than 100 athletes, coaches and support staff associated with Loughborough were present in Paris.

Performance: Loughborough athletes won a total of 16 medals (4

Gold, 4 Silver, 8 Bronze) at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games.

Tokyo 2020 (Held in 2021)

Number of Athletes: More than 100 athletes, coaches and support staff associated with Loughborough were present in Paris.

Performance: In the same press release announcing the university's success at Paris 2024, it was stated that this achievement was "three more medals than Tokyo 2020." This comparison confirms that the number of medals won at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games was 13.

Note: If Loughborough University had competed as a single country in Tokyo, they would have been ranked 11th in the medal standings.

Deutsche Sporthochschule Köln – DSHS (Germany – Cologne Sports Academy)

Europe's Only Thematic Sports University

Corporate Profile

Founded in 1947, the German Sports University Cologne (DSHS) is the only independent higher education institution in Germany that focuses solely on sport and exercise sciences. With its structure consisting of 19 scientific institutes and approximately 5,200 students, the university is one of the most comprehensive sports science centers in Europe (Deutsche Sporthochschule Köln, 2025).

Research Ecosystem

DSHS Cologne conducts pioneering research in the fields of biomechanics, physiology, sociology of sport, psychology of sport, and sports management.

Within the university:

- WADA accredited anti-doping laboratory,
- Space Integrative Physiology Center (ZiP),
- German Elite Sports Research Centers are operating.

Dual Career Structure

The "Partner University of Top-class Sport" agreement, signed in 2003, provides structured academic flexibility for athletes participating in Olympic and prospective squads. Within this scope, athletes are provided with:

- Flexibility in exam and class schedules,
- Absence tolerance,

- Academic mentoring opportunities are offered.

DSHS DSHS Athletes Sent to the Olympics

This institution, also known as "Spoho," is the backbone of the German Olympic team (DSH-Cologne, 2025).

Paris 2024

Number of Athletes: Over 70 athletes participated in the Olympics.

Tokyo 2020 (Held in 2021)

Number of Athletes: 61 athletes participated in the Olympics.

Achievement: These athletes won a total of 11 medals (3 Gold, 1 Silver, 7 Bronze).

Nippon University of Sport Sciences (Japan)

Historical Continuity and Capacity to Produce Elite Athletes

Corporate Profile

Founded in 1893 and granted university status in 1949, Nippon Sport Science University is a private university specializing in sports science, operating with campuses in Tokyo and Yokohama..

Olympic Contribution

The university has made significant contributions to Japan's elite athlete development system since the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games. According to various sources, a significant portion of the Olympic medals won by Japanese athletes have been achieved by athletes affiliated with this university. This constitutes a strong example of university-national team integration.

Athletes Sent by Nippon University to the Olympics

This university, known as Japan's athlete factory, was observed to have delivered an incredible performance, especially during Tokyo 2020, which they hosted (Nippon Taiiku Daigaku, 2025).

Tokyo 2020 (Held in 2021)

Number of Athletes: 81 athletes from Nippon University in Japan participated in the Olympics.

Achievement: These athletes won a total of 27 medals (12 Gold, 8 Silver, 7 Bronze). This is an extraordinary achievement for a single institution.

Shanghai Sports University (China)

Science-Technology and National Team Integration

Corporate Profile

Founded in 1952, Shanghai University of Sport is the first sports university established after the founding of the People's Republic of China and one of the pioneering institutions authorized at the national level under the "Double First Class" university initiative.

Strategic Focus Areas

- It is the only sports university to hold the title of "Joint Institution for Science and Technology in Winter Sports".
- The training centers for the national 3x3 basketball and skeleton national teams are located within the campus.
- It is home to the IOC-approved Olympic Research Institute and the International Table Tennis Museum.

Athletes sent to the Olympics by Shanghai University

China's system operates somewhat differently. The university is fully integrated with the national sports system. Data is generally reported for both athletes and coaches.

Paris 2024

Number of athletes: 55 athletes participated in the Olympics.

Achievement: These athletes won a total of 11 gold medals.

Tokyo 2020 (Held in 2021)

Achievement: BSU students, graduates, or coaches contributed to 14 gold medals.

Table 3. Medals Won by Türkiye, Foreign Universities, and Their Countries at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics

Country	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
Türkiye	2	2	9	13
Loughborough University	3	4	6	13
Cologne Sports Academy	3	1	7	11
Nippon University of Sport Sciences	12	8	7	27
Shanghai Sports University	14	-	-	14
Great Britain	22	20	22	64
Germany	10	11	16	37
Japan	27	14	17	58
People's Republic of China	38	32	19	89

Table 4. Medals Won by Türkiye, Foreign Universities, and Their Countries at the Paris 2024 Olympics

Country	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
Türkiye	0	3	5	8
Loughborough University	4	4	8	16
Cologne Sports Academy	-	-	-	-
Nippon University of Sport Sciences	8	7	7	22
Shanghai Sports University	11	-	-	14
Great Britain	14	22	29	65
Germany	12	13	8	33
Japan	20	12	13	45
People's Republic of China	40	27	24	91

NATIONAL INSTITUTE AND SYSTEM MODELS

Australian Institute of Sport (AIS)

Central Campus and National Network Model

In addition to its 66-hectare central campus in Canberra, AIS operates with a hub-and-network structure that extends its services across the country.

FTEM Athlete Development Framework

Developed by AIS, the FTEM (Foundations–Talent–Elite–Mastery) model is an internationally referenced framework that defines athlete development holistically from early age to elite level.

Education and Career Support

- Through the Elite Sport Education Network (ESEN), universities are committed to offering flexible training to elite athletes.

- Athletes' post-sport career transitions are supported through virtual internships and career counseling (CPRN).

Norwegian Olympiatoppen Model

People-Centered and Regional Structure

The Norwegian model is based on the philosophy of "people first, then athletes." The coach-athlete relationship is not hierarchical; it is based on mentorship and partnership.

Development Strategy

- A children's sports system that prioritizes development rather than score-oriented practices is implemented until the age of 13.

- Lillehammer, with its 1994 legacy, has established the Olympiatoppen and regional centers, spreading elite sport across the country..

Leipzig Model (Germany)

Integration of Historical Heritage and Modern Sports Science

The Faculty of Sport Sciences at the University of Leipzig is based on a structural collaboration established between the legacy of the DHfK from the East German era and the present-day Institute for Applied Training Sciences (IAT). Through its International Coach Training (ITK) programs, the Leipzig model also functions as a form of sport diplomacy on a global scale.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK – EU DUAL CAREER POLICY

The European Union's 2012 Dual Career Guidance aims to provide legal and institutional guarantees for athletes to be able to pursue their sports careers alongside their education and employment processes.

Application Models

1. State-centered legal regulation
2. The facilitating role of the state
3. Federation-focused negotiation model
4. Free model without formal structure

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TÜRKIYE

Integrated Facility and Management Model

- Federation centers should be established on campus (Loughborough model).

- The central campus should be connected to regional universities via satellite networks (AIS model).

Athlete Development and Monitoring System

- The AIS-FTEM model should be synthesized with Norway's approach to athlete rights.

- A national pool of athletes should be created that prevents premature specialization and does not push talent out of the system.

Parallel Education (Dual Career) Policy

- The "National Team Partner University" status, as exemplified by Germany, should be legally established.

- Academic flexibility, in line with EU Dual Career guidelines, should be guaranteed by regulations.

Beyond the Physical: Integration of Mental, Psychological, and Holistic Development

Modern sports science views the athlete not merely as a "performance-producing machine," but as an individual with psychological, social, and academic needs. The "Holistic Athletic Career Model" developed by Wylleman and Lavallee (2004) emphasizes that, in addition to the athlete's athletic development, their psychological, psychosocial, and academic/professional development should also be supported simultaneously. These supports are disconnected within the current faculty structures. However, Fletcher and Sarkar (2012), in their study on Olympic champions, proved that "psychological resilience" is the most critical factor determining success and that it is not innate but acquired through systematic training. Weinberg and Gould (2019) emphasize the necessity of integrating psychological skills training (goal setting, visualization, stress management) into physical training programs; while Collins and MacNamara (2012), in their "Psychological Dependency of Ability" (PCDEs) model, suggest that mental adaptability may be more decisive than physical ability in achieving elite status. Therefore, the university to be established should position sports psychology not as a clinical intervention tool, but as an integral part of the daily training routine.

Scientific Training, Advanced Technology, and Data-Driven Performance

In elite sports, success margins are measured in milliseconds, and the key factor making this difference is scientific data. Liebermann et al. (2002) demonstrate that integrating technology into sports directly enhances performance through biomechanical feedback and motion analysis. However, Cardinale and Varley (2017) argue that for sports science to be effective, the laboratory environment must be transferred to the training field, and this is only possible with an integrated campus (sports university) structure. In addition, disability prevention models such as the "Acute:Chronic Workload Ratio", popularized by Gabbett (2016), require continuous and centralized data monitoring. In dispersed systems, an athlete's data is lost, whereas in a centralized university, all of an athlete's physiological data can be collected in a single database, allowing for long-term development (LTAD) tracking (Balyi and Hamilton, 2004). Halson (2014) emphasizes the importance of scientifically based recovery strategies, which necessitates the location of sleep laboratories, cryotherapy units, and nutrition centers on the same campus.

"Training the Trainer": Qualified Coach and Coaching Science

The proposed Sports University model should include facilities and qualified coaches where athletes can receive physiological, mental, and psychological training in addition to academic education. An athlete's success is limited by the competence of their coach. Côté and Gilbert (2009) define coaching expertise not only in terms of technical knowledge, but also in terms of a triangle of "professional knowledge," "interpersonal knowledge," and "intrapersonal knowledge" (self-assessment). In the current system in Türkiye, coach training is generally provided through short-term courses. However, Lyle (2002) states that elite coaching is a complex decision-making process and requires in-depth academic training. Jowett (2007) showed that the quality of the coach-athlete relationship (closeness, commitment, complementarity) directly affects performance, and that the management of this relationship can be improved through training. Furthermore, Mallett et al. (2009) argue that the continuous professional development of coaches should be supported by university-based research. The proposed Sports University would function as a "Community of Practice" center that not only certifies coaches but also provides them with the most up-to-date scientific data and brings field problems to academia (Culver and Trudel, 2006).

CURRENT SITUATION ANALYSIS OF THE TURKISH SPORTS ECOSYSTEM (SWOT ANALYSIS)

The necessity of a Turkish Sports University model is analyzed below by comparing the strengths and weaknesses of the current system with international examples (Loughborough, Cologne, AIS, etc.).

STRENGTHS

Current Potential and Assets

1. Physical Facility Investments: The number and quality of stadiums, Olympic swimming pools, and sports complexes built across Türkiye in the last 20 years meet European standards. The problem of insufficient facilities has been largely solved..

2. Young and Dynamic Population: Unlike aging populations such as those in Norway or Japan, Türkiye has a large talent pool.

3. Widespread Network of Physical Education and Sports Science Faculties: There are numerous Sports Science Faculties throughout the country, and the academic staff potential is high in quantity.

4. State Support and Political Will: The budget allocated by the Ministry of Youth and Sports to performance sports is substantial, and the political will in this area is strong.

WEAKNESSES

Structural Problems and Deficiencies (Comparison with International Models)

1. Disconnected Integration (Loughborough Deficiency): While universities provide academic instruction, federations and national teams operate in independent training centers far from university campuses. Science and field practice are disconnected.

2. Insufficient Legislation Regarding Dual Careers (Germany/EU Deficiency): For elite athletes, a legally guaranteed institutional "flexibility policy" (exam postponement, right to absenteeism) is not in place at universities; it is left to the discretion of the teaching staff.

3. Lack of a Centralized Data and Tracking System (AIS Deficiency): Although talent scouting is conducted, there is a lack of an integrated data and tracking system like the FTEM model, which monitors athletes from age 10 to elite level.

4. Early Specialization and Score Focus (Opposite of Norway): Focusing on scoring at an early age instead of development in youth

academies leads to the premature depletion of the talent pool (drop-out).

OPPORTUNITIES

External Factors and Future Vision

1.Sports University Project: This new model is a big opportunity to bring together the scattered federation, academy, and facility structures under a single umbrella.

2.International Organizations: Organizations for which Türkiye is a candidate or will host (e.g., EURO 2032) necessitate scientific preparation to create a "Host Effect".

3.Technological Adaptation (Shanghai Opportunity): Türkiye's success in the defense industry and software sector can be easily integrated into sports technologies (wearable technology, data analytics).

4.Health Tourism Potential: Türkiye's healthcare infrastructure is suitable for hosting international teams as a training and rehabilitation center, similar to the Loughborough example.

THREATS

Risks and Obstacles

1.Bureaucratic Multiple Authority: The confusion of authority between the Council of Higher Education (YÖK), the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and the Federations can hinder rapid decision-making mechanisms.

2.Sustainability Issue: The high operating costs of sports facilities and the risk of becoming "white elephants" (underutilized or idle facilities).

3.Brain Drain: The tendency for trained sports scientists and qualified coaches to leave the country.

REASONS FOR ESTABLISHING A SPORTS UNIVERSITY

The number of licensed athletes in Türkiye has exceeded 16,927,000 (General Directorate of Sports Services, 2024). At the same time, 3,966 national athletes compete in various branches of sports. Given the athletic potential of our country, achieving sustainable success in the international sports arena and increasing the number of Olympic medals seems highly unlikely given the fragmented structures we have outlined in the conceptual framework. In the current system, athletes are caught between intense training and academic obligations, leading to both a loss of athletic performance and academic failure (the Dual Career Problem).

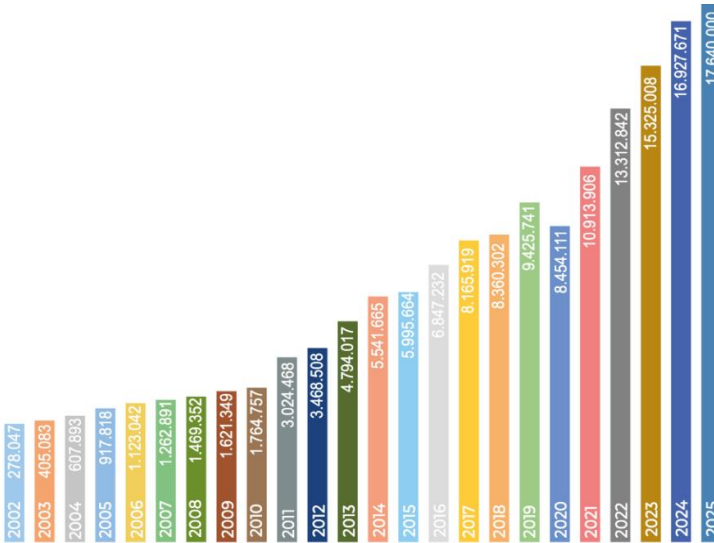


Figure 2. Number of Licensed Athletes in Türkiye Between 2002 and 2025.

In this context, considering the following fundamental reasons, the necessity of establishing a Sports University in our country emerges:

1. Holistic Performance Management: While the current structure prioritizes physical training, it neglects "mental resilience and psychological preparation," which are crucial elements of modern sport. The proposed university will offer psychology not as a secondary discipline, but as an integrated discipline within the training field, enabling athletes to manage competition stress.

2. Centralized Use of Resources: It is not economical to install high-cost performance technologies (biomechanics laboratories, hypoxia chambers, etc.) in every faculty. By centralizing all technological and scientific infrastructure in a single location using a "One-Stop Shop" model, as seen in Germany and the UK, efficiency can be maximized.

3. Flexible Academic Calendar: An athlete-friendly education model—structured around athletes' competition and training camp periods, supported by distance learning and modular course systems, and eliminating the fear of "attendance penalties"—can only be possible under the umbrella of an autonomous sports university.

STRUCTURAL AND ACADEMIC RECOMMENDATIONS

The following standards are proposed for the Sports University to function not only as a physical facility but also as a "High Performance Center" in terms of its operation:

Admission and Acceptance Criteria (Student Selection)

1. Academic Criterion: The university entrance exam score should only be used as a "threshold" to prove that the student possesses the cognitive competence to follow theoretical courses at the university level.

2. Sports Background (CV) Weighting: 60-70% of the entry score should be based on the candidate's national/international achievements, national team history, and years as a licensed athlete.

3. Sport-Specific Talent Tests: Instead of general aptitude examinations, scientific assessments should be implemented to measure the specific motor skills and physiological capacities (e.g., VO₂ max, strength tests) required for the discipline in which the candidate will specialize (e.g., wrestling, judo, swimming).

4. Olympic Pool Quota: An exam-free admission or a fully funded "Elite Status" quota should be reserved for candidates who have already secured an Olympic quota or demonstrate high potential to do so (such as athletes enrolled in Olympic Preparation Centers).

Graduate Titles and Competencies

Graduates should not be limited to titles such as "Physical Education Teacher" or the classic "Coach," but should graduate with the specializations needed by the modern sports industry. Some suggested specializations are listed below:

1. Performance Analyst: An expert who analyzes matches/trainings using data science and sports technologies.

2. Strength & Conditioning Coach: An expert who manages not only technical training but also the athlete's physical development.

3. Sports Mental Performance Consultant: Psychology-based expert in on-field focus and stress management.

4. Sports Technologist: Staff specializing in wearable technologies and sports engineering.

Facilities and Equipment Infrastructure (Campus-Laboratory Model)

The university campus should be based on the concept of a "Living Laboratory" rather than traditional classrooms. This concept should be built to meet the following criteria:

1. Integrated Smart Classrooms: Classrooms where theoretical lessons are taught directly in glass-enclosed spaces such as gymnasiums or on the sidelines, integrated with practical application.

2. High Altitude and Climate Control Chambers: Simulation rooms that allow athletes to adapt to different atmospheric conditions (temperature, humidity, oxygen levels).

3. Biomechanics and Motion Analysis Center: Studios where technical errors are analyzed with millimeter precision using 3D motion capture systems.

4. Recovery Center: Rehabilitation units including cryotherapy (cold room), hydrotherapy pools, and sleep laboratories.

Academic and Coaching Staff Qualifications

The staff should be structured to bridge the gap between "theory" and "practice." In addition to the academic staff to be hired by the university, suitable conditions must be created for coaches specializing in their fields to work at the university during the education, training, and practice periods. The following criteria should be considered when forming the academic and coaching staff:

1. Field Experience Requirement: For academic staff to be appointed specifically in practitioner roles, not only academic qualifications but also prior experience working with national teams or elite clubs should be a mandatory prerequisite.

2. Master Coach System: Even without an academic title, experienced coaches who have trained Olympic champions should be employed as "Lecturers or under contract" to facilitate the transfer of expertise.

Continuous Professional Development: Coaches and academic staff should be required to update their knowledge by participating in internationally accredited courses every two years (at partner universities such as Loughborough or Cologne).

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The current structure of sports science education in Turkey (the scattered model of Sports Science Faculties) appears insufficient for sustaining international sporting success and managing athlete health holistically. Furthermore, in the current system, athletes are unable to adequately participate in academic activities due to the intensity of their training; preparation processes are often carried out through physical training, and deficiencies in stress management/psychological competition can negatively affect performance. International literature indicates that sporting success is not a matter of "chance," but rather the product of strategic management and centralized coordination, with integrated management structures and elite sports development systems standing out as critical components of success. Therefore, establishing a centralized and specialized "Sports University" similar to those in Germany (DSHS Köln) and the United Kingdom (Loughborough) has become a scientific/strategic necessity. Within this framework, the Sports University is planned to be positioned as a "one-stop shop center of excellence" that manages the entire life cycle of the athlete and works in integration with ministries/federations and universities. The strategic policy set for the planned Sports University includes: (i) federation centers and integrated facility management within the campus (Loughborough), (ii) a central-satellite network structure (AIS), (iii) a monitoring/tracking system for athlete development (AIS-FTEM + athlete rights approach), (iv) legal protection of dual careers, (v) holistic mental/psychological support in performance, (vi) advanced technology-data-driven training, and (vii) restructuring coach training with a university-based continuous professional development model. For the institutional design of the Sports University, it is proposed that: a high weighting of athletic background be given to admission (60-70%), branch-specific scientific aptitude tests, an Olympic swimming pool quota; graduate profiles should include specializations such as performance analyst, strength and conditioning, mental performance, and sports technology; and on campus, infrastructure such as smart classrooms, hypoxia-climate rooms, biomechanics-movement analysis and recovery centers with a "living laboratory" approach.