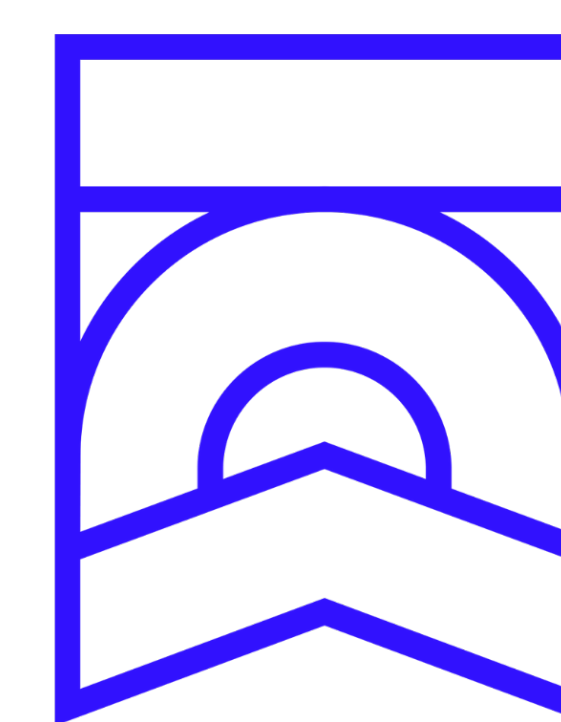




HOW DO ATHLETES, PARENTS & COACHES PERCEIVE TALENT DEVELOPMENT ENVIRONMENTS IN EUROPE?

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ICOACHKIDS, LEEDS BECKETT UNIVERSITY & INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR COACHING EXCELLENCE



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WHAT IS ICOACHKIDS+?

An Erasmus+ Sport co-funded project aiming to address the current lack of coach education resources to support coaches working with young people in 3 key areas.

1. Enhance participation in sport & decrease dropout for children aged 12-18.
2. Maximise the health enhancing properties of sport participation.
3. Take full advantage of the potential of sport as tool for positive youth development.

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BACKGROUND

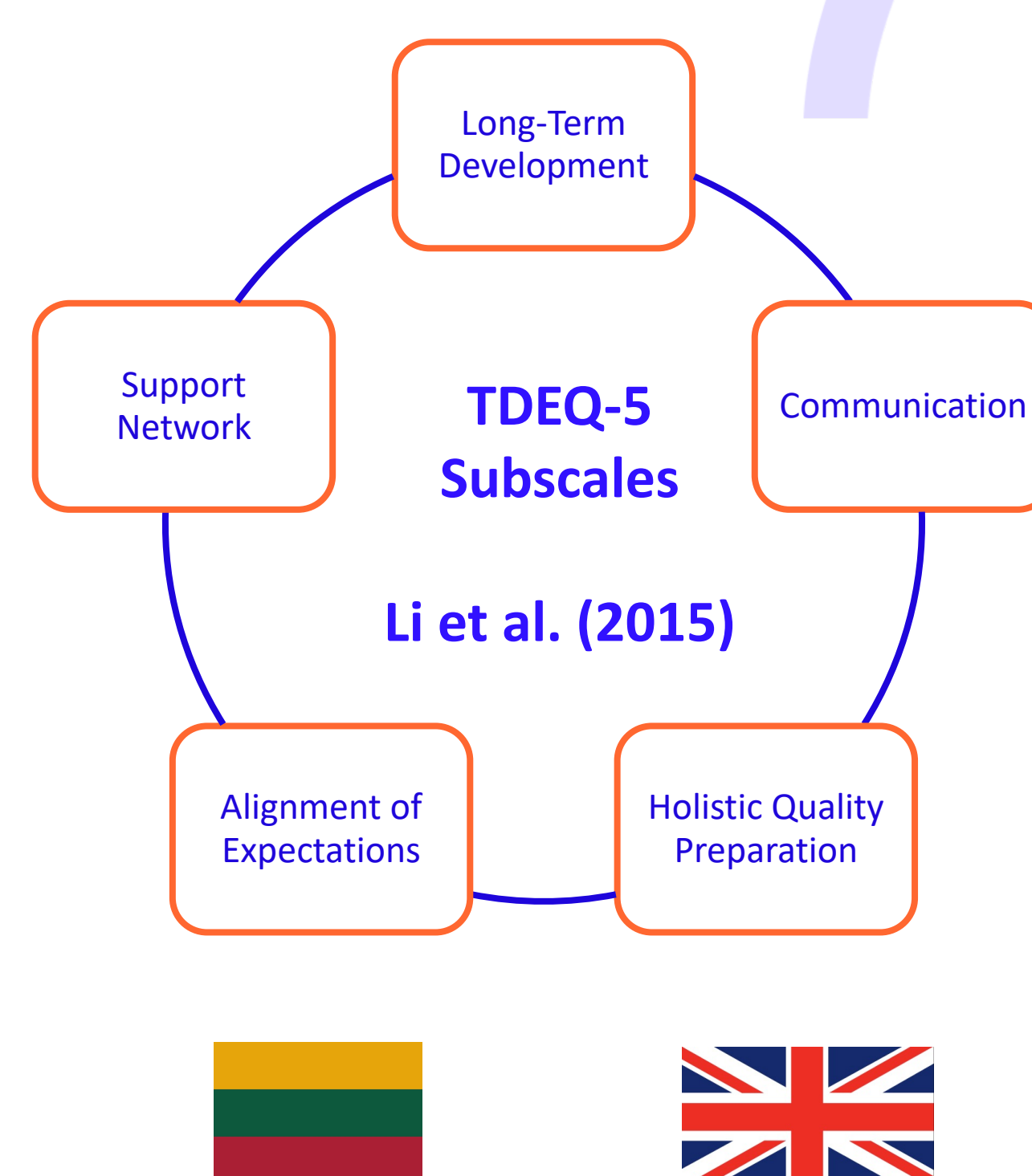
- Within talent systems, the sustainable supply of healthy and capable athletes to the elite level relies on the operation of effective **talent development environments** (TDEs).
- TDEs are the physical & social milieus where youth athletes engage in organised learning & training practices: characterised by regular intense & competitive activities.
- **Effective TDEs** are known to have long-term aims & methods, wide ranging coherent messages & support, emphasis on appropriate development not early success & individual & ongoing development (Martindale et al., 2005).
- Athlete perceptions of TDE quality can affect development, with previous links to wellbeing and burnout (Ivarsson et al., 2015). However, much of the current evidence on TDEs is specific to football academies & particular geographical talent programmes. There is little **cross-context & large sample TDE research**.
- TDE effectiveness is also reliant on **social interactions between stakeholders** (Henriksen et al., 2010) - how stakeholders interact together to reinforce TDE processes is critical.
- Two key stakeholders are **coaches & parents**, with proximity to athletes at the centre of TDEs. **Research examining how these stakeholders perceive TDE effectiveness is limited**.

AIMS

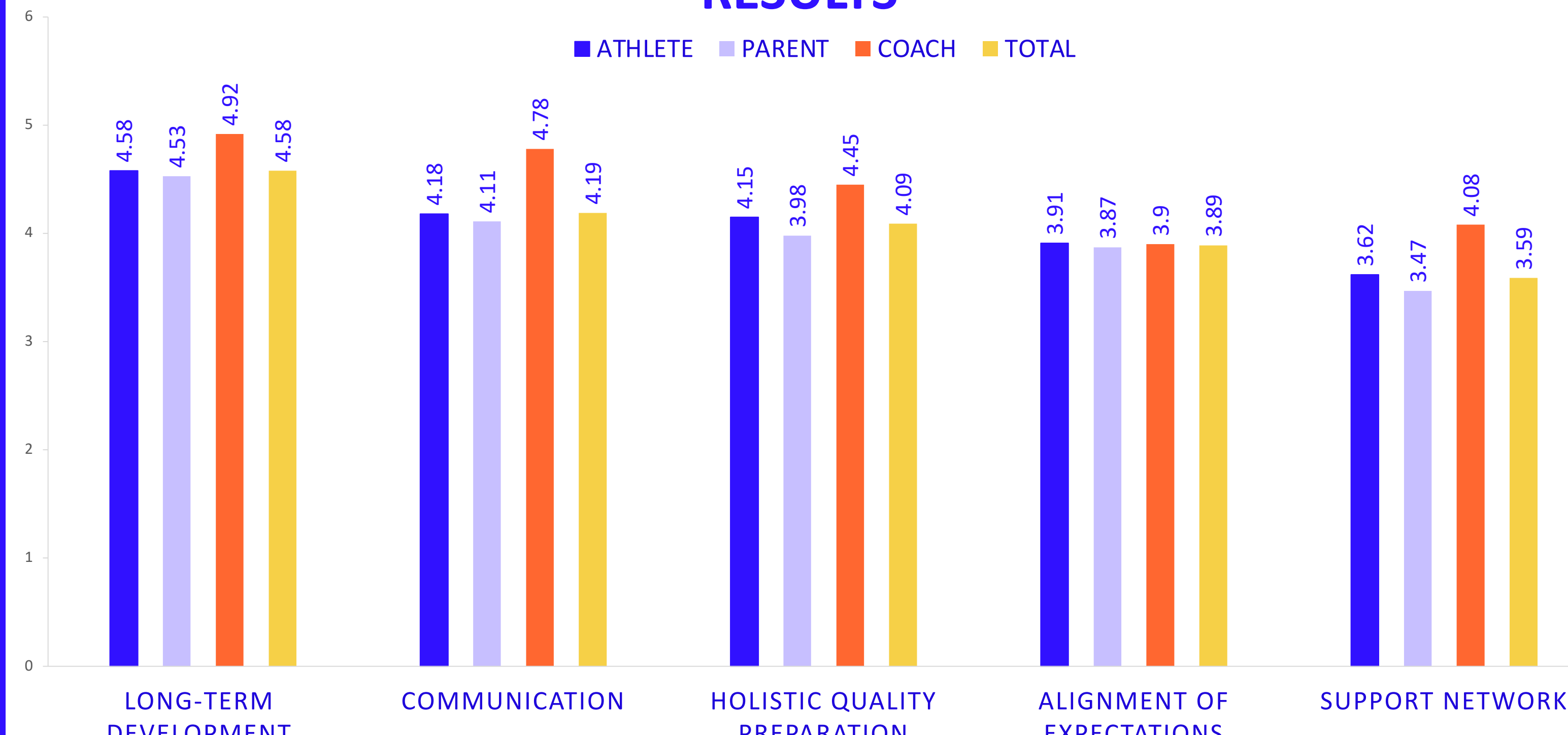
1. Assess the perceptions of the TDE of youth athletes involved in talent development systems across Europe.
2. Compare the perceptions of these TDEs between stakeholders (i.e., athletes, coaches & parents).

METHODS

- Quantitative cross-sectional study design conducted over 8 months with support from gatekeepers.
- **591 youth athletes** (Mean age = 15.2±1.5 years), **759 parents & 134 coaches** recruited from selective TDEs on talent pathways.
- The sample included participants from TDEs in **5 European countries**: Belgium, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, UK & Ireland & **27 individual & team sports**.
- Athletes trained on average for 12 hours a week.
- Athletes completed the **Talent Development Environment Questionnaire-5** (TDEQ-5) (Li et al., 2015). An applied psychometric scale/questionnaire.
- The TDEQ-5 was adapted to measure **parent (TDEQ-5P) & coach (TDEQ-5C)** perceptions.
- The scales measured perceptions relating to the model of effective TDEs (Martindale et al., 2005) using a **1-6 Likert scale (higher score = more favourable)**.
- Subscales include: **Long-term development (LTD)**, **Communication (CoM)**, **Holistic Quality Preparation (HQP)**, **Alignment of Expectations (AoE)** & **Support Network (SN)**.
- Data was analysed using mean scores at item & subscale level. Group comparisons were examined using a Kruskal-Wallis test.



RESULTS



- On the whole, **stakeholder perceptions were more favourable than not**.
- Item scores ranged from 3.22 – 4.92 & subscale scores ranged from 3.59 – 4.58.
- Items relating to tangible training & performances processes were higher-rated. Items relating to social, relational & psycho-social processes were lower-rated.
- LTD was highest ranked, this was followed by CoM, HQP, AoE & SN respectively.
- **Coaches rated LTD, CoM, HQP & SN significantly higher than athletes & parents respectively**. Athletes rated HQP significantly higher than parents. No significant differences found for AoE between stakeholders.

DISCUSSION

- LTD as the highest rated subscale is consistent with previous literature. Stakeholders' agreement in this indicates that this could be a **general strength in TDEs & an increasingly accepted area of good practice**.
- HQP (relating to holistic development) was not a relative weakness, contrary to past TDE research. This is a promising finding for European TDEs. However, observed differences between stakeholders suggests that the intangible & implicit nature of this subscale may make it challenging for parents to fully understand.
- Stakeholders are aligned to the level which they rate AoE. This may demonstrate the TDEs are clear in sport goal related processes. Data suggests there is less agreement in non-direct sport related processes (e.g., holistic development).
- Coaches tended to rate TDEs higher than athletes & parents. This could be due to coaches' higher knowledge or longer-term view of development but also a **'social desirability bias' = potential inflation of TDE quality**. Coaches may not always have an accurate reflection of their TDE – at least compared with other stakeholders.

SUMMARY & IMPLICATIONS

1. Coaches could look towards other stakeholders as valuable 'information assets' to consider in their decision making.
2. Stakeholder coherence is complex – the level of agreement may vary across different aspects of TDEs – so coaches should view and judge it critically.
3. The TDEQ-5P & TDEQ-5C may offer a means to triangulate TDE data in practice (but more research needed to establish these as replicable tools).

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