



# EXPLAINING SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EUROPEAN SPORTS CLUBS

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# Explaining similarities and differences between European sports clubs

An overview of the main similarities and differences between sports clubs in ten European countries and the potential explanations

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## Summary

This report sets out to disseminate the most central information from the European research project ‘Social Inclusion and Volunteering in Sports Clubs in Europe’ (SIVSCE). More specifically, the report has combined knowledge about sports club policies, sports clubs and members and volunteers across borders in ten European countries. The data applied has previously been disseminated in three mainly descriptive reports, but this report has condensed the information from these three reports in order to provide the reader with an overview of the most important findings. Furthermore, potential explanations for the identified similarities and differences have been found and presented. The report consists of three topical chapters that also set the structure for the summary. The first chapter provides an overview of European sports clubs with a focus on history, policies and central characteristics, the second informs us about social integration, while the third chapter provides information about volunteering in sports clubs.

### **Sports clubs: history, policies and characteristics**

In most of the ten European countries, sports policies and the role of sports clubs can be traced back to the formation of the sports system in each country during the period after World War II. In three countries – Spain, Hungary and Poland – the sports system seems to be the result of a combination of the structures established under the authoritarian regimes after World War II and a change of organisational structures and policy governance – under the influence of the sports systems and sports policies in other EU countries – in the years following a shift to democracy.

In all ten countries, sports clubs receive funding from the public sector, but there are a number of differences in how it is allocated, the extent of demands attached to it, etc. The local level is the most important level of government for sports clubs, but there are variations between local governments with regard to the type and level of support for sports clubs. The most common form of funding is ‘targeted subsidy’, but in some countries, ‘basic grants’ for sports clubs, with few and very general requirements, are more common. Indirect support in the form of access to public facilities is the most important form of public funding in most of the countries, but there are large differences in the availability and payment of utilisation fees by clubs for the use of facilities.

Sports clubs in Europe have many features in common. There is a relatively uniform understanding across the ten countries of what a sports club is: It is a private, non-profit organisation formally independent of the public sector; the members participate voluntarily; the decision-making structure is democratic; and volunteering is the dominant and crucial workforce and resource.

In most of the ten countries, sports clubs have existed for more than 150 years, but it is still a popular organisational form and a lot of new clubs are founded every year. ‘Young clubs’ – founded since the turn of the millennium – can mainly be found in Spain, Poland and Hungary. Sports clubs exist in small, rural communities as well as in large, urban communi-

ties. Despite some problems in recruiting new members and volunteers and a lack of public support and access to facilities being experienced in some clubs, most of the clubs do not feel that their existence is threatened. Proportionally the highest number of clubs that feel threatened due to at least one major problem can be found in Poland and the lowest number in the Netherlands and Belgium (Flanders).

People affiliated with a sports club are typically members of the club and active in competitive sport in a group or team, but participation in non-competitive sport is also quite common in some countries. In Belgium (Flanders) and Denmark, approximately 40% of the sports-active members never participate in competitive sport.

Even though the sports clubs are usually associated with competition and performance, companionship and conviviality are valued higher in the clubs than competition and performance in all the countries. In Poland and Hungary, sporting success is valued relatively high and social values relatively low in comparison with the other countries. Across all ten countries, a large majority of clubs aims to involve members when making important decisions.

In most of the ten countries, the majority of the clubs are small, with less than 200 members. Spain, Hungary, Poland, Switzerland and Belgium (Flanders) were found to have the highest proportion of small clubs, whilst the Netherlands, Norway and Germany were found to have the least. The majority of European sports clubs are single sport clubs with one main sports activity. All kinds of sports are organised in clubs. A few sports are big, i.e. offered in more than 5% of the clubs (football, gymnastics, table tennis, volleyball, tennis, fitness and aerobics, badminton, shooting sports, track and field, walking, handball, swimming and hiking), but most of the sports are small, meaning that they are offered in less than 5% of the clubs.

In all ten countries, the proportion of clubs using public facilities is higher than the proportion of clubs using their own sports facilities (highest in Poland and Hungary and lowest in the Netherlands), and in most of the countries, the 'availability of sports facilities' is a small problem, but it is a bigger problem in Poland, Hungary and Spain than in the other countries. In all countries, sports clubs receive public funding, but the direct public subsidies typically amount only to a small proportion of the clubs' total revenue. Compared with the other countries, the proportion of direct public funding is relatively high in Poland and Hungary. In spite of this, the clubs in Poland and Hungary face the greatest challenges regarding their financial situation.

## **Social integration in sports clubs**

Social integration has been explored in a broad sense that examines the (un)equal representation of various selected target groups – such as people with a migration background, people with disabilities, low income groups, etc. – in sports clubs (structural integration), the values and norms represented within sports clubs and sports policies (sociocultural integration), and finally, the participation of members and volunteers in club life and their identification with their respective sports club and other members (socio-affective integration).

The results show that a majority of European sports clubs work for structural integration.



More than two thirds mainly agree that they strive to offer sports to as many population groups as possible, while around half of the clubs mainly agree that they work for the integration of socially vulnerable groups. A significant number of the sports clubs in all ten countries have members from the selected target groups, take special initiatives to integrate one or more target groups and/or agree to work for structural integration. But at the same time, a significant number of clubs neither have members from within the selected target groups, nor do they work strategically with structural integration. There are both similarities and differences in the integration of various target groups into sports clubs, both between the respective target groups and also within and between sports clubs in the ten countries.

It is more common for larger sports clubs to work for structural integration than it is for smaller ones. Also, clubs that have a paid manager and undertake long-term planning are more inclined to take special initiatives and have positive attitudes towards contributing to structural integration. One way to interpret this finding could be that clubs that are more professional in their approach to management are also more likely to have the capacity to work strategically with structural integration. Interestingly, professional management does not seem to influence the representation of target groups in clubs. This could indicate that taking special initiatives is not a prerequisite for clubs to foster structural integration.

For the ten countries included, there is no clear and general link between sports policy priorities and programmes on the one hand, and the representation of and special initiatives taken by sports clubs to include people from selected target groups on the other hand. There are examples of countries where there seems to be a general alignment between policy priorities and programmes on the one hand and the actions of sports clubs with regard to structural integration on the other hand, but there are also a number of examples of the opposite situation.

Finally, the analysis on structural integration reveals that the integration of people from target groups mainly takes place in teams or in groups where members from outside the respective target groups are also represented. At least, this is the case for the vast majority of people with a migration background and people with disabilities included in the member and volunteer survey.

Turning to sociocultural integration, the results show that the vast majority of members and volunteers understand how their respective clubs are run and how they can influence decision making. At the same time, there seems to be respect for diversity in most sports clubs, in that the vast majority of members and volunteers report that they feel respected for who they are. These results could be interpreted as indicators of successful assimilation and the co-existence of the value of pluralism within most clubs.

With regard to assimilation and pluralism, the differences between countries are relatively modest. Instead, it seems that the type of connection to the club has some influence because volunteers, particularly regular volunteers, generally score higher on assimilation and pluralism than non-volunteers. Regardless of the form of affiliation, the duration of affiliation also has a positive influence on the extent to which members and volunteers agree with the statements regarding assimilation and pluralism. It would seem that longstanding affiliation fosters knowledge and skills about how to participate in the member democracy – and that a feeling of mutual respect is central to retention, and/or that it is built up over time.

People who were not born in the country in which they are currently a member of a sports

club agree slightly less with the statements on assimilation than those for whom the sports club is located in their country of origin. This could indicate that for some people with a migration background, it is more difficult to know and master the skills necessary to understand decision making in their respective sports clubs. However, we do not find that people with disabilities and/or a migration background feel less respected by other people in the club. This indicates that once people from these population groups find their way into a sports club, they are as inclined to feel respected as all other members and volunteers.

One potential explanation for the high degree of mutual respect reported by members and volunteers could be that they participate in relatively homogeneous groups. There is some support for this claim, as two out of five members and volunteers mainly socialise with people from the club who are similar to them (in terms of gender, ethnicity, employment, etc.). In Spain, a comparatively high proportion of members and volunteers belong to homogeneous groups, while the opposite is true in Germany, Poland and Switzerland. The analysis also reveals that the larger the sports club is, the larger is the heterogeneity within the social networks formed in the club.

There are elements of both assimilation and pluralism in policy documents. On the one hand, sports clubs have specific norms and values that are often expressed as being beneficial for individuals and for societal integration (e.g. with regard to democracy and voluntary work). Hence, some learning of and assimilation to these values and norms are seen as being beneficial. On the other hand, the recognition of the need for sports clubs to help people from target groups overcome barriers to integration in sports clubs can challenge the traditional values and norms of sports clubs and force them to think more in terms of finding ways to allow various social groups – with different values and norms – to take part in sports alongside each other. This viewpoint is connected to the concept of pluralism.

Sports clubs seem to be important arenas for fostering socio-affective integration. The vast majority of sports clubs have a strong focus on companionship and conviviality, and a majority of the members and volunteers actively participate in club life, while a minority of them are far less active. This finding indicates that, even though sports clubs seem to be important arenas in which socio-affective integration is built, it is possible to take part in a sports club without participating in club life (interaction), and without building emotional commitment to the club and to other members and volunteers (identification).

Interestingly, there are relatively large variations in the socio-affective integration of members and volunteers between the ten countries. Across all the forms of socio-affective integration measured, there is a general tendency for members and volunteers in Spanish and Polish clubs to score relatively high, while the score on socio-affective integration seems to be relatively low in sports clubs in Denmark and the Netherlands. This country pattern is inversely related to the pattern of the proportion of adults in the respective countries who are members of sports clubs. It seems that there is a trade-off between participation rate (within the population) and socio-affective integration (within the clubs).

Socio-affective integration is mainly influenced by how members and volunteers are connected to their respective club. Volunteers – particularly regular volunteers – are significantly more inclined to participate actively in the club democracy and social life and to be emotionally committed to their respective clubs. Also, the duration of affiliation with the club

is positively associated with the measures for socio-affective integration. Jointly, the results indicate that the broader, more intense and long-lasting the connection to the club is, the more inclined members and volunteers are to be active and emotionally committed. At the club level, the size of the sports club has a negative effect on socio-affective integration. In effect, the larger the club, the less active and engaged members and volunteers seem to be. This finding could reflect that smaller club communities foster tighter knit relationships and bring about a greater necessity for members to be active and engaged.

The privileged position of sports clubs with regard to public funding that is found in all ten countries is often backed up by a rhetoric that ascribes a number of positive qualities to sports clubs – some of which are related to socio-affective integration. Often, these positive qualities are seen as being related to the structure of sports clubs as not-for-profit organisations with a democratic decision-making structure and a reliance on voluntary work. These traits are sometimes described as being conducive to democratic learning and participation, and it is quite often argued that sports clubs are well-suited to build social networks of a certain quality (sometimes referred to as ‘binding communities’). In effect, general claims with regard to the qualities of sports clubs in relation to socio-affective integration seem to play a legitimising role for the public subsidies allocated to sports clubs – at least in some countries.

## **Volunteering in sports clubs**

In all ten countries, volunteering is a central element of sports clubs. About one in five members are engaged in a fixed position with slightly higher rates in Spain and Hungary and lower rates in Switzerland and Germany. Altogether, there are no big differences between the ten countries with regard to the number of volunteers (fixed and not fixed positions taken together) in relation to the number of members per club.

It is interesting that the number of volunteers shows quite stable figures over the last five years. In all countries, about two out of three clubs report that the number of volunteers has not changed (i.e. roughly unchanged +/- 10%). Furthermore, in most of the countries, the proportion of clubs with an increase in numbers (more than 10% additional volunteers) is higher than the proportion of those with a decrease (more than 10%). These figures do not fit the general thesis that volunteering is in a steady process of decline.

It has to be pointed out that in countries with a relatively low formal volunteering rate in the society as a whole, the relative number of members volunteering in sports clubs is nearly the same as in countries with a high general participation rate. Thus, in countries where volunteering plays a minor role in society, sports clubs offer an important opportunity for civil engagement.

The proportion of paid staff in relation to the number of members is far lower in all countries than the proportion of volunteers in the sports clubs. This is in line with the general attitude that volunteering should be a central element of sports clubs. Across most of the countries, a majority of clubs ascribe to the ideal that their clubs should be exclusively run by volunteers. However, a closer look shows that clubs agree much more with this statement in countries like Switzerland, Germany and Denmark than is the case in Hungary and Poland.

Presumably, there is an association with the strong historical roots of sports clubs in countries like Germany, Denmark and Switzerland on the one hand and the shorter tradition of sports clubs (and volunteering) in countries like Poland and Hungary on the other hand, because of the late dissolution of the authoritarian regimes. In this context, it is quite interesting to note that the number of clubs with an existential challenge in recruiting volunteers at board level is highest in Germany, Switzerland and Denmark. In all other countries, where the culture for exclusive volunteer club management is less strong, the rate of clubs with existential problems is far lower.

Only a minority of sports clubs employ a paid manager (full-time or part-time), which is most common in England, Norway and Hungary, and least common in Switzerland, Belgium (Flanders) and the Netherlands. Particularly clubs with more than 1,000 members have a paid manager, whereas only a minority of the clubs with less than 300 members have a full-time or part-time manager. In the majority of clubs, the number of paid staff has not changed considerably (at least +/- 10%) within the last five years. If there is a variation, the clubs have most often increased the number of paid staff.

The relative frequency of different forms of volunteer recruitment is similar in all ten countries and self-recruitment (40% over all countries) is the most common method of this recruitment. It is also very common that volunteers are approached by the club board (29%) or are motivated by other members (23%).

In a majority of the clubs across all ten countries, the primary way to recruit volunteers is carried out through the existing networks of current volunteers, and by means of verbal encouragement of potential volunteers. Clubs that have an increase in the number of volunteers more often reported that the following measures are used to recruit and retain volunteers: having a person responsible for volunteer management, giving benefits in kind to the volunteers, and recruiting through the networks of current volunteers. Thus, it can be assumed that these measures help to recruit and retain volunteers more efficiently.

There were several reasons for not volunteering given by members who currently do not engage as volunteers. About one third reported that they are not interested in volunteering at all, and for about one quarter, the volunteering tasks are too time-consuming. There are only some slight differences between the ten countries with regard to these two most relevant reasons for not volunteering.

Across all ten countries, a clear majority of volunteers are satisfied with the general conditions that the clubs provide for their work. About two thirds of the volunteers are satisfied or even very satisfied with the conditions for volunteering, whereas only 10% are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. The relative frequency of satisfied volunteers is similar in all ten countries, with the highest rates in Belgium (Flanders) and Spain, and the lowest in Germany and Hungary.

A closer look at the specific conditions for volunteering shows only minor differences between the countries. The members approve that the following conditions in particular are evaluated in a positive way: 'the tasks are interesting and challenging'; 'my problems and concerns are taken seriously'; 'my work as a volunteer is appreciated'; 'I can carry out my work autonomously'; 'I am being kept informed about major club affairs'; and 'other club members support my work as a volunteer'. Further analysis shows that all of these aspects

are relevant in the context of volunteer satisfaction. The most relevant factor is recognition ('volunteer work is appreciated and honoured'). The factors of *leadership (feedback and information)* and *support of volunteers* also have quite relevant effects on volunteer satisfaction, whereas *material incentives* play a less important role, as do *interesting tasks and autonomy*. In contrast, the size of clubs (number of members) and also having a paid manager have no significant effect on the satisfaction of volunteers. For the different measures to recruit and retain volunteers (e.g. having a responsible person for volunteer management and having a written strategy for volunteer recruitment), there are also no relevant effects. All in all, it seems that the conditions for volunteering as perceived by a single volunteer are the main determinants for their satisfaction.

## **A short introduction to the SIVSCE-project**

The ‘Social Inclusion and Volunteering in Sports Clubs in Europe’ (SIVSCE) project is a collaborative partnership co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union. The project has been, and will be, implemented in 2015, 2016 and 2017. This chapter provides a brief overview of the project.

### **Purpose**

There is only a limited amount of knowledge on the political conditions for, and structural characteristics of, sports clubs that promote social inclusion and volunteering in sport. Most of the existing knowledge is, furthermore, context-specifically tied to individual member states within the European Union. This project seeks to provide comparative knowledge across ten European countries, convert it into specific suggestions for action, and disseminate this knowledge to politicians and sports professionals across Europe. The main aim is to promote social inclusion and volunteering in sports clubs in Europe.

### **Work packages and project output**

The project is implemented in seven work packages (WPs):

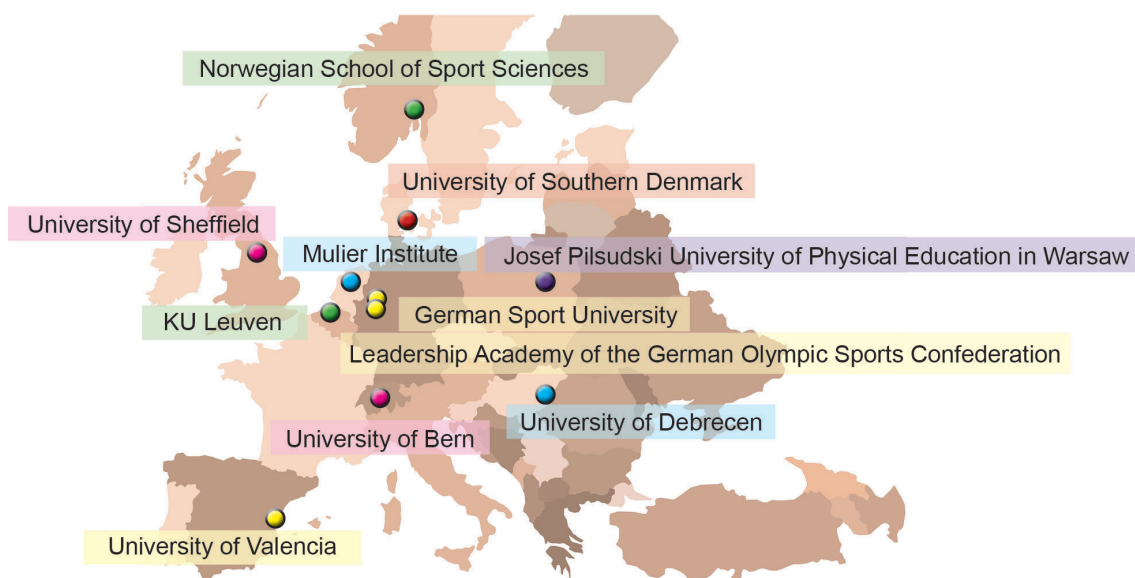
- WP1: A collection of sports club policies in the participating countries.
- WP2: An online sports club survey conducted in each of the participating countries.
- WP3: An online member and volunteer survey conducted in at least 30 sports clubs in each country.
- WP4: Overall analysis of the results from the three studies conducted in WP1, WP2 and WP3.
- WP5: A collection of examples of best practice in relation to social inclusion and volunteering.
- WP6: Creation of a handbook with suggestions for sports policies, club management and the like, capable of promoting social inclusion and volunteering in sports clubs.
- WP7: A broad dissemination of findings and suggestions (e.g. European and national conferences).

The project generates the following output:

- 5 reports (one for each WP 1 to 5)
- A handbook (WP6)
- A European conference and ten national conferences (WP7)

## Partners

The project includes eleven partners from ten countries dispersed across Europe, as illustrated in the map below. The representation of countries from different parts of Europe ensures that project findings will be of broad relevance to nations across Europe.



*Map of partners in the SIVSCE project.*

Jointly, the group of partners in the project represents vast knowledge about and experience with studies within the research field of sports participation, sports policies, sports organisations and sports clubs. For basic information about the project partners and their roles please consult the introductory report to the project (Elmose-Østerlund et al., 2016).

## Central concepts

Particularly central to the project are the following three concepts: Sports clubs, social integration, and volunteering. These are described below.

### Sports clubs

Sports clubs are generally considered to be participated in voluntarily, and led by volunteers, as opposed to paid employees. They are therefore part of the voluntary sector of leisure provision; in contrast to the private and public sectors. Even though they share this common characteristic, the population of sports clubs in Europe is highly diverse on a number of structural characteristics and it is therefore extremely difficult to present a clear and unambiguous

definition. Instead, researchers have suggested seven characteristics of an 'ideal type' sports club: 1) voluntary membership, 2) orientation towards the interests of members, 3) democratic decision-making structure, 4) voluntary work, 5) autonomy, 6) a non-profit orientation and 7) solidarity (Heinemann & Horch, 1981; Ibsen, 1992).

### **Social integration**

In the project we have used the concept 'social integration' as a more broad term than social inclusion. We distinguish between three – interrelated – dimensions of social integration that draw attention to different aspects of the concept that are relevant to sports clubs (Elling, De Knop & Knoppers, 2001; Esser, 2009).

1. *Structural integration*: The representation of various social groups in the membership, relative to the population.
2. *Socio-cultural integration*: The ability of individuals to know and master dominant values and norms (assimilation) and the acceptance of multiculturalism (pluralism).
3. *Socio-affective integration*: Participation in social life and the formation of social networks (interaction) and the degree of identification and emotional devotion (identification).

### **Volunteering**

In this project, we define volunteering or voluntary work by five central characteristics: 1) voluntary activities, 2) unpaid or paid for with a symbolic amount, 3) carried out for people other than one's own family, 4) for the benefit of other people 5) and having a formal character (organised or agreed) (Ibsen 1992).

### **Theoretical framework**

This project is not guided by a single theoretical approach to the study of sports clubs. However, it does subscribe to the understanding that sports clubs are relevant objects of study themselves. In order to understand how sports clubs function and why, it is necessary to study the central characteristics of clubs. At the same time, sports clubs cannot be understood as detached from their environment, since the environment sets the framework in which sports clubs function and develop. Finally, sports clubs have come to exist due to members combining their resources to realize shared interests, which means that sports clubs primarily exist to serve the interests of their members.

In light of the above, this project departs from a multilevel model for the analysis of sports clubs (Nagel, 2007). The multilevel model takes into account the environment of sports clubs (macro level), sports club characteristics (meso level) and the characteristics of members and volunteers (micro level).



## **More information**

Project progress, publications, articles and information about conferences can be found at the project website: <http://www.sdu.dk/SIVSCE>. For more detailed information about the project, please consult the introductory report (Elmose-Østerlund et al., 2016), which is also available on the project website.

## 1. Introduction

Sports clubs share a number of common characteristics across European borders. They are private, non-profit organisations, formally independent of the public sector, the members participate voluntarily, and the decision-making structure is democratic. In spite of this, past research has shown that, in addition to a number of similarities, there are significant differences between sports clubs both within and between countries (Breuer, Hoekman, Nagel, & Van der Werff, 2015). These similarities and differences are at the heart of this report, where potential explanations for the identified similarities and differences will also be elaborated on.

The report utilises the knowledge about sports policies, sports clubs and members and volunteers that has been collected in the SIVSCE project and – so far – disseminated in three mainly descriptive reports. The first report (WP1) was based on a collection of sports club policies in the ten participating countries with the aim of elucidating potential associations between the conditions that the governmental and political framework establishes on the one hand and social integration and volunteering in sports clubs on the other hand (Ibsen et al., 2016). The second report (WP2) sought to investigate and compare the characteristics of European sports clubs. The report builds on data collected through an online survey carried out among 35,790 sports clubs in Europe. In the survey, the participating clubs were invited to answer questions on structural characteristics, the general management of their club and specific goals and plans for promoting social integration and volunteering (Breuer et al., 2017). The third report (WP3) examined the involvement and commitment of adult (16+ years) members and volunteers in their respective sports clubs. The data for the report was gathered through an online survey among 13,082 members and volunteers from 642 sports clubs (Van der Roest et al., 2017).

Each of the above-mentioned reports presents knowledge related to European sports clubs at different levels of analysis, as illustrated in Figure 1, which also presents the theoretical framework applied in the SIVSCE project. The core idea is that by combining information from across different levels of analysis – as is done in this report – it is not only possible to identify similarities and differences, but also to provide potential explanations for the similarities and differences identified, while taking into account the complexity of the context in which European sports clubs exist.

The multilevel model in Figure 1 takes into account the environment of sports clubs (macro level), sports club characteristics (meso level) and the characteristics of members and volunteers (micro level), as shown in the figure. The focus points at each level of analysis have been modified from the original figure (Nagel, 2007; Nagel et al., 2015) to fit in with the research perspectives applied in this project. The arrows in the figure show the interplay between the different levels of analysis. The figure shows that understanding sports clubs and the background for the action of sports clubs can be a complex undertaking that requires data collection on multiple levels of analysis – as has been conducted in the SIVSCE project.

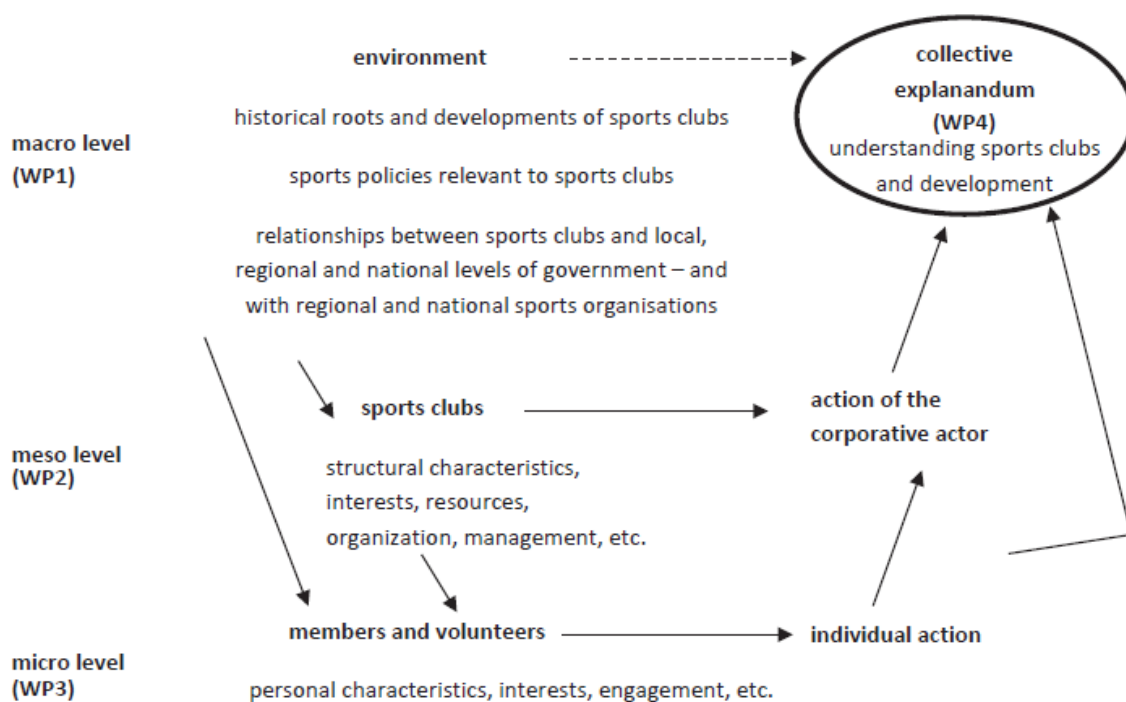


Figure 1: Multilevel model for the analysis of sports clubs.

## 1.1. Methodological remarks

Building on knowledge from three different sources, the data material applied in the analyses in this report is comprehensive. It contains comparative data from the ten European countries that are part of the SIVSCE project on each of the three levels of analysis. For a detailed description of the data applied at each level of analysis, the reader can consult each of the three mainly descriptive reports presented above. Here, only the most basic information about the data material will be briefly introduced.

At the macro level, information about sports club policies was gathered in all ten countries, building on existing knowledge and data sources. The information was structured using a template in which the following topics were covered: The relationships between various levels of government (national, regional and local) and sports clubs, the relationships between national and regional governing bodies and sports clubs, and finally, the historical influences on sports clubs.

At the meso level, a survey was conducted using national translations of an English questionnaire developed in the research group. Sports clubs were sampled to be as representative as practically possible for the population of sports clubs in each country, and one person was contacted electronically for each club. A total number of about 35,000 sports clubs replied to the survey, ranging from about 600 in Norway and Poland to about 20,000 in Germany.

At the member and volunteer level, a survey was also conducted using national translations of an English questionnaire developed in the research group. Here, at least thirty sports clubs from within each country were sampled (in some countries, significantly more clubs were sampled). The clubs were selected in order to represent the variation found within sports clubs concerning a number of structural characteristics, such as sports, club size, community size and the like. Three sports were oversampled – football, tennis and swimming – and so the sample cannot be expected to be completely representative for members and volunteers within European sports clubs. Within the clubs sampled, all adult members and volunteers (aged 16 or above) were contacted electronically in all clubs – if possible – and asked to participate in the study. A total number of about 13,000 members and volunteers replied to the survey, ranging from about 350 in Spain to about 2,700 in Denmark.

What should be kept in mind when reading this report – particularly concerning the similarities and differences between countries – is that, even though the data is the best comparable data on European sports clubs, in some situations pragmatic considerations have meant that it has not been possible to collect data in exactly the same manner or with the exact same sampling procedure in all countries. Also, the survey response rates differ significantly between countries, which could potentially mean that for some countries, a more ‘selected’ group of respondents (clubs and/or members and volunteers) have replied to the surveys than is the case for other countries. We do not have sufficient background information available to estimate this potential source of bias, but the reader can inform himself about the potential bias by reading the methodological chapters in the WP2 and WP3 reports.

In the search for potential explanations for similarities and differences between countries, clubs and members and volunteers – within and across the levels of analysis shown in Figure 1 – correlational analyses have been conducted. Some correlational analyses were conducted as bivariate analyses, showing the correlation between two variables only, but often regression analyses were also conducted. The regression analyses most often involved a number of so-called independent variables that could potentially influence the dependent variable or the correlation between other independent variables and the dependent variable. The purpose of the regression analyses was to obtain greater certainty about the correlations found in the bivariate analyses and to provide a more comprehensive picture of the conditions and traits that are significant in explaining the identified similarities and differences.

Depending on the type of dependent variable, different types of regression analyses were conducted. In the text, it is indicated what type of regression analysis (e.g. linear, logistic, etc.) was conducted. Where the regression analyses were performed across levels of analysis, it was indicated that the regression analyses were so-called multilevel models. In the text or in separate footnotes, it is also mentioned which independent variables were included for each regression analysis.

## **1.2. Structure of the report**

The report is structured with three topical chapters. In Chapter 2, an overview of European sports clubs is provided, with a focus on history, policies and central characteristics. In Chapter 3, the topic is social integration with a focus on structural, sociocultural and socio-affective integration. Chapter 4 provides information about voluntary work in European sports clubs. Each of the topical chapters presents central similarities and differences across countries, along with potential explanations for these by combining data from the macro, meso and micro level. Central for the analysis are the questions of whether differences between sports clubs (meso level) can be explained by differences at the sports policy level (macro level), and if differences at the member and volunteer level (micro level) can be explained by differences at the club level (meso level).

## 2. Sports clubs: history, policies and characteristics

The analysis in this report has particular focus on social integration and volunteering in sports clubs in the ten countries. However, the study has also included other aspects of sports clubs. In this first chapter, we therefore firstly sum up the findings from the first report in the research project regarding the history and policies in relation to sports clubs in the ten countries (Ibsen et al., 2016), and secondly we elucidate seven dimensions of sports clubs, which later in this report are included as independent variables in the analyses of social integration and volunteering in sports clubs.

### 2.1. Sports club history and policies

The organisational pattern, which was formed several decades ago, has a tendency to endure, although the social, cultural and economic conditions that led to the formation of the organisational system have changed in many cases (Anheir & Salamon, 2006; Pierson & Skocpol, 2002; Salamon & Anheir, 1998; Stinchcombe, 1965). In the literature, this is referred to as ‘path dependence’. According to this theoretical approach, the organisational system largely reflects past ideological trends, as well as social conflicts and groupings. Over the years, a number of institutional frameworks have been created, and the organisational system is viewed as more or less ‘protected’ against new and competing forms of organisation and policy. This ‘protection’ – among other things – is caused by legislation, and the way the public sector supports, cooperates and exchanges relations with the environment, which has created a mutual dependency. Thus, the basic assumption of this theoretical approach is that the situation relative to a historic time,  $t_1$ , exerts influence on the situation at a later point in time,  $t_2$ .

In most of the ten countries, sports policies and the role of sports clubs can be traced back to the formation of the sports system in the country during the period after World War II. This applies to both the organisational system and the relationship between the public sector on the one side and sports organisations and clubs on the other. In three countries – Hungary, Poland and Spain – the sports system seems to be the result of a combination of the political structures under the authoritarian regimes established after World War 2 on the one hand, and a change of organisational structures and policy governance – under the influence of the sports systems and sports policies in other EU countries – in the years following a shift to democracy on the other. In Spain, sports clubs were born at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. With the dictatorship that followed the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), the situation completely changed because the State wanted to control the Spanish sport clubs. The recovery of democracy (with the Constitution of 1978) allowed sports clubs to recover the democratic culture they had before the dictatorship. The structures established during the dictatorship did not disappear immediately, but the sports clubs had a clear memory of their democratic background.

Within this historical perspective, it is also useful to consider that societies can be placed on a continuum of ‘statism’, understood as the extent to which the state or civil society is the principal locus of public life. Anglo-Saxon countries are at the low end of the ‘statism’ scale. This scale has been used to explain the “*mosaic of local civic institutions that developed*

*in nineteenth-century Britain*” (Schofer & Fourcade-Gourinchas, 2001, p. 812), but also to explain why *”voluntary action in Anglo-Saxon countries is still cast in a powerful liberal ideology that continues to celebrate voluntarism as autonomous and jealously defends its arm’s length relationship from government”*.

The second theoretical point of departure in this research project seeks to explain the sports clubs (patterns, structure, activities, goals, resources etc.) in the different countries from the aspects of the current societal context, with a particular focus on the limitations and possibilities that the political system and the public sector in general provide (Micheletti, 1994). These societal structures and cultures largely define the ‘political opportunity structure’, both practical and ideological, within which different organisational forms must act.

### **2.1.1. ‘The political opportunity structure’ for sports clubs**

In all ten countries, people have the right to found and become a member of an association. Several of the countries have ensured this right in the constitution. Specific requirements on how sports clubs are to be structured and organised are rarely found in the national legislation, however. If there are any requirements, it is mainly related to the possibilities for associations and voluntary organisations to receive public funding and exemption from taxation (not-for-profit orientation, openness for all who are interested, democratic decision-making structure, etc.). Specific requirements for receiving public subsidies are found in Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland. In some countries, the specific requirements are laid down in an act on sport or an act on public economic support to voluntary organisations (Hungary and Denmark). Club structure is therefore determined by policies at the national level only on a very general way – and only in some countries.

In all ten countries, sports clubs receive funding/subsidies from the public sector, but there are substantial differences in how these resources are allocated, the conditions required, etc. The available information leaves the impression that the economic value of the support from the local authorities to sports clubs is relatively low in England compared to Belgium (Flanders), Germany, Denmark, Norway and Switzerland. In several countries, however, financial support has been declining over the past decade.

In all ten countries, the most important governmental level for sports clubs is the local level, but there are variations between local governments with regard to the form and level of support for sports clubs. In most of the countries involved, there is no direct link or only a weak one between the national level of government and the sports clubs. An exception here is the national (or regional) programmes targeted at sports clubs (e.g. Belgium (Flanders), Denmark, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain and Switzerland).

The most common form of funding for sports clubs is ‘targeted subsidy’ (Belgium (Flanders), Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands and Poland), but in some countries ‘basic grants’ for sports clubs with few, very general requirements are more common (Denmark and Norway). A new kind of relationship between sports clubs and the public sector has developed over the last decades within some of the countries in the form of co-production and co-creation between sports clubs and local public institutions.

The provision by (local) authorities of public facilities and infrastructure is of utmost importance with regard to the (continued) existence of sports clubs. Indirect support in the form

of access to public facilities is the most important form of public funding in most countries, but there are large differences in the availability and payment of utilisation fees by clubs for the use of facilities. In most of the ten countries, sports facilities are predominantly owned by the local authorities that are responsible for the maintenance and administration of the facilities. Access for free or a low fee is found in Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Norway, Poland and Switzerland. Full or reduced fee access is found in England, the Netherlands and Spain.

### 2.1.2. Welfare state typologies

This study has been inspired by Esping-Andersen's well known welfare state typology (1990) and later development of the typologies (Fenger, 2007; Leibfried, 1993; Pierson, 2004). Although welfare state typologies are developed in relation to social and welfare policy, we assume that the characteristics of the typologies can be considered as relevant for sports policies and the relationships between the public sector and sports clubs in particular. Firstly, some of the core dimensions in the definition of the welfare state typology are also essential for sports policy. Among other things, the typology is determined by the degree of economic redistribution in society, which is largely associated with the public sector's total consumption. It can be assumed that welfare states with a large public sector not only have a high level of public welfare schemes and income redistribution, but also spend relatively large sums on sports policy objectives and programmes (Bergsgard et al., 2007; Ibsen & Ottesen, 2003).

Furthermore, the welfare state typology differentiates between states according to the importance of the subsidiarity principle, and this principle also guides the sports policy in several countries. Secondly, studies of various countries' sports policies find a correlation between the way the welfare state is generally functioning and the principles of the respective national sports policies (Bergsgard et al., 2007; Bergsgard & Norberg, 2010; Ibsen & Ottesen, 2003). Table 1 shows the welfare state typology that (best) characterises the countries included in this project.

**Table 1. Welfare state typology.**

Type of welfare state	Countries
Liberal	England
Conservative / Corporatist	Germany, Belgium (Flanders), Netherlands, Switzerland
Social Democratic / Universal	Norway, Denmark
Latin Rim	Spain
Post-Communist	Poland, Hungary



## 2.2. Characteristics of sports clubs

On the one hand, there is a relatively uniform understanding across the ten countries of what a sports club is. More precisely, a sports club is conceived as a private, non-profit organisation formally independent of the public sector, the members participate voluntarily, and the decision making structure is democratic. On the other hand, there are also major differences on a number of organisational characteristics. In the following, we are looking at seven dimensions – or characteristics - of sports clubs, which later in this report are included as independent variables in the analyses of social integration and volunteering in sports clubs.

1. The historical dimension: the age of clubs.
2. The contextual dimension: the degree of urbanisation.
3. The intentional dimension: the goals and activities in clubs.
4. The structural dimension: the size, specialisation and management of clubs.
5. The resource dimension: the facilities and finances of clubs.
6. The membership dimension: how the members are affiliated to the club.
7. The problems dimension: challenges for clubs.

### 2.2.1. The historical dimension: the age of clubs

The population of sports clubs in Europe consists of a mixture of young and old clubs. Eight percent of the clubs that replied to the questionnaire are very old, founded before 1900, and seven percent are very young, founded since 2010. ‘Young clubs’ – founded since the turn of the millennium – make up almost one third (31%) of the population of European sports clubs. There seems to be a clear correlation between the country-specific political history and the proportion of sports clubs formed in recent times. ‘Young clubs’ are mainly found in Spain (73 %), Poland (64 %) and Hungary (48 %). On the other side, only seven percent of all Dutch sports clubs, eleven percent of all Swiss sports clubs, and thirteen percent of all German sports clubs are ‘young clubs’. This shows that in Spain, Poland and Hungary, which until the 1970s and 1980s had authoritarian regimes, relatively many young sports clubs exist compared to the other countries that experienced a longer democratic political history. After the period of transition to democracy in Spain, there was an emergence of many sports clubs in Spain in the 1980s and 1990s. Furthermore, a lot of the problems and difficulties sport clubs faced in order to survive resulted in a cycle of creation-disappearance.

The following big sports are found especially in old clubs founded before 1960: Gymnastics, badminton, football, handball, health sport, table tennis, track and field, volleyball and walking (more than two out of three of these clubs offer at least one of these sports).

There is a strong correlation between the size of clubs and the year of foundation. Three out of four clubs with more than 500 members were founded before 1960. For clubs with 50 members or less, this only applies to 16%. Multisport clubs are typically older than single sport clubs. The majority of clubs founded before 1920 and about half of the clubs founded between 1920 and 1960 are multisport clubs, while three out of four clubs founded since 1960 are single sport clubs. The explanation for this may be that it has been less common to form

multisport clubs in recent decades than it was previously, but it may also be due to the fact that some single sport clubs change over time to multisport clubs.

### **2.2.2. The contextual dimension: the degree of urbanisation**

Sports clubs in Europe are situated in different surroundings, like rural areas or big metropolitan areas. This is a relevant dimension because a new study of associations in Denmark shows that associations with a strong connection to a local community (which primarily is found in small communities) are more willing to cooperate with public institutions, and it is conceivable that it is important for the integration of marginalised groups in the clubs (Levinsen & Ibsen, 2017).

The distribution of community sizes where the sports clubs are located varies across countries. In the countries involved in this study, 46% of the clubs are located in communities with less than 20,000 inhabitants. In Switzerland, the largest proportion of sports clubs is located in small communities: 43% of the clubs have their home in villages with less than 5,000 inhabitants and 36% are situated in middle-sized communities with 5,000 to 19,999 inhabitants. In contrast to that, more than 30% of the sports clubs in England, Hungary, Poland and Spain are situated in communities or cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants.

More than 20% of the clubs in the following sports are located in small rural communities with less than 5,000 inhabitants: Gymnastics, badminton, football, handball, table tennis, shooting sports and tennis. The analysis cannot prove a significant correlation between community size and the age of the clubs.

### **2.2.3. The intentional dimension: the goals and activities in clubs**

Sports clubs deal with sport, but sport includes many different types of sport and activity, and the purpose of organising sports can be very different. Several studies have shown that the kind of sport and the purpose of the clubs are of major importance for the social relationships between members and their involvement in democracy and voluntary work (Ibsen, 1992; Østerlund, 2013). What kind of sports are the clubs dealing with and what is the purpose of the clubs?

#### *Type of sports*

Across the ten countries, only fifteen sports are provided in more than 5% of the sports clubs. Football is the most often provided sport, followed by gymnastics ('all sorts' and 'apparatus'), table tennis, volleyball, tennis, fitness and aerobics, badminton, shooting sports, track and field, walking, badminton, handball, swimming and hiking. The vast majority of sports are provided by fewer than five percent of the sports clubs.

The analysis shows that, on the one hand, there are many common features across the countries in the sports activity pattern. This applies especially to the big team ballgames. Around 30% of the clubs in Norway, Poland and Germany stated that they offered football to their members. In the Netherlands, every fourth club provides opportunities for playing football, whereas in Denmark, Spain and Switzerland, less than 20% of the clubs provide football offers. On the other hand, there are also major differences between countries in the spread of the various sports, which arguably should be explained historically. In Norway,

Nordic skiing is a popular sport (in 18% of the clubs). In Poland, around nine percent of the clubs have offers in fighting and combat sports. In Hungary, nearly seven percent of the clubs offer karate. In Belgium (Flanders), nearly eight percent of the clubs have offers in fighting and combat sports. Table 2 shows in which countries the various sports are mainly provided through sports clubs.

**Table 2. Most common sports provided by sports clubs in the ten countries (proportion of clubs).**

Sports	Most common in sports clubs in ...
Apparatus gymnastic	Germany
Badminton	Denmark, Germany
Basketball	England, Spain, Hungary
Boxing	Hungary
Canoe / kayak	Hungary
Cycling	Belgium (Flanders), Spain
Dancing	Belgium (Flanders), Denmark, Germany
Equestrian sports	Germany, Norway
Fighting / combat sport	Belgium (Flanders), Poland, Spain
Fitness and aerobics	Germany, Norway
Football	Germany, Norway, Poland
Gymnastics (all sorts)	Germany, Denmark
Handball	Norway, Hungary, Denmark, Germany
Hiking	Hungary, Germany, Spain
Shooting sports	Denmark, Norway, Poland, Hungary
Skiing Nordic	Norway
Sports for disabled	Norway
Swimming	Hungary, Norway, Poland, England
Table tennis	Germany, the Netherlands
Tennis	Germany, Norway
Track and fields	Germany, Norway
Volleyball	Germany, Poland
Walking	Germany, Spain, Norway and Belgium (Flanders)

Switzerland is not included in this analysis

The analysis also shows that the largest club-organised sports are primarily offered in multi-sport clubs. What also characterises these sports is that a relatively large proportion of the clubs providing such sports are 'old clubs', i.e. founded before 1960, and a relatively large part of the clubs are 'big clubs', i.e. have more than 500 members.

### *Goals and values*

Participation in a sports club is usually assigned two key values: Competition and performance, as well as social fellowship. What significance do the clubs attach to these goals and values? In the questionnaire, clubs were asked to give their opinion on the importance of the two following goals: ‘Companionship and conviviality’ and ‘Sporting success and competition’.

Social aspects seem to be very important to most sports clubs across countries and across sports types. Across countries, the mean value of the item *Our club sets high value on companionship and conviviality* is 4.3 and larger than 4 in all countries with the exception of Hungary (on a scale from 1 = *don’t agree at all* to 5 = *totally agree*). The highest agreement to this item comes from sports clubs in Spain ( $M = 4.7$ ) and Belgium (Flanders) ( $M = 4.6$ ), and the lowest agreement is found in Hungary ( $M = 3.8$ ). Compared with the importance of social aspects within club life, *sporting success and competition* is not considered to be that high in the sports clubs. Although most clubs rather agree with this item, the average values are lower than the average value on the social aspects. Across countries, the mean value is 3.5. The lowest average importance of sporting success is stated by sports clubs in Germany and Norway ( $M = 3.1$ ). The highest is found in Poland ( $M = 4.1$ ) and Hungary ( $M = 3.9$ ).

The results show that there seem to be differences particularly between, on the one hand, the two post-communist states (Poland and Hungary), where sporting success is valued relatively high and social values relatively low, and on the other hand, most ‘conservative’ states (in relation to the welfare state typology: Germany, Belgium (Flanders), Switzerland) as well as ‘social democratic states’ (Denmark and Norway), where sporting success is valued relatively low and social values relatively high.

We also looked at whether there are differences between the different types of sports in relation to the importance of the two goals. Companionship and conviviality is especially an important goal in clubs that (among other things) organise cycling, football, hiking and shooting (more than 40% totally agree). Sporting success is valued high in about every tenth sports club that organises basketball, cycling, equestrian, handball, shooting sport, swimming and track and field (more than 10% totally agree). The analysis shows that there are much bigger differences between sports regarding the importance of ‘sporting success’ than the importance of ‘companionship and conviviality’. Companionship and conviviality are more common values and goals across sport types and sports clubs than sporting success is. However, there is no contradiction – in the statistical sense – between the two goals. Rather the opposite. The proportion of clubs that ‘totally agree’ that ‘*Our club sets high value on sporting success and competition*’ also ‘totally agree’ that ‘*Our club sets high value on companionship and conviviality*’ to a greater extent than clubs that do not find sporting success very important.

A logistic regression analysis<sup>1</sup> shows that the probability that a club ‘totally agrees’ with the statement ‘*Our club sets high value on companionship and conviviality*’ depends on the club size and the size of the community to which the club belongs: higher agreement with the statement is found in small clubs and in clubs in small communities. So the size of the

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<sup>1</sup> The regression analysis included the following independent variables: country, club age, club size, single vs. multisport and size of community.

community and the size of the club have an influence on the extent to which social values are given importance in the sports club.

The logistic regression analysis shows that the probability that a club ‘totally agrees’ with the statement ‘*Our club sets high value on sporting success and competition*’ not only depends on the club size and the community size, but also on the age of the club. It is higher in small clubs than in larger clubs (but with small differences), higher in younger clubs than in older clubs, and higher in large communities than in small communities. Further analyses of the importance of ‘companionship and conviviality’ can be found in Chapter 3.3.1 as part of the analyses of the socio-affective integration in the sports clubs.

#### **2.2.4. The structural dimension: the size, specialisation and management of clubs**

The structural dimension includes several aspects of a club: How big is the club, how specialised is the club (in one sport or two or more sports), and how is the club managed?

##### *Size*

Several studies show that the size of the club (= number of members) is very important for many aspects of a club (Heinemann & Schubert, 1992; Ibsen, 1992; Laub, 2012; Seippel, 2008; Østerlund, 2013). This study shows that across countries the average size of clubs is 239 members, but the population of sports clubs is dominated by a large number of small clubs with less than 100 members (more than half of the clubs) and a small number of big clubs with more than 500 members (11%). We find the highest proportion of small clubs in Spain, Hungary, Poland, Switzerland and Belgium (Flanders) and the lowest proportion in the Netherlands, Norway and Germany. The average size of European sports clubs in terms of membership numbers varies across countries: while Dutch sports clubs have approximately 410 members on average, the average in Poland is 112. Between 300 and 400 members on average are found in sports clubs in Denmark, Germany and Norway. However, the median is much lower in all included countries, meaning that there are few clubs with large membership numbers. In Denmark and England, for example, half of all clubs have a maximum membership number of 112, which is clearly below the mean values of both countries.

It is difficult to find a clear pattern in the distribution of small and large clubs between the countries. The essential differences between the countries could possibly be explained by population density, but here we do not find a clear pattern. The differences could also be related to how large is the proportion of citizens who practise sport in a sports club. But there is no clear pattern. The third explanation could be that the club size is related to whether it is a single sport club or a multisport club. Across the countries, the average club size of multisport clubs is 611 members and of single sport clubs is 91. But the number of members of the two types of sports clubs also differs a lot between the countries. Relatively many small single sport clubs – with 50 or less members – are found in Hungary (60%), Spain (58%) and Poland (49%) and very few in the Netherlands (10%), where large single sport clubs with more than 500 members are much more common (30% of all single sport clubs) than in the other countries. If we look at the multisport clubs, it is more or less the same pattern. Small clubs are most common in Spain, Poland and Hungary. However, it is particularly in Germany and

Norway that we find large multisport clubs with more than 500 members.

There are also big differences in club size between sports. Half of all the clubs that organise gymnastics, badminton, basketball, fitness and aerobics, handball, track and field, volleyball and walking have more than 500 members.

### *Degree of specialisation*

The majority of European sports clubs – three out of four – are single sport clubs with one main sports activity. This particularly applies to the Netherlands, Belgium (Flanders) and England (approximately nine out of ten sports clubs). Around one third of Hungarian and Norwegian sports clubs and 40% of the German sports clubs are multisport clubs, meaning they are divided into branches representing different sports.

Almost all the big sports (in more than 5% of all sports clubs) are predominantly organised in multisport clubs: Gymnastics, badminton, fitness and aerobics, handball, health sport, table tennis, track and field, volleyball and walking. More than 80% of the clubs with these sports are multisport clubs.

Furthermore, a logistic regression analysis<sup>2</sup> with the dependent variable *multisport club* shows that multisport clubs are more common among big clubs than small clubs; among clubs founded before 1960 than among younger clubs; and among clubs in small communities (less than 5,000 inhabitants) than clubs in larger communities. The fact that multisport clubs are typically older than single sport clubs may be because it is less common today to form multisport clubs than it was previously (especially before 1960). Later we will examine whether a club's degree of specialisation is important for social integration and voluntary work in the clubs.

### *Management and involvement of members*

In theory as well as in practice, management is ascribed great importance in the performance of an individual organisation. In this study we look at two aspects of management: To what extent is planning of the activities and monitoring of plans carried out, and to what extent are members involved in important decisions regarding the club?

Regarding *long-term planning*, two out of three sports clubs – across the countries – agree or totally agree that they do that. It is particularly common in English sports clubs, where more than 80% of the clubs agree that *'Our club engages in long-term planning'*. It is interesting that in countries with high sports club participation (Denmark, Switzerland, Germany and Belgium (Flanders)), we find a lower proportion of the sports clubs that 'agree' or 'totally agree' that the club is engaged in long-term planning than we find in the other countries.

The *monitoring of the implementation of plans* is pretty similar across countries: Three quarters of clubs 'totally agree' or 'agree' that they do that. What stands out here is the total agreement of 42% of Hungarian clubs, whereas in all other countries between 12% (Netherlands) and 25% (Spain) totally agree that the club monitors the implementation of its plans.

Regarding *the involvement of members in the decision making*, a large majority of clubs – 78% across all the countries – 'totally agree' or 'agree' to the statement that the club *'aims to*

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2 The regression analysis included the following independent variables: country, club age, club size and size of community.

*involve members when making important decisions*', and almost half of the clubs (47%) also agree that they *'delegate decision making from the board to committees'*. So in essence, it seems that a majority of clubs strive for a 'participatory democracy', although there are some variations between clubs and between countries. This shows that many sports clubs live up to the expectations at the macro level that they are organised democratically, although we cannot tell from this study that this means that they actually function as 'schools in democracy' for members, which, in turn, become more competent and inclined to participate in 'the big democracy' (among other things, participation in elections to the national parliament and involvement in political issues). Taking a closer look at the differences between countries, interesting details can be observed. The highest proportions of clubs 'totally agreeing' that their club aims at involving members when making important decisions are found in Spain and Switzerland (higher than 40%), and the lowest in Poland and Denmark (lower than 20%).

The proportion of clubs that totally agree with the statement *'Our club delegate decision making from the board to committees'* is much lower (between 5% and 19%). The highest proportion is also found in Spain (one of five clubs), and the lowest in Hungary, Belgium (Flanders), the Netherlands and Poland (less than 10%).

Between the different (big) sports, there are relatively small differences in to what extent the clubs use the different management tools. Clubs with basketball have the highest proportion that use long term planning, while badminton has the lowest proportion. Monitoring is mostly used in shooting sport clubs, while we find the lowest use in badminton clubs. Involving members in decision making is also mostly used in shooting sport clubs and least used in gymnastics clubs. Delegating decisions is mostly used in handball and football clubs, but not much more than in most of the sports.

A logistic regression analysis<sup>3</sup> shows that the larger the club is, the greater is the likelihood that the club is engaged in long-term planning and monitoring of the implementation of plans. Young clubs are also more engaged in long-term planning and monitoring than older clubs. The size of the club is also important for the involvement of the members in the decision making. The larger the club is, the lower is the probability that the club involves the members in the decision making. Single sport clubs also involve the members more than multisport clubs. The size of the club is also an important factor affecting the delegation of decision making. The bigger the club is, the greater is the likelihood that the club delegates important decisions.

### **2.2.5. The resource dimension: the facilities and finances of clubs**

The governmental and political framework largely defines the 'space', or the 'political opportunity structure', both practical and ideological, within which different organisational forms must act. The questionnaire for sports clubs included three aspects in this regard: a) access to sports facilities, b) public economic support, and c) public rules and regulations.

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<sup>3</sup> The regression analysis included the following independent variables: country, club age, club size, single vs. multisport and size of community.

*Access to and assessment of sports facilities*

Voluntary non-profit sports clubs have the possibility of receiving public support. This can be indirect support, e.g. in the form of tax exemptions or by being able to use public sports facilities, or direct financial support in the form of monetary subsidies.

With regard to the use of club-owned and publicly owned sports facilities, it is evident that in all countries of this study, the proportion of clubs using public facilities is higher than the proportion of clubs using their own sports facilities. Across countries, 33% use club-owned facilities and 68% use publicly owned facilities. These numbers add up to more than 100%, since some clubs use both club-owned and publicly owned facilities.

The proportion of clubs using public sports facilities is highest for the post-communist countries Poland and Hungary. In Poland, nine out of ten clubs make use of publicly owned facilities, while nearly three quarters of Hungarian sports clubs use such facilities. The lowest proportion of sports clubs making use of public infrastructure is found in the Netherlands, where the proportion of sports clubs using club-owned and publicly owned facilities is nearly even. With more than half of all Dutch sports clubs using their own facilities, the Netherlands are pioneering in terms of club-owned facilities, followed by Germany, Norway and England. Spain represents the country with the smallest proportion of clubs in possession of club-owned sports facilities.

The use of club-owned facilities is most common in sports clubs that organise shooting sport and tennis, and least common in swimming clubs and cycling clubs. Between eight and nine of the clubs that organise the biggest sports (football, gymnastics, table tennis, volleyball, tennis, fitness and aerobics, badminton, shooting sports, track and field, walking, badminton, handball, swimming and hiking) use publicly owned facilities, with the exception of apparatus gymnastic (two out of three) and shooting sport (two out of five). A logistic regression analysis<sup>4</sup> shows that the use of public sports facilities is more common in multisport clubs than in single sports clubs, and in large clubs more than in small clubs.

How do the sports clubs assess the club's access to sports facilities? In most of the ten countries, '*availability of sports facilities*' is a small problem. Across countries, 56% of the clubs have answered that it is either not a problem or a small problem. In the Netherlands, Belgium (Flanders) and Germany, it is 'no problem' in almost half or more than half of the clubs, and a 'big problem' in less than 10% of the clubs. Poland, Hungary and Spain stand out in that the availability of sports facilities is a much bigger problem.

Sports clubs that organise basketball, handball and swimming assess the availability of sports facilities more negatively (approximately four out of five clubs have answered that it is a problem for the club) than especially sports clubs that organise equestrian or shooting sport (only two out of five clubs assess it as a problem). A logistic regression analysis<sup>5</sup> shows that the probability that the availability of sports facilities is a problem (medium, big or very big) is higher in big sports clubs than in small sports clubs; in multisport clubs more than in single sport clubs; in clubs in urban communities more than in rural communities; and in younger clubs more than in older clubs.

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4 The regression analysis included the following independent variables: country, club age, club size, single vs. multisport and size of community.

5 The regression analysis included the following independent variables: country, club age, club size, single vs. multisport and size of community.



European sports clubs are frequently obligated to pay fees for the usage of public sports facilities. Across countries, 64% of the clubs that use public facilities pay a usage fee. Only swimming deviates from this picture, since a larger proportion (64%) of the clubs with swimming pay a fee for the usage of public facilities, while the average for the other sports is 54%. However, there are big differences between the countries regarding the obligation to pay usage fees. In the Netherlands, nearly all clubs using public facilities have to pay a fee, and in England and Belgium (Flanders), nine out of ten of the clubs making use of public infrastructure are liable to pay. On the other hand, for the universalist welfare states like Denmark and Norway, the percentage of clubs having to pay a fee when using public facilities is much lower (41% in Denmark and 53% in Norway). Also in Germany and Spain, only around half of the clubs that use public facilities have to pay for it. A logistic regression analysis<sup>6</sup> shows that payment for the usage of public sports facilities is more common in large, urban communities than in small, more rural communities; and it is less common in older clubs than in clubs founded since 1960. The analysis also shows that among sports clubs that do not pay for the usage of publicly owned facilities, the availability of sports facilities is a smaller problem than for clubs that pay for the usage of publicly owned facilities. A bivariate analysis does not find important differences between sports regarding this question.

#### *Public subsidies*

Across countries, the average proportion of the total revenue of the clubs that comes from direct public subsidies is 16%. Between the countries, we find large differences. There seem to be some correlations between welfare state types and the proportion of public support in the clubs' overall revenue. The direct financial support to sports clubs from the public sector is relatively largest in the post-communist countries. In Poland, almost 41% of the total revenues on average come from the public sector and in Hungary, the proportion amounts to 28%. We find the lowest funding from the public sector in the liberal welfare state (England, 6%) while the universalist welfare states and corporatist welfare states place in between (but the Netherlands, at 5%, deviates from this pattern).

A regression analysis<sup>7</sup> shows that the proportion of public subsidies in the clubs' total revenue is higher in multisport clubs than in single sports clubs; in old clubs than in young clubs; and in large clubs than in small clubs.

How do the individual clubs assess their financial situation? Across countries, more than half of the clubs have no problems or small problems, but in 22% of clubs, it is a big or very big problem. It is clear that clubs in the two post-communist countries, Hungary and Poland, face the largest challenges. More than half of all clubs in these two countries have 'big' or 'very big' financial problems. Financial problems are also higher on average in Spanish sports clubs (one in three) than in the clubs of the remaining countries. The lowest financial challenges are reported by sports clubs in Belgium (Flanders), the Netherlands and Switzerland, where less than 10% of the clubs have big or very big problems.

Between sports, the differences in the clubs' assessment of the financial situation are rel-

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6 The regression analysis included the following independent variables: country, club age, club size, single vs. multisport and size of community.

7 The regression analysis included the following independent variables: country, club age, club size, single vs. multisport and size of community.

atively small. Most negative is the assessment among the clubs that offer football, handball and shooting sport. A logistic regression analysis<sup>8</sup> shows that the assessment of the financial situation does not differ much between small and big clubs; between young and old clubs; between clubs from rural communities and clubs from urban communities; and between multisport clubs and single sport clubs. However, the analysis shows that the proportion of clubs that assess the financial situation negatively (have medium, big or very big problems), is larger among clubs that are relatively very dependent on public subsidies than clubs that are less dependent.

#### *Public rules and regulations*

The access to publicly owned sports facilities and public financial support is usually associated with the requirements and expectations of the public authorities for the clubs. How do the clubs assess these laws, requirements or directives? The pattern of the clubs' assessment is almost the same as we found in the assessment of access to sports facilities. Across countries, it is not a problem or is a small problem in 59% of the clubs and it is a big or very big problem in 19% of the clubs. It is primarily a problem for clubs in Poland and Hungary, where one in three clubs have answered that it is a big or very big problem. In Spain and Germany, the proportion is one in four clubs, and in the other countries the proportion of clubs that consider it to be a big or a very big problem is lower than twenty percent.

This pattern seems to reflect the degree of public governance of sports clubs. In countries with a relatively high level of public, political control and management, the clubs are more likely to answer that the number of laws and regulations is a big problem than in countries with a low degree of public steering and few requirements.

The results of a bivariate analysis show that, between sports, the differences in the clubs' assessment of public rules and regulations are relatively small. Most negative is the assessment among the clubs in apparatus gymnastics, basketball, football, handball, health sport and shooting sport. The assessment of the clubs that provide equestrian sports is least negative.

The results of a logistic regression analysis<sup>9</sup> show that the assessment of the laws, requirements or directives is more critical in older clubs (founded before 1960) than in younger clubs; in multiple sports clubs more than in single sports clubs; and the bigger the club is, the greater is the proportion of the clubs that assess the laws, regulations etc. as critical.

#### **2.2.6. The membership dimension: how the members are affiliated to the club**

A voluntary association (or club) differs from a commercial and a public organisation by the way the 'participant' is affiliated. In the commercial organisation the participant is either an 'employee' or a 'customer'. In a public sector organisation, the participant is either a 'citizen' or a 'client'. In an association, the participant is a 'member' defined as a voluntary choice with defined obligations (including membership fees) and rights (typically democratic rights).

The involvement of members in sports clubs can vary to a large extent. The different ways

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8 The regression analysis included the following independent variables: country, club age, club size, single vs. multisport and size of community.

9 The regression analysis included the following independent variables: country, club age, club size, single vs. multisport and size of community.

of being involved in a club could be connected to the structure and activities of sports clubs. The opportunity structure provided at organisational level is likely to affect how members participate in the respective clubs. People can be affiliated to the club in different ways: as sports active, as members, in the decision making and as a volunteer. In this section, we look at the first two types of affiliation to a sports club. In Chapter 3, we analyse member participation in the democratic process in the club, and in Chapter 4, we analyse volunteering in the sports clubs.

#### *Involvement as SPORTS ACTIVE*

Across countries, between 60% and 80% of the individuals affiliated to a club actually participate in sport in the club. Across countries, 76% do sport in the club. The proportion is biggest in Belgium (Flanders), Denmark, Germany, Hungary and Switzerland and lowest in Norway. Although many people are active as sports participants in sports clubs, there is a large variation in the frequency of their participation.

The intensity of the sports participation: Whereas some only participate sporadically, others are intensively involved in sports activities in their respective clubs. Across countries, 59% of the individuals affiliated with a club take part in a sports activity two times a week or more. Norway and Poland differ from this picture with respectively 74% and 84% doing sport two times a week or more in their sports clubs.

Sport in a group or alone: Many studies of the changes in sports habits have reported that the sports participants practise sport individually more than was previously the case (see among others, Breivik et al., 2011; Lamprecht et al., 2014; Pilgaard, 2012). However, this is not the case in sports clubs. Few people do sport alone or in small groups – most do it in larger groups of 6+ members (average across the countries is 78%). The proportion of sports-active people that do sport alone or in small groups (of less than 3) in the sports clubs is highest in Norway (19%) and lowest in Spain (4%). This is likely to be associated with the sports activity.

Competitive or non-competitive sport: Sports clubs are usually associated with competitive sports. Many sports clubs were founded to take part in some sort of competition, although recreational sports have become more popular over the course of the years. In most of the countries, more than half of the sports participants are taking part in competitive sports, but the differences between countries are large. In Belgium (Flanders) and Denmark, it is only respectively one out of three and approximately 40% who never participate in competitive sport. In Norway, Poland and England, three out of four people take part in competitive sport. Here, the historical roots of sport, gymnastics and sport for all movements are likely to play a role. The strong position of the non-competitive gymnastics movement in Denmark is an example.

Sport in other organisational settings: The new sports participation pattern differs from the previous pattern in that people typically do sport in different organisational settings: voluntary clubs, commercial fitness centres, at the work place, on their own, etc. The responses of the sports-active people in the clubs confirm this. Only between five and fifteen percent of the sports participants affiliated to a sports club take part in sport only in the club. The proportion is lowest in Norway and highest in Belgium (Flanders), Hungary and the Netherlands.

- Across countries, 22% of the respondents do sport *in a privately owned gym/fitness centre*. Between one tenth (Belgium (Flanders)) and one third (Norway, Poland and Spain) participate in sport in a commercial setting.
- Between four percent (Spain) and twenty percent (Norway and Poland) do sports at *school or the workplace* (e.g. in a fitness facility, in exercise breaks, by doing company sport, etc.). Across countries, this is the case for 12%.
- The most common way to do sport outside of organised settings *is either 'on my own' or 'with my friends and/or family'*. Across countries, 54% of the respondents do that. The proportion is highest in Norway and Switzerland (70%/65% 'on my own' and 39%/50% with friends or family).

### *Involvement as MEMBER*

Across countries, between 70% and 90% of the 'club-affiliated' people are members. Across countries, 83% of the respondents are 'members' of the club. The proportion is highest in Germany, Norway, Spain and England and lowest in Poland. Members can either be passive, i.e. they do not participate in sports activities in the sports club, or they can be sports-active members. There are many passive members in Norway, Spain and England and few in Denmark.

Because sports clubs typically offer sports for many age groups, one can be a member for a long period of time. New initiatives in sports clubs, like walking football or football fitness (Bennike, 2016), currently even promote sports activities for seniors as well. But having many years of membership in a club is also an expression of having strong ties to the club. Generally, the sports clubs in Europe have many members (36%) that have been a member of or connected to the club for more than ten years, but the proportion differs between countries. We find the highest proportion in Switzerland (50%), Germany (49%) and the Netherlands (49%) and the lowest in Spain (11%). It is likely that the low proportion of members with long membership spans in Spain is due to the fact that large proportions of Spanish clubs have been founded in recent times, and this is due to the late dissolution of the authoritarian regime and the subsequent later growth of sports clubs than in the other countries.

### **2.2.7. The problems dimension: challenges for clubs**

In the last section of this chapter, we address the major challenges and problems for sports clubs. In the questionnaire, the clubs were asked for their assessment of nine potential problems: four dealing with the recruitment and retention of members and volunteers and five dealing with more external factors, such as the club's funding, access to sports facilities, extent of government regulations and directives, and competition from other sports opportunities. The analyses of the responses to challenges are presented earlier in this section of the report (regarding public funding, access to publicly owned sports facilities and the number of laws and regulations) and also in later chapters of this report (regarding the recruitment of volunteers and the integration of different groups of members). Here, we look at the proportion of sports clubs that report at least one existential problem, meaning that the clubs feel threatened in their existence due to at least one problem (= a very big problem).

Across countries, 26% of the clubs feel threatened due to at least one very big problem. The proportion is highest in Poland, where 38% of the clubs have reported at least one existential problem. In Germany, Switzerland, Hungary and Spain, approximately one out of three clubs feels that its existence could be endangered. Clubs in Denmark, Norway and England report existential problems less frequently (one in five) and the proportion of Dutch and Flemish sports clubs with one existential problem threatening the clubs' existence is lowest (one in ten)<sup>10</sup>.

Taking a closer look at the problems that are the main threat to the existence of sports clubs, a diverse picture is displayed across countries. Regarding the human resource dimension (here, the recruitment and retention of volunteers at board level), it can be observed that 15% of sports clubs in Germany, 11% of clubs in Switzerland and 8% of Danish sports clubs feel that their existence is threatened due to this problem. In Poland, Hungary, and Spain, the biggest and most threatening problem is the relationship with the public sector: public support, access to facilities and governmental requirements. In England, the largest existential problem is the availability of sports facilities and the financial situation.

The results of a bivariate analysis show that we find small differences between the different sports regarding the proportion of clubs with at least one big challenge or problem. However, the proportion of clubs with problems that threaten the existence of the sports club is markedly higher in football and shooting sport and significantly lower in cycling and equestrian sports than the average of all sports clubs.

The logistic regression analysis<sup>11</sup> shows that, in addition to the country variable, the proportion of clubs with one or more problems that threaten the existence of the club depends on the age and the size of the club. Older clubs founded before 1960 are less 'threatened' (in their own opinion) than more recent clubs, and the bigger the club, the lower the probability that the club feels threatened by one or more problems. A potential interpretation of this finding is that the big clubs might be less vulnerable to the replacement of volunteers and fluctuations in membership. However, the country variable is much more important than the age and the size of the club.

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10 It needs to be noted that the question regarding existential problems was phrased slightly differently in the survey in Belgium (Flanders). Therefore, the comparison of Belgian (Flemish) sports clubs with those of the other countries regarding existential problems should be treated carefully.

11 The regression analysis included the following independent variables: country, club age, club size, single vs. multisport and size of community.

### **3. Social integration in sports clubs**

Social integration is a topic at the heart of the SIVSCE project. The focus in the project has been on social integration in a broad sense that not only examines the (un)equal representation of various social groups in sports clubs but also poses questions about whether and how the policy context, club structure, management and culture affect how well integrated members and volunteers are in their respective sports clubs.

In order to structure the findings on social integration, three main dimensions are included, and they will be treated separately in each of the following three subchapters:

1. Structural integration (the integration of target groups).
2. Sociocultural integration (assimilation vs. pluralism).
3. Socio-affective integration (interaction and identification).

The dimensions are derived from the conceptualisation presented in the introduction to the project, where additional information about the conceptualisation and the three dimensions is available (Elmose-Østerlund & Ibsen, 2016).

#### **3.1. Structural integration**

The first dimension of social integration examined in this report is structural integration, which is concerned with the representation of different population groups within the membership of sports clubs compared to the general population. The selective integration into sports clubs found in numerous studies of sports participation has spurred an interest in the various target groups that have been shown to be underrepresented in sports clubs, such as ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and other socially vulnerable groups. The integration of these groups within sports clubs in Europe is at the centre of interest in this paragraph.

##### **3.1.1. Structural integration in sports clubs**

As part of this study, sports clubs were asked a number of questions that inform us about structural integration. More specifically, three main topics were touched upon in the survey: 1) the representation of various target groups in sports clubs, 2) the propensity of sports clubs to take special initiatives to include various target groups, and 3) the attitudes of sports clubs regarding the integration of target groups.

At a general level, the results show that a significant number of sports clubs in all ten countries have members from the selected target groups, take special initiatives to integrate one or more target group(s) and/or agree to work for structural integration. But at the same time, there is also a significant number of clubs that do not have members from within the selected target groups or work strategically with structural integration in the sense that they have a specific focus on taking initiatives targeted at the integration of one or more target group(s).

In effect, there are both similarities and significant differences in the integration of various target groups in sports clubs, between the respective target groups as well as within and

between sports clubs in the ten countries. These similarities and differences will be the focus of attention in the following paragraphs.

### **3.1.2. The representation of and special initiatives to integrate various target groups in sports clubs**

The sports clubs that participated in the survey were asked to report both the *representation* of selected target groups in their membership and their propensity to take *special initiatives* to integrate people from within these target groups. With regard to representation, the clubs were asked to estimate the percentage of the total membership made up of people from the respective target groups (within set intervals). This data was collected for four target groups: people with disabilities, people with a migration background, the elderly (65+ years) and women and girls.

For the same four target groups along with a further two, namely low income people and children and adolescents (up to 18 years), the clubs were asked whether they ‘have special initiatives (e.g. activities, teams, cooperation, reduced membership fees, etc.) in place to increase participation among the following population groups (the six target groups mentioned earlier). The idea behind not only examining the representation of selected target groups, but also the propensity of clubs to take special initiatives to integrate people from within these groups, was to examine both the current state of structural integration and the degree to which this is an explicit focus area within sports clubs.

The representation of the selected target groups within European sports clubs and the propensity of clubs to take special initiatives towards these groups will be elaborated below for each of the six selected target groups. The focus will also be on similarities and differences between countries and specific sports. The differences between sports build on results from linear and logistic regression analyses<sup>12</sup>.

#### *People with disabilities*

People with disabilities (including both physically and mentally disabled people) are represented in half of European sports clubs. In 45% of clubs, they make up 1-10% of the total membership, while in 2% of clubs, they make up more than 50%. The highest percentages of clubs with people with disabilities represented in their membership are found in England (74%), Germany (71%), Norway (65%) and the Netherlands (62%). The lowest representation is found in Swiss (27%), Polish (30%) and Hungarian (35%) sports clubs.

The large differences in the percentages of sports clubs that have members with disabilities can seem somewhat surprising, given that data from Eurostat on the representation of members with disabilities within the populations generally do not show large variations between countries (Eurostat, 2015a). Hence, the differences found cannot be explained by differences in the representation of people with disabilities within the populations in the ten countries.

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12 The regression analyses included the following independent variables: club age, club size, single vs. multisport, size of community, paid manager, engagement in long-term planning, value ascribed to companionship and conviviality, value ascribed to sporting success and competitions, and finally, a total of 21 of the more popular sports included in the study (badminton, basketball, boxing, cycling, dancing, fighting/combat sports, fitness and aerobic, football, golf, gymnastics, handball, judo, rehabilitation/tertiary prevention, shooting sports, sports for disabled/people with chronic diseases, swimming, table tennis, tennis, track and field, volleyball and walking/Nordic walking).

One in five sports clubs have special initiatives to integrate people with disabilities. The most common initiatives taken by clubs to integrate people with disabilities are ‘targeted sports activities’ (9%) and ‘special efforts to compensate for being disabled (e.g. specialised equipment or adaptations to buildings)’ (7%). The latter result is particularly interesting. It shows that around one in fifteen European sports clubs has made some form of investment that makes it easier to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities – most usually investments with a particular focus on people with a physical disability, as these are likely to have the highest demand for specialised equipment and/or adaptations to buildings.

The highest percentage of sports clubs that target people with disabilities can be found in Hungary (39%) and Spain (28%), while the lowest percentage can be found in Denmark (8%), Belgium (Flanders) (14%) and England (15%). The results confirm that representation and special initiatives are two separate measures for structural integration, since the percentage of clubs with people with disabilities in the membership is highest in England, while at the same time, English clubs score relatively low on the propensity to take special initiatives to include people with disabilities. The opposite is true for Hungarian sports clubs.

Perhaps not surprisingly, people with disabilities are better represented in clubs that offer activities that fall under the categories of ‘sports for the disabled/people with chronic diseases’ and ‘rehabilitation/tertiary prevention’. The same is true for clubs that offer golf and swimming, whereas clubs that offer boxing and judo (martial arts) along with clubs that offer handball, volleyball, basketball and football (team ballgames) generally have a lower representation of people with disabilities in their membership. A likely explanation for this finding could be that it is easier for clubs to integrate people with disabilities in more individualistic activities than in activities in which they are part of a team or have to physically ‘battle’ a direct opponent. Also, some individual sports have long traditions for offering activities for people with disabilities.

#### *People with a migration background*

People with a migration background are represented in the membership of almost two thirds (64%) of European sports clubs. In almost half (47%) of the clubs, people with a migration background make up 1-10% of the total membership, while they make up more than 50% only in 2% of the clubs. So, even though people with a migration background make up a significant proportion of the population in many European countries, there seem to be relatively few sports clubs in which people with a migration background make up the majority of the membership.

Most clubs that have people with a migration background in their membership are found in Norway (79%), the Netherlands (78%) and Germany (78%). On the other hand, the lowest percentage that have members with a migration background are found in Polish (26%) sports clubs. A relatively low representation of people with a migration background is also found within clubs in Hungary and Denmark (both 54%).

With the limitation that the definitions of people with a migration background do not exactly match between this survey and the Eurostat survey, it does, however, seem that there is some correspondence between the representation of people within the population born outside the country in question on the one hand, and the percentage of sports clubs hav-



ing migrants in their membership on the other. At a population level, Poland, Hungary and Denmark are the countries with relatively the lowest proportion of people born outside their country within the population (Eurostat, 2015c). These are also the countries with the lowest proportions of clubs that have people with a migration background in their membership. Norway was not included in the Eurostat survey, but Belgium (Flanders), Spain and England have higher percentages of people with a migration background within the population than Germany and the Netherlands (Eurostat, 2015c). In effect, the percentage of clubs with people with a migration background in their membership is not a perfect mirror of the proportion of people with a migration background found in the population.

A little less than one in five sports clubs (18%) have special initiatives to include people with a migration background. The most common initiatives are ‘targeted sports activities’ (6%), ‘concessionary membership fee (reduced or funded)’ (5%) and ‘cooperation with municipalities/local government’ (4%).

It is clearly most common to have special initiatives for people with a migration background in Swiss sports clubs (49%) followed by Hungarian clubs (36%), while the propensity to take these types of initiative is lowest in the Netherlands (6%), England (6%) and Denmark (7%). Once again we find that Hungarian clubs have a relatively low representation of people with a migration background at the same time as the percentage of clubs with special initiatives are among the highest. Greater consistency exists between the two measures for structural integration in Danish clubs that have a relatively low representation combined with a relatively low propensity among clubs to take special initiatives.

Sports clubs that offer boxing and fighting/combat sports along with football and basketball generally have more members with a migration background. A finding that corresponds with the fact that it is also within these sports that a number of sports participation studies find the relatively highest proportion of people with a migration background (Ibsen, Pilgaard, Høyer-Kruse, & Støckel, 2015; Rowe & Champion, 2000). Furthermore, they are all ‘international sports’, in the sense that they are well-known in most of Europe and particularly popular in many Southern and Eastern European countries.

It is also within the above-mentioned sports that the propensity for clubs to take special initiatives for people with a migration background is highest. This is a result that also seems to correspond with the general observation that these sports are often chosen for integration projects that target people with a migration background. It would therefore seem that these sports both have some special qualities that are appealing to people with a migration background, and also that there is a higher awareness within these clubs about raising participation within this group. In contrast, clubs that offer shooting sports, golf, cycling, table tennis and volleyball generally have a lower representation of people with a migration background in their membership.

### *The elderly*

The elderly (65+ years) are also represented in a majority of European sports clubs. 69% of clubs have members from within this group. In 35% of the clubs, the elderly make up 1-10% of the total membership, while in 8% of the clubs, they make up more than 50%. Most clubs with elderly people in the membership are found in Germany (93%), the Netherlands (89%)

and Denmark (81%), while the fewest clubs with elderly people are found in Poland (43%), Spain (46%) and Hungary (57%). Denmark is clearly the country with the highest proportion of clubs (22%) in which the elderly make up more than half of the total membership followed by the Netherlands (13%) and Germany (13%).

One in four sports clubs has special initiatives for the elderly. Again, the most common initiative is ‘targeted sports activities’ (11%) followed by ‘concessionary membership fee (reduced or funded)’ (9%). The highest percentage of clubs with special initiatives to integrate the elderly is found in Switzerland (56%), Hungary (40%) and Germany (38%), while it is much less common to take these types of initiative among clubs in England (11%), Norway (13%) and Belgium (Flanders) (15%).

The elderly are particularly well represented in sports clubs that offer golf, shooting sports, tennis, gymnastics, walking/Nordic walking and table tennis, along with activities that fall under the categories of ‘sports for the disabled/people with chronic diseases’ and ‘rehabilitation/tertiary prevention’. We also find a higher propensity to take special initiatives to integrate the elderly in the clubs within the clubs that offer one or more of these activities.

The lowest representation of the elderly can be found within clubs that offer fighting/ combat sports, judo and boxing (martial arts), as well as clubs that offer football, handball, basketball and volleyball (team ballgames). In short, the pattern seems to be quite similar to that for people with disabilities, which could indicate that some sports are generally better suited for the integration of people that are more likely to have some form of physical (or mental) limitation. Surprisingly, clubs that offer swimming are less likely to have elderly people in the membership, even though this is a sport that can be practised individually and without any direct physical opponent – and a sport that is also more likely to integrate people with disabilities in the membership. One potential explanation for this finding could be that a proportion of the elderly people that practise swimming do so outside of the sports club setting, which could be caused by many swimming clubs having a strong focus on competitive sport.

#### *Women and girls*

Women and girls make up a little more than one third (35%) of the total membership in European sports clubs. The highest representation of women and girls is found in Norway (40%), Denmark (39%) and Germany (38%), while the lowest representation is found in Poland (28%), Spain (30%) and Hungary (32%).

One in three sports clubs has special initiatives to integrate women and girls. Clearly the most common form is once again ‘targeted sports activities’ (18%) followed by ‘special teams for this group only’ (11%). The latter indicates that it is quite common for sports clubs to have teams that are only for women and girls. This hardly seems surprising given that in many competitions, tournaments, displays and the like, the participants are split into two categories: ‘men and boys’ and ‘women and girls’.

It is clearly most common for sports clubs in Switzerland (64%) and Hungary (61%) to have special initiatives for women and girls. It is far less common among Danish (12%), Belgian (Flemish) (14%) and Dutch (17%) clubs to have these types of initiative. Again we find that representation and the propensity of clubs to take special initiatives are two separate measures. In Danish sports clubs, women and girls are relatively well represented, but relatively

few clubs take special initiatives, while once again, the opposite is true for Hungarian clubs.

Women and girls are generally better represented in sports clubs that offer dancing, gymnastics, fitness and aerobics and volleyball to their members, whereas the opposite is true for clubs that offer football, shooting sports, table tennis and cycling. It is worth noting that even though women and girls are less well represented in clubs that offer football, the same clubs are more likely to have special initiatives to include women and girls. It would therefore seem that football – along with other team ballgames such as basketball and handball – is working to increase the participation of women and girls.

#### *Low income people*

More than two in five (42%) sports clubs take special initiatives to include low income people. Not surprisingly, the most common measure is ‘concessionary membership fee (reduced or funded)’ (26%), while ‘cooperation with municipalities/local government’ (12%) is also a relatively common type of initiative for this group.

Low income people are a particular focus point for clubs in Poland (67%), Hungary (67%) and Switzerland (57%), while it is much less common for clubs in Denmark (17%) and Norway (23%) to target this group. A potential explanation for this finding could be that within the universal welfare states, Denmark and Norway, the level of income equality is higher, and therefore the perceived need to address this group by taking special initiatives in clubs is less prominent. Interestingly, however, within the country that has the highest income inequality out of the ten included in this study (according to the Gini coefficient), England, only 29% of clubs target low income people. This shows that there is some, but not a perfect, correlation between the level of income inequality in a country and the propensity of clubs to take special initiatives for low income people.

It is more common for clubs that offer football and handball, as well as fighting/combat sports and judo, to have special initiatives for low income people. This group is less of a focus point for clubs that offer golf and cycling. The latter could reflect that these sports are generally more expensive sports, at least when it comes to the need for equipment, and in the case of golf, normally also with regard to the membership fee.

#### *Children and adolescents*

Children and adolescents (up to 18 years) have traditionally been one of the most important member groups – perhaps the most important – for sports clubs in most European countries. It is also the target group of the six included in this study for which the highest percentage of clubs (59%) have special initiatives. The most common are ‘targeted sports activities’ (38%), ‘concessionary membership fee (reduced or funded)’ (28%) and ‘special teams for this group only’ (21%).

The differences between countries in the propensity of clubs to offer special initiatives for this group are not as big as for some of the other target groups. Nevertheless, we do find that special initiatives for children and adolescents are most common among sports clubs in Hungary (77%), Poland (73%) and Germany (73%), and least common in Dutch (44%), Belgian (Flemish) (45%), Danish (47%) and English (47%) sports clubs.

### 3.1.3. The attitudes of sports clubs towards structural integration

Besides the more specific questions regarding the representation of and special initiatives towards selected target groups, the clubs were more generally asked to indicate whether they work for structural integration – and whether economic compensation is required if they are to work for the integration of target groups. In the following, the focus will be on the similarities and differences between countries.

More than two thirds (68%) of European sports clubs ‘agree’ or ‘totally agree’ (27% totally agree) that ‘our club tries to offer sports to as many population groups as possible’, while a little more than one in ten (11%) disagree with this statement. This indicates that the vast majority of sports clubs have a general interest in appealing to as many different people as possible. The highest levels of agreement are found among Spanish (85%), English (81%) and Hungarian (80%) clubs, while the largest disagreement is found among sports clubs in Switzerland (22%), Germany (20%) and Poland (15%).

Presented with the more specific statement that ‘our club strives to help socially vulnerable groups become better integrated into our club’, the level of agreement drops somewhat, but still remains relatively high. A little more than half (52%) of the clubs ‘agree’ or ‘totally agree’ (17% totally agree), while 13% disagree. In this connection, it is worth noting that socially vulnerable groups were defined in the survey to ‘include people with a migration background, ethnic minorities, people with a physical or mental disability, low income groups, etc.’ It would therefore seem that, when being more specific and defining structural integration with reference to ‘socially vulnerable groups’ and by mentioning specific target groups, clubs are less in agreement that they work for integration.

There are quite large differences between countries in the level of (dis)agreement on whether they work for the integration of socially vulnerable groups. Most clubs are in agreement in Spain (72%), Hungary (63%) and Germany (61%), while the level of disagreement is highest amongst clubs in Norway (26%) and Poland (16%).

In order to feed into a discussion about the conditions under which sports clubs can contribute to the integration of target groups, the economic aspect was touched on in the survey. More specifically, clubs were asked to indicate whether ‘our club needs to be economically compensated to take responsibility for the inclusion of different population groups’. Overall, more clubs are in disagreement (39%) than in agreement (27%) with the statement, although the answers were dispersed along all the possible response categories.

The highest level of disagreement – and thereby support for the attitude that sports clubs are not in the need of economic compensation in order to work for integration of target groups – is found in Hungary (62%) and Spain (59%). In contrast, most clubs are in agreement in Norway (44%), Germany (40%), Poland (35%) and the Netherlands (30%).

### 3.1.4. Club characteristics that promote and inhibit structural integration

In the previous paragraphs, structural integration was examined with a focus on 1) *representation* (the representation of selected target groups in sports clubs), 2) *special initiatives* (the propensity of sports clubs to take special initiatives to integrate people belonging to selected target groups), and 3) *attitudes* (the more general attitudes of sports clubs towards contributing to structural integration).

In the context of all of these three focus points, it has been examined in linear and logistic regression analyses how structural, managerial and attitudinal characteristics connected to the clubs affect structural integration. Included structural characteristics were club age, club size, single vs. multisport and size of the community in which the club is located. The managerial indicators included whether the club has a paid manager and whether the club engages in long-term planning. The attitudinal indicators included measures for the value that the sports clubs ascribe to companionship and conviviality as well as sporting success and competitions. Finally, 21 of the more popular sports included in the study were also included in the regression analyses, but the differences between various sports have been thoroughly described in paragraph 3.1.2. Therefore, it is only the results with regard to the influence from structural, managerial and attitudinal characteristics that will be discussed below.

The results show that among the *structural characteristics* of clubs, club size is the only characteristic that is consistently and positively associated with the degree to which sports clubs work with structural integration. With increasing membership numbers, the representation of the selected target groups, the propensity of the clubs to take special initiatives and the positive attitudes of clubs to work for structural integration increase. This finding could reflect that larger sports clubs have a higher capacity to recruit and retain people from within the target groups in question – and thereby to contribute to structural integration.

With regard to the *managerial characteristics*, both having a paid manager and engaging in long-term planning are positively associated with the propensity of clubs to take special initiatives and have positive attitudes towards contributing to structural integration. One way to interpret this finding could be that clubs that are more professionalised in their approach to management are also more likely to have the capacity to take special initiatives that foster structural integration, whereas clubs with less professionalised management may not have the same capacity to provide services beyond their ‘core activities’.

Interestingly, professionalised management does not seem to influence the representation of target groups in sports clubs. This could indicate that taking special initiatives is not a prerequisite for clubs to contribute to structural integration. People from within the selected target groups find their way into clubs regardless of whether it is through special initiatives or not. In that connection, the representation of the target groups in question within the ‘catchment area’ of clubs is likely to play a very important role. Nevertheless, it is likely that special initiatives provide an opportunity to be integrated in sports clubs, for instance for people with severe physical or mental disabilities. Here, the managerial capacity of clubs could prove to be an important factor, although with the data in this study, it is not possible to pursue this hypothesis, as the survey did not differentiate within the six defined target groups.

With respect to the *attitudinal characteristics*, the results do not provide clear and unambiguous results. It seems that sports clubs that set high value on sporting success and competitions are more likely to take special initiatives to include target groups. This shows that in clubs, sportive and integrative targets can coexist and in some instances perhaps even reinforce each other. Positive attitudes towards working for structural integration are positively associated with the attitude that companionship and conviviality is important. This could indicate that the more general positive attitude towards structural integration often coincides with a more general notion that the social aspect of life in a sports club is important.

Finally, the analysis reveals that even though representation, special initiatives and attitudes towards structural integration represent different measures for structural integration, they are all positively correlated. In effect, clubs that have special initiatives to include a certain target group are also more likely to have a higher percentage of members from within this group. The same holds true for the attitudinal component in that the more clubs agree that they strive to help socially vulnerable groups become integrated into their respective clubs, the more they take special initiatives for the selected target groups, and the higher the representation of members from within these groups. As mentioned earlier, it is worth noting, however, that the relationships between the three are far from deterministic, and that the one is, therefore, not a prerequisite for the other.

### **3.1.5. Structural integration in sports policies and programmes**

Having examined structural integration at the sports club level and the potential explanations for similarities and differences as a result of club characteristics, we now turn to the role of structural integration in sports policies and programmes – and in the next paragraph, we look at whether policy differences between countries can help explain the identified differences in structural integration in European sports clubs.

Across all ten countries, sports policies are mainly targeted at ‘sport for all’, but at the same time, the actual support differs between countries. Sports policies in most countries have goals aimed at increasing sports participation among a number of target groups, but they are often expressed in broad terms, and concrete, binding policies are almost absent. The target groups are mainly found across countries within different selections of the following groups: people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, low income people, children and adolescents, the elderly, and women and girls.

The dominant way for governments to use economic incentives to promote structural integration in sports clubs is based on the ‘programme model’. This model implies that a government creates a specific programme aimed at, for instance, increasing sports participation among one or more target groups. Sports clubs – or local authorities or sports organisations – can then apply for funds that are to be spent to try to achieve the policy goals set in this area. In the countries that use the programme model, it is usually only a very small proportion of the total funding given to sports clubs that are distributed in this manner.

In effect, structural integration is a political priority, but the vast majority of economic subsidies allocated to sports clubs are given without specific demands and goals with regard to structural integration.

### **3.1.6. The effect of sports policies and programmes on structural integration**

It is the purpose of this section to examine the effect of sports policies and programmes on the integration of target groups in sports clubs. Data material at the policy level is therefore compared with data material at the sports club level for all ten countries. The analysis seeks to identify patterns between priorities at the policy level and actions taken at the sports club level.

For the ten countries included, the analysis revealed that there is no clear and general link between sports policy priorities and programmes on the one hand, and the representation of

and special initiatives taken by sports clubs to include people from selected target groups on the other.

Within the data material, there are examples of countries in which there seem to be a general alignment between policy priorities and programmes on the one hand and the actions of sports clubs with regard to structural integration on the other. However, there are also a number of examples of countries in which a target group has political priority, but where the representation of and/or the proportion of sports clubs with special initiatives targeted at the integration of this target group is relatively low. Country examples derived from the analysis may serve as illustrations of this general point.

With regard to the integration of people with a migration background, Germany can serve as an example of a country in which a general alignment seems to exist. In Germany, the Federal Ministry of the Interior supports social integration programmes of sports clubs with eleven million Euros each year, and the target groups are migrants and refugees. At the same time, German clubs have a relatively high representation of members from within this group and a relatively high percentage of clubs take special initiatives to integrate people with a migration background.

England can serve as an example of a country in which there is only a partial alignment when it comes to the integration of people with a migration background. In England, limiting immigration is a strongly debated political issue, and as a result, there are no government policies or programmes to increase the integration of people with a migration background in sports clubs. Accordingly, a relatively low proportion of English clubs take special initiatives to integrate people from within this group. In spite of this, people with a migration background are relatively well represented in English clubs.

Norway and Denmark can also serve as examples of countries in which there is only a partial alignment between policy priorities and programmes. An illustration of this can be found with regard to the integration of women and girls. In Norway and Denmark, there are no policy objectives or programmes aimed at raising the participation of women and girls in sports clubs (Ottesen, Skirstad, Pfister, & Habermann, 2010). In spite of this, the two Nordic countries have the most equal gender distribution in the membership within sports clubs (i.e. the clubs have relatively the highest representation of women and girls). This is the case even though relatively few sports clubs in the two countries have special initiatives to integrate women and girls. Instead, the relatively high participation levels of women in Denmark and Norway seem to correspond with a relatively high level of gender equality in these two countries and with a relatively high participation of women in the labour market (Eurostat, 2015b).

Finally, Hungary stands out from most of the other nine countries in the sense that the Hungarian clubs seem to be relatively active in taking special initiatives in order to integrate more or less all of the six selected target groups. At the same time, the clubs have a relatively low representation of people with disabilities, people with a migration background and the elderly in their membership. Furthermore, the link to sports policy priorities and programmes seems vague in that the allocation of funds within the area of sport in Hungary mainly follows elite performance, international success and talent management logic. The Act of Sport from 2010 does mention people with disabilities as a targeted group, but this does not correspond with the relatively low representation of people with disabilities in Hungarian sports clubs.

The examples presented illustrate the complexity of the analysis – and of combining policy information with survey data at the club level. In that connection it is important to note that the analysis is based on data material at the policy level that does inform us about policy priorities and central policy programmes. At the same time, detailed information about the economic incentives attached to policy priorities and programmes is not fully elaborated. Also, the information about the efforts taken to ensure that information about policy priorities and programmes reaches the clubs could have been more detailed.

Taking the limitations in the data material into consideration, the analysis still clearly shows that policy priorities and programmes do not automatically influence the priorities of sports clubs. However, this is not the same as claiming that sports policy priorities and programmes can never be efficient in promoting the integration of one or more target groups in sports clubs. In the examples given above, there are cases in which policy priorities and programmes seem to be aligned with the actions of sports clubs. Looking into these examples in more detail could provide more knowledge about the circumstances under which sports policy priorities and programmes can affect the actions taken by sports clubs.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that there does not need to be a link between sports policy priorities and programmes on the one hand and the representation of and initiatives taken by sports clubs to include people from selected target groups on the other. This is because political priorities often seek to address ‘problems’ – in this case the underrepresentation of certain population groups and/or the lack of interest from clubs in taking special initiatives to integrate people from these groups. The same holds true for the suggested link between the representation of selected target groups within clubs and targeted initiatives towards the integration of selected target groups within clubs. The data presented within this chapter on structural integration clearly shows that the integration of target groups (also) does take place in sports clubs that do not claim to take special initiatives for the group(s) in question.

In effect, some sports clubs integrate members from one or more target groups without seeing them as belonging to a target group. For some clubs, the recruitment happens mainly because the club is located in a local community in which the target group in question is well represented, while other clubs work strategically to integrate (more) members from a target group and take special initiatives to foster integration. Such special initiatives can either be taken in line with, or even as a result of, sports policy priorities and programmes in the respective countries, but it can also happen regardless of national, regional and/or local policy priorities and programmes.

### **3.1.7. Structural integration within or between target groups**

An aspect of structural integration that has not been touched upon in the previous sections is the question of whether people that belong to one or more of the target groups mentioned in this chapter become integrated in sports clubs in which they do sport with people from within this target group only, or if they also do sport with people that do not belong to the same target group.

From the project data, we can give something of an answer to this question by turning to the survey that was sent to members and volunteers in selected sports clubs. The results show that for people that regard themselves as part of an ethnic or cultural minority, one in five



do sport with people from the same group only. The remaining four out of five do sport with people from outside their ethnic or cultural minority. With regard to people with disabilities, three percent only do sport in a group with people with disabilities. In effect, the vast majority therefore practise sport with people without disabilities.

Even though the figures presented above cannot be expected to be representative for all people with a migration background and people with disabilities within sports clubs in Europe, they do indicate that the structural integration of people from target groups mainly takes place on teams or in groups, where members from outside of the respective target groups are also represented. At least this is the case for the vast majority of people with a migration background and people with disabilities included in the member and volunteer survey.

## **3.2. Sociocultural integration**

The second dimension of social integration treated in this report is sociocultural integration. When examining sociocultural integration, the values and norms represented within sports clubs and sports policies – and among members and volunteers – become the centre of attention. In this context, integration is viewed as a process in which dominant and marginal values and norms are continuously confirmed and challenged.

Two central concepts are assimilation and pluralism. Assimilation is concerned with the degree to which individuals know and master the dominant values and norms within a setting – here the sports club in which values and norms, written or unwritten, are often agreed upon by ‘insiders’ (e.g. current members and/or volunteers). Pluralism is concerned with the degree of acceptance of multiculturalism in a setting, understood as the degree to which different norms and values can coexist in a setting – here the sports club.

### **3.2.1. Sociocultural integration among members and volunteers in sports clubs**

In the member and volunteer survey, questions were asked to examine some aspects of sociocultural integration. With regard to assimilation, one topic was primarily targeted in the survey, namely the understanding of decision-making structures in sports clubs among members and volunteers. This understanding is central to the understanding of how to influence the decisions that are made within a club, which, in turn, is central to the understanding of how a sports club functions.

From the results, it seems that the vast majority of members and volunteers within sports clubs know ‘when and how to give my opinion when decisions are made in the club’. Three out of four members and volunteers mainly agree to this (41% totally agree), while only 8% mainly disagree. Similar results were found when members and volunteers were asked whether they ‘understand how the club functions’. Close to four out of five members and volunteers (79%) mainly agree to this (42% totally agree), and once again 8% mainly disagree. Jointly the results could be interpreted as an element in the successful assimilation of members and volunteers into the sports clubs to which they belong.

There are some variations across countries with regard to the distribution of answers to the questions regarding assimilation, but they are relatively modest and will therefore not

be elaborated. The main explanations for the differences in assimilation should instead be sought in how members and volunteers are connected to their clubs and who they are. The results from a linear regression analysis<sup>13</sup> indicate this. Volunteers – particularly those who report regularly to do voluntary work – are significantly more inclined to understand how the club functions and when and how to influence decision making than non-volunteers. Regardless of their form of affiliation, the duration of their affiliation also positively influences the agreement of members and volunteers with the statements regarding assimilation. It would seem that longstanding affiliation fosters knowledge and skills about how to participate in the member democracy.

The characteristics of members and volunteers also exert some influence. Men report slightly higher agreement with the statements regarding assimilation than women, and the level of agreement also increases with age and level of education. The latter result is interesting as it could indicate that formal education also influences the competencies of members and volunteers to participate in a club democracy.

People who were not born in the country in which they are currently a member of a sports club are slightly less in agreement with the statements on assimilation than those for whom the sports club is located in their country of origin. This could indicate that for some people with a migration background, it is more difficult to know and master the skills necessary to understand decision making in their respective sports clubs.

Finally, the analysis also reveals that the ability of members and volunteers to understand and master decision-making structures in their respective clubs declines with the increasing size of the sports clubs to which they are connected. This result could reflect that decision-making structures perhaps seem more complex in larger than in smaller organisational units – and that the perceived distance from member and/or volunteer to the board is somewhat bigger in a large sports club.

With regard to pluralism, the members and volunteers were asked whether they feel ‘that other people from the club respect me for who I am’. Here, we also find an overriding tendency towards agreement, in that more than four out of five (82%) members and volunteers mainly agree with this statement (45% totally), while only 4% mainly disagree. Again, we mainly find modest variations in the distribution of answers to this question between the ten countries.

As was the case for assimilation, a linear regression analysis<sup>14</sup> shows that being a volunteer – particularly on a regular basis – is positively associated with a feeling of being respected. The feeling of respect is also positively associated with the duration of affiliation to the club. This result could indicate that a feeling of mutual respect among members and volunteers is central to member and volunteer retention – and/or that mutual respect is built up over time. We also find that the feeling of being respected by other people from the club is slightly higher among those who are well educated than among those who are less well educated. However, we do not find that people with disabilities and/or a migration background feel less respected by other people from the club. This indicates that once people from these

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13 The regression analysis included the following independent variables: Affiliation with the sports club, duration of affiliation, gender, age, educational level, disability, migration background, club age and club size.

14 The regression analysis included the following independent variables: Affiliation with the sports club, duration of affiliation, gender, age, educational level, disability, migration background, club age and club size.

population groups find their way into a sports club, they are as inclined as all other members and volunteers to feel respected.

One potential explanation for the generally high degree of mutual respect reported by members and volunteers could be that they participate in relatively homogeneous groups within their respective clubs. There is some support for this claim as two out of five members and volunteers mainly agree (14% totally agree) that they ‘mainly socialise with people from the club that are similar to me (in terms of gender, ethnicity, employment, etc.)’. A little more than one in three (34%) mainly disagree (15% totally disagree).

With regard to homogeneity, there seem to be some interesting variations between selected countries. In Spain, a comparatively high proportion of the members and volunteers seem to belong to homogeneous groups in that 78% mainly agree to the statement, while only 9% mainly disagree. The opposite is true in Germany, where only 22% mainly agree that they mainly socialise with members that are similar to themselves and more than half (51%) disagree. Relatively large disagreement with the statement can also be found in Poland (43%) and Switzerland (40%).

The results indicate that socialising mainly with people similar to oneself is relatively normal among members and volunteers in sports clubs. Interestingly, a linear regression analysis<sup>15</sup> reveals that this notion is slightly more widespread in smaller sports clubs than in larger sports clubs. It would therefore seem that the larger the sports club, the larger the heterogeneity within the social networks formed in the club.

Before turning to how sociocultural integration is articulated in sports policy, it is worth noting that with the measures presented above, we have far from captured the full complexity of sociocultural integration in sports clubs. Decision making is one important aspect of understanding and mastering the dominant values and norms within a sports club, but it is far from the only important aspect related to the concept of assimilation. The same can be said for pluralism. Feeling respected as an individual is indeed at the core of this concept, but it cannot stand alone. Furthermore, this study has focused solely on current members and volunteers of sports clubs, which means that potentially, unsuccessful assimilation or a lack of feeling respected by other people within a sports club could be widespread among people that have been – but no longer are – members of a sports club. Therefore, sociocultural integration is an important topic for further study in the context of sports clubs.

### **3.2.2. Political perspectives on sociocultural integration**

Having examined the sociocultural integration of members and volunteers in sports clubs, we now turn our focus to the political perspectives on the same topic. More specifically, the focus will be on the values and norms with regard to sociocultural integration that seem to be reflected in policy rhetoric and initiatives.

The fact that governments across the ten countries have set goals with regard to social integration and have identified a number of target groups that sports clubs should strive to integrate indicates what seems to be a general recognition: that there is a need to ‘help’ people from target groups become socially integrated in sports clubs through stating the following:

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<sup>15</sup> The regression analysis included the following independent variables: affiliation with the sports club, duration of affiliation, gender, age, educational level, disability, migration background, club age and club size.

- Governments give priority to these groups even if this is most often not reflected in the distribution of economic subsidies – with the exception of funds for specific programmes targeted at one or more of the identified target groups.
- Governments expect that sports clubs take initiatives that can help people within these target groups overcome the perceived barriers to sports club participation, some of which are likely to be related to the values and norms that exist within sports clubs.
- Governments give priority to sports club participation relative to other forms of sports participation by directing all or most of the funding for sport to sports clubs. This priority is often backed up with a rhetoric that ascribes a number of positive qualities to sports clubs – some of which are related to social integration. Following this rhetoric, it seems logical for governments to argue that regardless of their social characteristics and background, people should have (equal) opportunities to participate in club-organised sport.

The above findings indicate the relevance of both assimilation and pluralism in context to policy documents. On the one hand, sports clubs have specific norms and values that are often expressed as beneficial for individuals and for societal integration (e.g. with regard to democracy and voluntary work). Hence, some learning and assimilation of these values and norms are seen as beneficial. On the other hand, the recognition of the need for sports clubs to help people from target groups overcome barriers to integration in sports clubs can challenge the traditional values and norms of sports clubs and force them to think more in terms of finding ways to allow for various social groups – with different values and norms – to take part in sport alongside each other. This viewpoint is connected to the concept of pluralism.

### **3.3. Socio-affective integration**

The third and final dimension of social integration examined in this report is socio-affective integration, which broadly deals with the integration of members and volunteers into club life. Two concepts are at the centre of attention: interaction and identification. The concept of interaction seeks to capture the active participation of members and volunteers in the life of sports clubs (e.g. democracy, social life and voluntary work), and the formation of social networks among members and volunteers. On the other hand, the concept of identification focuses on the emotional commitment of members and volunteers to their respective sports clubs and to other members and volunteers within their respective clubs.

#### **3.3.1. The weight attributed to socio-affective integration in sports clubs**

For the vast majority of sports clubs in Europe, socio-affective integration is very important. One item from the sports club survey captures this perfectly. Close to nine out of ten (88%) European sports clubs mainly agree (50% totally agree) that the club ‘sets high value on companionship and conviviality’. Only 3% of the clubs mainly disagree. With this level of agreement, it seems justified to conclude that the social aspect of sports club participation is generally highly valued in clubs, and that it seems to constitute an important part of the

self-understanding in clubs.

The support for the importance of socio-affective integration is far greater than the support for the statement that the club 'sets high value on sporting success and competition'. 57% of the clubs mainly agree to this (20% totally agree), while 21% mainly disagree. The comparison goes to show that even though sporting success is a core value in many sports clubs, social life is generally viewed as being more important.

Even though the support for the importance of socio-affective integration is high in all ten countries, we do find some countries in which the support is higher than in other countries. If we narrow this down to the percentage of clubs that 'totally agree' that they set high value on companionship and conviviality, the support is highest among clubs in Spain (74%), Belgium (Flanders) (70%), Denmark (60%) and Switzerland (57%) and lowest among clubs in England (29%), Hungary (30%), Germany (37%) and Poland (37%).

At the club level, a linear regression analysis<sup>16</sup> reveals that the support for the importance of companionship and conviviality does not differentiate much according to club characteristics. Nevertheless, there is a weak tendency that the support for the claim decreases with increasing club size. In effect, it would seem that companionship and conviviality is valued higher among smaller than among larger clubs.

### **3.3.2. Democratic participation of members and volunteers in sports clubs**

In the member and volunteer survey, the respondents were asked to report their level of participation in some central aspects of life in a sports club. More specifically, they were asked to report their frequency of participation in the sports activity, club democracy, social life and voluntary work. The participation of members in the sports activity is treated in Chapter 2, and the topic of voluntary work is covered in Chapter 4. So in this chapter and the next, the focus will respectively be on democratic and social participation.

With regard to democratic participation, the members and volunteers were asked for both formal participation (at the annual general meeting as well as at member and/or club meetings) and informal participation (how often they speak their mind to key persons in the club and share their views with other members). With regard to *formal participation*, more than two out of five (42%) members and volunteers reported that they had attended the last annual general meeting. This figure varies greatly between countries. The highest turnout is found among sports clubs in Spain (64%), Switzerland (57%) and Germany (49%), while the lowest turnout is found in Denmark (22%).

Looking at the participation in member and/or club meetings (not including the annual general meeting), a majority of the members and volunteers are active participants. Less than one third (29%) reported that they never participate in these meeting, another 28% reported that they participate once a year or less, while 43% reported that they participate at least once every half year. In Spain and Poland, members and volunteers are most inclined to participate in such meetings. 61% of members in Spanish clubs participate in member and/or club meetings at least once every half year, while the corresponding figure in Polish clubs is 52%. Conversely, the lowest proportion of members and volunteers that participate in these meet-

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<sup>16</sup> The regression analysis included the following independent variables: club age, club size, single vs. multisport, size of community, and, finally, a total of 21 of the more popular sports included in the study.

ings at least once every half year is found in Denmark (31%), Switzerland (33%), Germany (38%) and the Netherlands (39%). It is worth noting that the differences between countries can potentially be partially explained by different traditions across countries as to how often clubs hold these meetings. Hence, they do not only reflect the willingness of members and volunteers to participate.

Turning to the *informal participation* in the member democracy, the proportion of members and volunteers that are active increases somewhat compared to the formal participation. Hence, more members and volunteers are active in the club democracy than what is reflected solely when looking at the turnout at the annual general meeting or at other member and/or club meetings.

Close to two thirds (65%) of the members and volunteers report that they speak their mind to key persons in the club at least once every half year. Of these, 38% do so at least once a month. On a similar note, three out of four members and volunteers share their views with other members in the club at least once every half year, and more than half (53%) do so at least once a month. Once again, we clearly find the most active members and volunteers in Spain and Poland, while the lowest proportion of active members is found in Denmark and Switzerland. For instance, the proportion of members and volunteers that speak their mind to key persons in the club at least once a month is 66% in Spain and 51% in Poland, while it is 20% in Switzerland and 21% in Denmark.

Combining formal and informal democratic participation, the members and volunteers were asked to report when they had last attempted to influence decision making in their respective clubs. A little more than two out of five (41%) reported that they had never attempted this, while approximately the same percentage (42%) reported that they had attempted this within the last six months. Hence, the answers reflect a high degree of polarisation. The pattern throughout the countries is relatively similar to what was reported above. The highest proportion of members and volunteers that have attempted to influence decision making within the last six months can be found in Spain (59%), Norway (55%) and Poland (54%), while the lowest proportion can be found in Hungary and Denmark (37%), the Netherlands (39%) and Switzerland (44%).

### **3.3.3. Social participation of members and volunteers in sports clubs**

Sports clubs can be – and to a large extent are – settings in which members and volunteers engage socially with other people from the club. Across all countries, there is a minority of members that do not interact with other members and volunteers by taking part in the social life within clubs. Nevertheless, there is also some evidence of polarisation, in the sense that some members and volunteers are very active in the social life, while others participate very infrequently or not at all. Significant variations in the participation trends of members and volunteers also exist between countries, just as was the case with regard to democratic participation. Selected results to illustrate these general points are presented in this chapter.

One aspect of social participation is the tendency of members and volunteers to participate in their club's social gatherings. Only 14% reported that they never participate in such gatherings, while a little less than two out of three (63%) participate at least once every half year, and 19% participate at least once a month. Even more frequent is the tendency of mem-

bers and volunteers to 'stay behind after training, matches, tournaments or the like to talk to other people from the club'. Almost the same percentage (13%) never participate, but the percentage that participate at least once every half year is significantly higher (82%), and so is the percentage that participate at least once a month (51%). This goes to show that informal socialising within sports clubs happens frequently and involves a relatively high proportion of the members and volunteers.

This is particularly true for members and volunteers in sports clubs in Belgium (Flanders) and the Netherlands, where 51% and 46% respectively reported that they stay behind and talk to other people from the club at least once a week. This figure is lowest among members and volunteers in Hungary (23%) and Norway (26%). Denmark, however, has the highest percentage of members and volunteers who reported that they never participate (23%).

Another interesting aspect of social participation is the degree to which members and volunteers talk to people outside of the group or team to which they belong. Only one in ten reported that they never do this, while two out of three do so at least once a month and 36% do so at least once a week. The most members and volunteers that socialise with people from outside of their group or team at least once a week can be found in sports clubs in Spain and Belgium (Flanders) (45%), while the lowest percentage is found in Norwegian (14%) and Hungarian (28%) clubs.

Being mediums for social participation, sports clubs are also likely to be arenas for the formation of social networks – and indeed they are. Almost nine out of ten (88%) members and volunteers have made new friends through their participation in their respective clubs, and almost two thirds (64%) socialise outside of the club with people from the club they did not know before joining. These findings illustrate how sports clubs can be regarded as arenas in which a vast majority of members and volunteers not only reproduce and perhaps strengthen existing social networks – new friendship relations are also established, indicating that sports club participation helps expand or build new social networks.

The highest tendency among members and volunteers to have made new friends is found in England (95%), Spain (92%) and Belgium (Flanders) (92%), while the lowest percentage can be found in Denmark (78%). Among members and volunteers in Danish clubs, we also find the lowest percentage that socialises outside of the club with people from the club (41%). Danish clubs are followed by Hungarian clubs (50%). Conversely, the highest tendency to socialise outside of the club is clearly found among members and volunteers in Spanish clubs (90%).

Members and volunteers in sports clubs also have relatively broad networks inside their respective clubs. A little more than eight out of ten (81%) reported that they know more than ten people inside their respective clubs by name, and one out of four even claim to know more than 50 people by name. The most members and volunteers that know more than 50 people from their respective clubs by name can be found in the Netherlands (42%), Switzerland (32%) and Germany (32%), while fewest know this amount by name in Poland (12%) and Hungary (17%).

### 3.3.4. Emotional commitment of members and volunteers in sports clubs

Across all ten countries it is evident that the vast majority of members and volunteers are emotionally committed to their respective club. 87% of the members and volunteers mainly agree (56% totally agree) that there is a good atmosphere in the club. Nearly the same amount (83%) furthermore mainly agree (59% totally agree) that they are 'proud to say that I belong to the club'. The highest proportion of members and volunteers that reported that they totally agree that they are proud to belong to their respective clubs can be found in England (77%), Hungary (73%), Spain (71%) and Poland (69%), while the lowest proportion exists in the Netherlands (29%), Belgium (Flanders) (46%) and Germany (47%).

In the survey, members and volunteers were also asked to compare the importance of their sports club to other social groups to which they belong. Almost three out of five (59%) mainly agree (30% totally agree) that 'the club is one of the most important social groups I belong to'. A little more than one in five (21%) mainly disagree (9% totally disagree) with this statement. Hence, it would indeed seem that many members and volunteers ascribe relatively high importance to their club as a social group. In Spain and Poland, close to three out of four (74% and 72% respectively) members and volunteers mainly agree that their club is one of their most important social groups. The corresponding figures are significantly lower in Denmark (41%), the Netherlands (45%) and Norway (50%).

On a similar note, the members and volunteers were also asked to rate the importance they ascribe to socialisation with other people from their respective clubs. A little more than three in four (76%) mainly agree (44% totally agree) that 'it is important for me to socialise with other people from the club'. Only 7% mainly disagree (3% totally disagree). This is in line with the relatively high social participation that we identified in the previous chapter. In Poland (62%) and Spain (59%), most members and volunteers totally agree with the importance of socialising with other people from the club, while the corresponding figure is lowest in the Netherlands (25%), Norway (35%), England (37%) and Denmark (38%).

As was shown in the previous chapter, the vast majority of members and volunteers (88%) in sports clubs have made new friends through their participation in the club. Almost two thirds (64%) also reported that they see these people in private. However, this leaves a minority for whom the friendship relations built seem to be 'club friendships'. This finding is more or less in line with the fact that a little more than six out of ten (61%) of the members and volunteers mainly agree (29% totally agree) that 'in the club we help and support each other in private matters if necessary'. This is an indication that for many, the relationships formed inside the club have relevance for private life outside the club – but also that this need not be the case. Again, we clearly find the most members and volunteers in total agreement that they help each other in private matters if necessary in Polish (51%), Hungarian (47%) and Spanish (40%) clubs. Less total agreement is found among members and volunteers in Dutch (9%), Belgian (Flemish) (13%), Danish (21%) and Norwegian (23%) clubs.

### 3.3.5. Socio-affective integration in sports clubs

The figures reported in the previous four paragraphs show the importance of sports clubs as arenas for fostering socio-affective integration among members and volunteers. The vast majority of sports clubs have a strong focus on companionship and conviviality, and a majority



of the members and volunteers in them participate actively in club life, while a minority are far less active in the club democracy and social life. This finding indicates that even though sports clubs seem to be important arenas in which socio-affective integration is built, it is possible to take part in a sports club without participating in the democratic and social aspects of club life (interaction), and without building up emotional commitment to the club and to other members and volunteers (identification).

Interestingly, there are relatively large variations in the socio-affective integration of members and volunteers between the ten countries. Across all the forms of socio-affective integration measured, there is a general tendency for members and volunteers in Spanish and Polish clubs to score relatively high, while the score on socio-affective integration seems to be relatively lower in sports clubs in Denmark and the Netherlands. This country pattern is inversely related to the pattern related to the proportion of adults in the respective countries that are members of sports clubs. Spain (7%) and Poland (3%) score relatively low on the proportion of the adult population that are members of a sports club, while Denmark (25%) and the Netherlands (27%) score relatively high (EU, 2014).

It would seem that there is a trade-off between participation rate (within the population) and socio-affective integration (within clubs). The reasons for this are unclear, but it could well be that in countries where a relatively low proportion of the population are active, those who have joined a sports clubs attach more weight to the social interaction. Another possible explanation might be that adult members, especially those in more fitness-oriented and health-oriented sports clubs, are less socio-affectively integrated into the club (Østerlund, 2013, 2014). This would correspond with the fact that in countries like Poland and Spain, sports clubs generally have a strong focus on and culture for competitive sport. Finally, the country differences could also be associated with other differences in the sports club culture and structure between the countries (attitudes of sports clubs, size of sports clubs, sports offered, etc.).

### **3.3.6. Club and individual characteristics that promote and inhibit socio-affective integration**

Linear and logistic regression analyses<sup>17</sup> show that socio-affective integration is influenced mainly by how members and volunteers are connected to their respective club. Volunteers – particularly regular volunteers – are significantly more inclined to participate actively in the club democracy and social life and to be emotionally committed to their respective clubs. Also, the duration of affiliation with the club is positively associated with the measures for socio-affective integration presented in this chapter. This is a finding that can be interpreted in two ways: either socio-affective integration is built up with time, or socio-affective integration fosters the retention of members and volunteers. It is likely that both interpretations are relevant. Jointly, the results indicate that the broader, more intense and long-lasting the connection to the club, the more inclined member and volunteers are to be active and emo-

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<sup>17</sup> The regression analyses included the following independent variables: affiliation with the sports club, duration of affiliation, gender, age, educational level, disability, migration background, club age, club size, value ascribed to companionship and conviviality, and, finally, a total of 15 of the more popular sports included in the study (athletics, badminton, basketball, cycling, dancing, fitness and aerobics, football, golf, gymnastics and trampolining, handball, swimming, table tennis, tennis and volleyball).

tionally committed.

With regard to the influence from individual characteristics, most of the effects are relatively modest. However, we do find that men are slightly more inclined than women to participate actively in the member democracy. This difference is not found with regard to social participation and emotional commitment. Instead it seems that social participation and emotional commitment decline slightly with increasing age, meaning that younger people seem to be more socially active and committed than elderly people. Finally, we find that people with a migration background are no less active in the social gatherings of clubs and that they are equally inclined to stay and socialise after training, matches, tournaments or the like. However, they are somewhat less inclined to talk to people outside of their group or team, and they seem to know fewer people from within the club by name. This can be an indication that ethnicity could potentially influence the ability or desire to socialise widely with people in sports clubs.

At the club level, all three aspects of socio-affective integration treated above – democratic participation, social participation and emotional commitment – are negatively related to the size of the sports club. In effect, the larger the club, the less active and engaged members and volunteers seem to be. This is a finding that could reflect that smaller club communities foster tighter-knit relationships and bring about a greater necessity that members are active and engaged, because a higher proportion of the members and volunteers must contribute to the club in order to solve the tasks that allow the club to survive.

Conversely, only very modest correlations exist between the socio-affective integration of members and volunteers on the one hand, and the attitudes reported by sports club leaders in the club survey on the other. The tendency of clubs to involve members when making important decisions and to delegate decision making from board to committees<sup>18</sup> seems to have hardly any effect on the participation of members and volunteers in the member democracy. However, we do find a weak tendency for clubs that set high value on companionship and conviviality to have members and volunteers who are more inclined to talk to people from outside their team or group and to know more people from the club by name. Hence, we cannot rule out that clubs that have a specific focus on fostering a social climate are more successful in promoting broad socialisation among members and volunteers.

Finally, we turn to the differences in socio-affective integration between sports. In the context of democratic participation and emotional commitment, the type of sport that the members or volunteers are active in seems to have a limited effect on the activity level. Larger differences can be found in connection with social participation, where team ballgames, such as football, handball and volleyball, seem to be somewhat more conducive to social participation – particularly when it comes to the propensity of members and volunteers to stay and socialise after training, matches, tournaments or the like. One potential explanation for this could be that within these sports, the concept of the ‘third half’ is widespread.

However, we also find higher participation in the ‘third half’ (although they might use a different term) among members and volunteers in tennis and table tennis clubs – and in dancing clubs. In contrast, we find a significantly lower tendency among members and volunteers

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18 These two value statements regarding member involvement were only included in the regression analyses concerning democratic participation.

who participate in fitness and aerobics to socialise after training – and they also have significantly smaller networks within their respective clubs. The latter is also true for participants in gymnastics and trampolining, although not to the same degree as for members and volunteers within fitness and aerobics. From these results, it seems that the culture and structure of a sports activity does have an effect on the propensity of members and volunteers to be socially active. In interactive sports, there seem to be more social contacts after the activity (Østerlund, 2013, 2014).

### **3.3.6. Political perspectives on socio-affective integration**

After having examined the socio-affective integration of members and volunteers in sports clubs, we now turn our focus to the political perspectives on the same topic. More specifically, the focus will be on the values and norms with regard to socio-affective integration that can be derived from the policy rhetoric and initiatives. Since the data material collected about sports club policies in the respective countries is in most instances not very elaborate with regard to the role of socio-affective integration, only some more general statements will be briefly elaborated.

Across all ten countries, sport for all policies exclusively – or at least mainly – target sports clubs as the recipients of public funding. This privileged position of sports clubs is often backed up with a rhetoric that ascribes a number of positive qualities to sports clubs – some of which are related to socio-affective integration. Often these positive qualities are seen as related to the structure of sports clubs as not-for-profit organisations with a democratic decision-making structure and a reliance on voluntary work. These traits are sometimes described as conducive to democratic learning and participation, and it is quite often argued that sports clubs are well-suited to build social networks of a certain quality (sometimes referred to as ‘binding communities’) among members and volunteers. In effect, general claims with regard to the qualities of sports clubs in connection with socio-affective integration seem to play a legitimising role for the public subsidies allocated to sports clubs – at least in some countries.

## 4. Voluntary work in sports clubs

Voluntary work is still the most important resource that allows sports clubs to exist and to offer interesting programmes to their members. However, volunteering is not only relevant for sports clubs and members, but also for civil society, since integration in a club can lead to integration in the broader community. Volunteering in sports clubs gives people the opportunity to engage in society and gain experience with democratic decision making. However, some sports clubs have difficulty in recruiting and retaining enough qualified volunteers. Therefore, questions arise regarding what characterises the clubs that are successful in recruiting and retaining volunteers, and how the clubs can manage this problem effectively. In this context, the roles of paid staff as well as certain measures to recruit and retain volunteers seem relevant to examine.

Besides this perspective of conditions for the successful management of volunteers in sports clubs, this chapter aims to consider from a broader perspective the role of sports policy and the general relevance of volunteering in society for the situation of volunteering in sports clubs. In that connection, it is interesting to examine if there are differences as well similarities between the sports clubs in the ten countries that are part of the project.

According to the introduction to the SIVSCE project (Elmose-Østerlund & Ibsen, 2016, p. 14), volunteering is characterised as follows: Voluntary activities that are unpaid or paid for with a symbolic amount. The voluntary activities must be carried out for the benefit of people other than the family and have a formal character (organised or agreed).

The following questions serve as a guideline for the different thematic sub-chapters:

1. What role does voluntary work play compared with the work of paid staff? What developments can be observed in volunteering?
2. What role does volunteering play in club management? How much do clubs experience problems in having enough volunteers?
3. What measures do sports clubs take to recruit and retain volunteers? Are there interrelations between certain measures and the development of the number of volunteers as well as the conditions for volunteering?
4. What individual and organisational factors play a role in volunteer satisfaction?

### 4.1. Characteristics and development of voluntary work in sports clubs

When examining the characteristics and development of voluntary work, the focus will first be on the proportion and development of volunteers, then the attention turns to paid staff, and finally, the workload of volunteers is elaborated.

#### 4.1.1. Relative proportion and development of volunteers in sports clubs

In all ten countries, volunteering is a central element of sports clubs. The relative proportion of volunteers in a fixed position compared to members is between 23% in Spain and 22% in Hungary on the one hand, and 14% in Switzerland and 13% in Germany on the other hand. However, in the countries with a low rate of volunteers in fixed positions, the relative proportion of volunteers in no fixed positions is higher (Switzerland and Germany). Altogether, there are no big differences between the ten countries with regard to the number of volunteers (fixed and not fixed taken together) relative to members per club.

Furthermore, the figures for the frequency of volunteering as well as the working areas (administration and management, as well as sport and training) differ only slightly. Obviously, each club needs a certain number of volunteers for the different tasks. In this context, it is interesting that in clubs with more members, the relative proportion of volunteers is lower. Thus, the need for more volunteers in case of more members does not increase linearly. The reason for this is probably that you need certain positions in the club (e.g. president and treasurer) independent of the number of members. There are also differences when it comes to sports: the relative proportion of volunteers is considerably higher in football than in swimming and tennis clubs, because clubs for team sports seem to need more volunteers for the training of each team, as referees and for the organisation of the regular matches (e.g. every second week) (Heinemann & Schubert, 1992; Ibsen, 1992; Laub, 2012; Seippel, 2008; Østerlund, 2013).

It should be pointed out that in countries with generally a relatively low formal volunteering rate (Eurostat, 2015d), like Hungary (7%), Spain (11%) and Poland (14%), the relative number of members volunteering in sports clubs is nearly the same as in countries with high general participation rates, like the Netherlands (40%) and Denmark (38%). Thus, in countries where volunteering plays a minor role in society, sports clubs offer an important opportunity for volunteering. This assumption is in line with the relatively low rates (less than 50%) of club members in Poland, Spain and Hungary who do voluntary work outside the club, because volunteering only plays a minor societal role in these countries. It is likely that there is a correlation with the late dissolution of the authoritarian regimes and the general lack of 'tradition' for volunteering in these countries. In all other European countries in the sample, more than 50% of the club members volunteer outside the sport club, or used to do this.

It is interesting that the number of volunteers has been quite stable for the last five years. In all countries, about 60% of the clubs or even more reported that the number of volunteers had not changed (i.e. roughly unchanged +/- 10%). Furthermore, in most of the countries, the proportion of clubs with an increase (more than 10% additional volunteers) is higher than those with a decrease (more than 10%). Only in Germany and Switzerland the number of clubs that have lost volunteers is higher. These figures do not fit with the general thesis that volunteering is in a steady process of decline. Thus, the often declared 'crisis of volunteers' cannot be found in our empirical data. One explanation for this might be that the clubs divide the tasks between more members and thus reduce the workload per volunteer in order to make voluntary work more attractive. Such a strategy is observed in Swiss sport clubs, for example (Lamprecht et al., 2017).

It is also remarkable that there is a slight positive correlation between the development of

volunteers and the development of paid staff. This result is in contradiction with the assumption that an increase in paid staff reduces the willingness of club members to volunteer. The explanation might be that paid staff can support volunteering and thereby motivate volunteers for a long-time and regular engagement.

#### **4.1.2. Relative proportion and development of paid staff**

The proportion of paid staff relative to members is far lower in all countries than the proportion of volunteers in the sports club. This is in line with the general attitude that volunteering is – and should be – a central element of sports clubs. In nearly all countries, the majority of the clubs agree with the statement that the club should only be run by volunteers. However, there are interesting differences with regard to the number of paid staff relative to members: we observe the highest rates in Poland with 5%, followed by Spain (3%) and then Hungary and Germany (2%). In all other countries, the number of paid staff compared to all members is about 1%. These differences can be interpreted by the relatively short history of sports clubs in former authoritarian regimes and there being less tradition of volunteering in sports clubs in these countries. The lack of traditional organisational values in sports clubs is likely to facilitate the introduction of paid staff. Clubs in former authoritarian countries are presumably more open to engaging paid staff, because there is a tradition for paid trainers and management.

Only a minority of the sports clubs employ a paid manager (full-time or part-time), which is most common in England (19% of all clubs), Norway (17%) and Hungary (15%), and least common in Switzerland (2%), Belgium (Flanders) (3%) and the Netherlands (5%). Once again, this is probably in line with the specific tradition that a sport club should be run by volunteers in these countries. Because of their organisational values, clubs may have difficulties to decide to engage a paid manager.

However, the differences between small and large clubs are far greater than the differences between countries. In particular, clubs with more than 1,000 members have a paid manager (44% of all clubs), whereas only a minority of the clubs with less than 300 members (3%) have a full or part time manager. The reason for this could be that these clubs have enough money for paid management, and that the workload and the requirements for running a large club are higher. Furthermore, in sports clubs located in bigger communities, the proportion of paid management is also higher. Clubs in cities with more than 50,000 participants more often employ a paid manager. This effect can be observed in all countries apart from England. However, the effect of club size is much stronger than that of the size of the community. The correlation between club size (number of members) and the existence of paid management can be observed in all countries.

In the majority of clubs, the number of paid staff has not considerably changed (at least +/- 10%) within the last five years. If there is a variation, the clubs have mostly increased the number of people that are paid. Only in Spain do more than 10% of the clubs show a reduction in paid staff. The cause might be the difficulties that clubs have to get enough financial resources because of the economic development in this country. In the whole sample, clubs with more members more frequently show an increase in the number of paid staff. The small correlation is probably caused by the greater number of tasks and requirements in these clubs.

In order to handle the growing amount of work, large clubs tend to increase the number of paid staff.

### **4.1.3. Workload of volunteers**

A large proportion of the volunteers (44%) are 'regular' in the sense that they do voluntary work at least once a week in the clubs. This figure is relatively equal between countries. However, there are differences between the three sports that are represented most frequently in the member survey: football (52%), swimming (42%) and tennis (40%). Team sports obviously require more regular volunteering, probably because there are more teams and more competition events and matches per season. Volunteers in football clubs also spend more hours (189 hours per year/season) in the club than the average volunteer (165 hours per year/season). Volunteers in swimming clubs have an average workload of 145 hours and those in tennis clubs 136 hours (per year/season).

The comparison between the countries also shows differences in the average number of hours spent on volunteering from 119 hours per year in Switzerland to 292 in Poland. However, it is difficult to explain why the volunteers in Polish sports clubs have such a high workload compared to all other countries, where the mean figures are lower than 200 hours per year/season. In clubs with a paid manager, volunteers work more regularly and spend also more hours (201 per year on average) than in clubs that have no paid management (158 hours per year). Thus, a paid manager does not reduce the workload of volunteers. In contrast, the workload is higher, which could be a result of a higher number of tasks and requirements in bigger clubs with paid management.

## **4.2. Relevance of volunteering**

As indicated by the figures presented above, volunteers play an important role in sports clubs. Below we show to what degree this matches the opinion of the club boards, and we will elaborate on whether volunteering is in fact an existential challenge for some sports clubs.

### **4.2.1. Crucial role of volunteering in club management**

There is generally very high agreement among sports club representatives that volunteering currently plays an important role in sports clubs. Across most of the countries, a majority of clubs ascribe to the ideal that their clubs should be run exclusively by volunteers (between 84% in Switzerland and 41% in Hungary). Only in Poland do the majority of clubs (53%) disagree with this statement. Furthermore, a clear majority of the clubs in all ten countries agree that all members can be volunteers regardless of their qualifications (between 94% in Germany and 80% in Poland). Thus, there is a general idea that members who want to contribute to the club should have the opportunity to do so. In contrast, there is broad disagreement in all ten countries with the attitude that members are customers and cannot be expected to contribute with voluntary work (between 88% in Norway and 67% in Belgium (Flanders)). In summary, voluntary work and the expectation that members engage as volunteers in their respective clubs are part of the organisational culture in all ten countries.

Nevertheless, a closer look reveals clear differences between the club boards' opinions on volunteers, particularly for the item that the club should be run exclusively by volunteers. The results – measured on a scale between 1 = *don't agree at all* to 5 = *totally agree* – show that in Switzerland (M = 4.3), Germany (M = 4.1) and Denmark (M = 3.8), clubs agree much more with this statement than in Hungary (M = 3.0) and Poland (M = 2.6). How can these different attitudes on volunteering in sports club management be explained?

A closer look at sports policies shows a clear picture that sports opportunities provided by sports clubs and delivered by volunteers are the main target of sports policies in nearly all ten countries. Thus, there seems to be a clear preference for sports offers provided by civil society in which volunteers play a central role. In some countries, the sports federations provide clubs with ideas and support to recruit and retain volunteers, e.g. qualifications, courses, volunteer recruitment strategies, etc. This illustrates the general high weight attached to volunteering at the sports policy level. Furthermore, the results at the club level reveal that in all ten countries, the clubs have implemented specific measures to support voluntary work. A clear majority of the clubs have at least one initiative to recruit and retain volunteers (for more details see section 4.3). Thus, these findings do not give a clear explanation for the different attitudes on volunteering between certain countries.

It is more likely that there is an association with the strong historical roots of sports clubs in countries like Germany, Denmark and Switzerland on the one hand, and the shorter tradition of sports clubs (and volunteering) in countries like Poland and Hungary, because of the recent dissolution of the authoritarian regimes. The differences between the countries on the opinion that sports clubs should exclusively be run by volunteers also correspond with the Eurostat data (Eurostat, 2015d). The figures for the participation in formal voluntary work (in all societal fields) are relatively higher in Denmark (38%) and Germany (29%) compared to Hungary (7%) and Poland (14%). Furthermore, the data of the member survey show that in Hungary and Poland, far fewer club members do voluntary work outside the sports club.

In this context, it is also interesting that sports clubs with a paid manager agree far less with the statement that clubs have to be managed exclusively by volunteers (M = 2.5) than clubs without paid management (M = 4.1). In addition, there is a (weak) negative correlation between the opinion that sports clubs should exclusively be run by volunteers and the average proportion of paid staff in a club. Furthermore, there is a weak negative correlation between the opinion that the club should exclusively be run by volunteers on the one hand and the club and community size on the other. However, the question arises whether clubs with paid management change their opinions on volunteering as they employ paid staff, or if clubs with a less strong culture for volunteering more likely engage paid staff. It is not possible to answer this question with the data at hand. On a general note, it has to be pointed out that paid managers are also more common in Hungary and Poland than in Switzerland and Germany.

#### **4.2.2. Volunteering as an existential challenge**

The club survey reveals that having enough human resources is one of the main challenges of many sports clubs. In all ten countries, the recruitment and retention of volunteers at the board level is an existential problem for some clubs. Compared to the results above, it is quite interesting that the number of clubs with such an existential challenge at the board level is



highest in Germany (15%), Switzerland (11%) and Denmark (8%). In all other countries, where the culture for exclusively volunteer club management is less strong, the rate is at most 5% or even less. Here, we would assume more generally that there is a correlation between the attitude that clubs should be run exclusively by volunteers and their report of the existence of crucial problems at the board level. However, the data of the club survey reveal no correlation between the two factors. Furthermore, clubs with existential problems in recruiting and retaining volunteers at the club level do not show higher values for the opinion that the club should be exclusively run by volunteers. Thus, the specific tradition of volunteering cannot explain the differences between the countries.

Another interesting aspect in this context might be the role of paid management: Can a paid manager reduce the existential problems of volunteering at the board level? The results at the club level show that there are no differences according to whether a club employs a paid manager or not. In summary, there seem to be other specific factors that are relevant for existential problems in the field of volunteering.

### **4.3. Recruitment and retention of volunteers**

The following sections are dedicated to the important aspect of recruitment and retention of volunteers in sports clubs. In that connection, it is described how volunteers are recruited and the effect this has on volunteer development. Finally, the conditions for volunteers and the reasons not to volunteer are elaborated.

#### **4.3.1. Volunteer recruitment**

When the volunteers describe how or through whom they came to volunteer in the club, 40% answer that they put themselves forward. This could perhaps be tied to a general opinion among many volunteers that sports clubs function only if members volunteer. In line with the measures to recruit volunteers through the network of current volunteers or members, it is also very common that volunteers have been approached by the club board (29%) or have been motivated by other members (23%). The relative frequency of different forms of volunteer recruitment is similar in all ten countries, and self-recruitment (40% on average across countries) is the most common way apart from Switzerland and Belgium (Flanders), where recruitment by the club board is more relevant.

Here, it is interesting whether the recruitment measures of the clubs – reported in the club survey – correlate with the way the volunteers are recruited – measured in the member survey. However, the comparison between both perspectives shows no relevant interrelations between the club and the member survey. It is probable that sports clubs consequently do not recruit volunteers with one single measure, but use different ways to find new volunteers. Furthermore, members might not remember the form of recruitment very well. Nevertheless, self-recruitment seems to be an important way for clubs to recruit volunteers.

### 4.3.2. Measures to recruit and retain volunteers

In a majority of the clubs across all ten countries, the primary way to recruit volunteers is through the existing networks of current volunteers and by encouraging volunteers verbally (more than 50% of all clubs in nearly all countries). In contrast, only a minority of the clubs try to recruit volunteers from outside the existing club members (between 7% and 25%). In Switzerland (69%) and Germany (66%), about two out of three clubs arrange social gatherings for the volunteers to strengthen group identity, whereas in Poland and Hungary, only 23% and 31% respectively use this measure to retain volunteers. Only in Switzerland do the majority of the clubs (70%) inform their members that they are expected to contribute with voluntary work, whereas in the other countries 25% to 49% of the clubs do this. Apart from England (54%), less than half of the clubs in the different countries pay for volunteers to take training and gain qualification. The following measures to recruit and retain volunteers are used even more rarely, with relative frequencies in the different countries between 1% and 36%: rewarding volunteers with benefits in kind, having a position with a specific responsibility for volunteer management, having a written strategy for volunteer recruitment. All in all, the more traditional forms of recruiting and retaining volunteers, such as personally contacting and encouraging the members of the club, are much more common than more formal measures, like payment for qualification, benefits in kind or specific volunteer management.

Nearly all the measures presented above are more common in clubs with a larger number of members. In particular, clubs with more than 500 members use the different possibilities to recruit and retain volunteers relatively more often, probably because they have a larger need for volunteers and more problems to recruit volunteers without any effort. In contrast, 25% of the clubs with less than 50 members do not do anything in particular to recruit and retain volunteers. Only the concept that members are expected to contribute with voluntary work is more common in smaller clubs. Presumably, the social pressure to engage for the club community is bigger in clubs with fewer members, where nearly every member is known personally.

Clubs with a full-time or part-time paid manager more often take more formal measures to recruit and retain volunteers, like having a responsible person for volunteer management, providing benefits in kind and/or having a written strategy. Probably, these clubs are more open to innovation, and the paid manager supports the implementation of such measures. However, the relative differences between clubs with and without paid management using a certain measure are usually only between 10% and 15%. For the more traditional measures to recruit and retain volunteers, there are no differences whether a club has a paid manager or not. Nevertheless, we observe a more formalised way of recruiting and retaining volunteers in clubs with paid management.

Furthermore, multisport clubs more often take specific measures to recruit and retain volunteers than single sport clubs. We find the slight differences for nearly all the measures reported above. Differentiating the measures to recruit and retain volunteers with regard to community size show no relevant differences. Clubs in bigger communities use the different measures more or less as frequently as clubs in smaller communities. The comparison between the clubs in the three different sports, football, swimming and tennis, also reveals no relevant differences when it comes to the use of specific measures to recruit and retain volunteers.

#### **4.3.3. Measures to recruit and retain volunteers and volunteer development**

The following measures are taken relatively more often by clubs that also reported an increase in the number of volunteers more frequently: having a person responsible for volunteer management, giving benefits in kind to the volunteers, recruiting through the networks of current volunteers. Thus, it can be assumed that these measures help to recruit and retain volunteers more efficiently. However, the correlations are only weak and for other measures, e.g. a written strategy for volunteer recruitment and paying volunteers for qualification and training, there are no relevant effects.

There are only minor differences with regard to volunteer development for the factor of club size. In clubs with more members, there is a decrease in the number of volunteers slightly more often. In contrast, having a paid manager does not play any role with regard to volunteer development.

A linear regression analysis<sup>19</sup> shows that specific measures, particularly having a person responsible for volunteer management, have bigger effects on volunteer development than general structural factors, like club size and paid management. However, the effects are considerably small and the quality of the regression model is low.

It is not surprising that there is a (weak) correlation between the statement that the members demonstrate passion, dedication and energy for the work that needs to be done on the one hand, and volunteer development on the other hand. Thus, the clubs that manage to motivate and fascinate the members into volunteering seem to have fewer problems in recruiting enough volunteers.

#### **4.3.4. Measures to recruit and retain volunteers and conditions for volunteering**

Besides the impact of certain measures on volunteer development, the question arises if there is a correlation between taking certain measures to recruit and retain volunteers and the statements of the volunteers regarding their work in the member and volunteer survey. To measure the conditions for volunteering, the volunteers evaluated the following five dimensions in the member and volunteer survey, with two questions for each dimension on a five-point Likert scale:

1. Task design: tasks are interesting and challenging; carrying out work autonomously.
2. Material incentives: getting fringe benefits; some payment for volunteer work.
3. Leadership: constructive feedback from club management; information about major club affairs.
4. Support: problems and concerns are taken seriously; support from other club members.
5. Recognition: work is appreciated; club honours volunteer work.

The different items were selected on the basis of former studies on the relevance of different working conditions for the satisfaction of volunteers (Schlesinger, Egli, & Nagel, 2013).

The results of the interrelation between measures for volunteering by the club and the

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<sup>19</sup> The regression analysis included the following independent variables: club size, paid manager, having a person responsible for volunteer management, recruiting mainly through the networks of current volunteers and members, and rewarding volunteers with benefits in kind.

opinions of the volunteers show only small effects for some of the measures and some of the working conditions. There are no differences in the volunteers' evaluations whether a club has a person with specific responsibility for volunteer management. Obviously, it is not enough to have a specific position to improve the conditions for volunteering, e.g. leadership and support. For the following measures to recruit and retain volunteers, there are also no relevant correlations with the perceived conditions for volunteering: the club arranges parties and social gatherings for the volunteers to strengthen group identity, and the club encourages and motivates its volunteers verbally.

In contrast, if a club rewards its volunteers with benefits in kind, or the club pays for volunteers to take training or gain qualification, the members not only perceive more material incentives, but also report slightly more support and recognition. Thus, such measures with some monetary benefits serve also to improve the perceived conditions of volunteering. As a consequence, material incentives can positively influence volunteer satisfaction in general.

However, if a club informs the members that they are expected to contribute with voluntary work, this goes along with a less positive evaluation of the factors *task design* and *leadership*. When members are obliged to work as volunteers, there are probably some of them that do not really appreciate the working conditions. As a consequence, this could have negative consequences for volunteer satisfaction and their commitment to the work in the club. Therefore, a rule that volunteer engagement is mandatory for all members could potentially have negative consequences for the quality of voluntary work.

#### **4.3.5. Reasons not to volunteer**

There could be several reasons not to volunteer for the members who currently do not engage as volunteers. About one third stated that they are not interested in volunteering at all, and for about one quarter, the tasks as a volunteer are too time-consuming. There are some slight differences between the ten countries with regard to these two most relevant reasons. For example in Spain (7%) and England (13%), only a minority of the members show absolutely no interest in volunteering. The argument of 'too time-consuming' is mentioned less by members of Polish sports clubs (10%).

Only 12% of the members who are not engaged reported that they do not feel qualified to take on any of the tasks. This fits well with the finding of the club survey that most clubs state that members can be volunteers regardless of their qualifications. Only a small group of 10% of the members give as the reasons for not volunteering that they do not know what kind of volunteers the club is looking for or where to sign up. However, there are no interrelations between giving these reasons and some structural conditions or measures to recruit and retain volunteers, e.g. having a responsible position for volunteer management. Finally, there are likely to be many other different reasons not to volunteer in the clubs, and several of these have their origin outside the clubs (occupation, family, etc.).

## 4.4. Satisfaction with the conditions for volunteering

The last topic regarding volunteering that will be touched upon is volunteer satisfaction and the relationship between satisfaction and the conditions offered for volunteers.

### 4.4.1. Volunteer satisfaction

Volunteers in sports clubs are mainly unpaid, and a minority of them receive monetary benefits. Nevertheless, across all ten countries, a clear majority are satisfied with the general conditions that clubs provide for their work. Measured on a 5-point Likert scale, about 70% of the volunteers are satisfied or even very satisfied with the conditions for volunteering, whereas only 10% are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. The relative frequency of satisfied volunteers is similar in all ten countries, with the highest rates in Belgium (Flanders) (82%) and Spain (79%), and the lowest in Germany and Hungary (both 61%).

A closer look at the specific conditions for volunteering also shows minor differences between the countries. Measured on a scale between 1 = *strongly disagree* and 5 = *strongly agree*, the volunteers evaluate the following conditions in a positive way (total mean values slightly above or slightly below 4.0):

- *the tasks are interesting and challenging,*
- *my problems and concerns are taken seriously,*
- *my work as a volunteer is appreciated,*
- *I can carry out my work autonomously,*
- *I am informed about major club affairs,*
- *other club members support my work as a volunteer,*
- *the club honours me for my voluntary work.*

With regard to the statement about honouring volunteers, there are considerable differences between the countries, with values about 4.0 in Belgium (Flanders), Denmark and the Netherlands, and values about 3.0 in England, Germany and Hungary. Generally, there is far less agreement (mean values about 2.0) with the statements concerning material incentives:

- *I get fringe benefits (e.g. reduced membership fee),*
- *I get some payment for my voluntary work.*

Obviously, most of the volunteers in the clubs do not get any payment or receive other financial gratifications.

### 4.4.2. Factors for volunteer satisfaction

With regard to the different conditions for volunteering, the question arises of how far these factors play a role for the general satisfaction of volunteers. The analysis of the five dimensions of voluntary work (see section 4.3.4 above) shows that all measured aspects are relevant for volunteer satisfaction. The comparison of the satisfied volunteers with the unsatisfied volunteers in a logistic regression analysis demonstrates that the most relevant factor is rec-

ognition (that volunteer work is appreciated and honoured). The factors *leadership (feedback and information)* and *support of volunteers* also show quite relevant effects for volunteer satisfaction, whereas *material incentives* and also *interesting tasks* and *autonomy* play a less important role.

The specific conditions for volunteering are much more relevant than other determinants, like the frequency of volunteering and the hours of volunteer work. Volunteers who work more regularly (at least once a week) are slightly more satisfied than volunteers who engage only once or twice a year. In contrast, there is no correlation between satisfaction and workload (hours per month) of regular volunteers.

Finally, it is interesting to have a closer look at the relevance of structural conditions in the club for volunteer satisfaction. The size of the club (number of members) as well as having a paid manager have no significant effect on the satisfaction of volunteers. For the different measures to recruit and retain volunteers (e.g. responsible person for volunteer management and written strategy for volunteer recruitment), we also do not observe any relevant effects. Probably most clubs succeed relatively well in encouraging and promoting volunteering, regardless of whether they take specific formalised measures to recruit and retain volunteers or not. Another explanation for this somewhat unexpected result might be methodological problems to record certain measures at the club level by asking only one representative in the club.

All in all, the conditions for volunteering as perceived by a single volunteer are the main determinants for satisfaction. Thus, it is not enough to implement a certain measure for promoting volunteering – it is important also to reach the volunteers with it. Only then can a club be successful in recruiting more volunteers and particularly in retaining the current (satisfied) volunteers.

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