



Real European Sport Model

Research report

Executive Summary

The European Sport Model (hereinafter "ESM") has been understood as a defining framework for how sport is organised, governed and practised across Europe. The model assumes that grassroots and elite-level sport are united by financial solidarity mechanisms. It builds on the principle of promotion and relegation in open competitions, and it establishes sport as a values-based activity and a critical instrument of social and public infrastructure.

Despite this, the main observation underpinning this research is that the ESM does not holistically capture how the majority of sports are organised and how European citizens engage with physical activity. This observation has long been recognised at the highest level of European policymaking. As early as 1998, the same year and in the same report that the term "European Sport Model" is first used, the European Commission recognised that many grassroots and elite stakeholders felt unrepresented by the sports federations that claimed to speak on their behalf (European Commission, Directorate-General X, 1998b, Section 3.1). In the 2007 White Paper on Sport, the European Commission acknowledged that defining a single organisational model for sport in Europe was unrealistic, given the complexity and diversity of national structures (Commission of the European Communities, 2007a, p. 12).

This has spurred growing concerns and led to the research question guiding our inquiry: "To what extent does the ESM reflect the diversity of the organisation of and participation in sporting activity in Europe?" Our research finds that the current ESM does not present a cohesive framework that is representative of the depth and breadth of the realities of the organisation of and participation in sporting activity in Europe.

This headline finding is supported by four sub-findings encapsulated in each Chapter of the report:

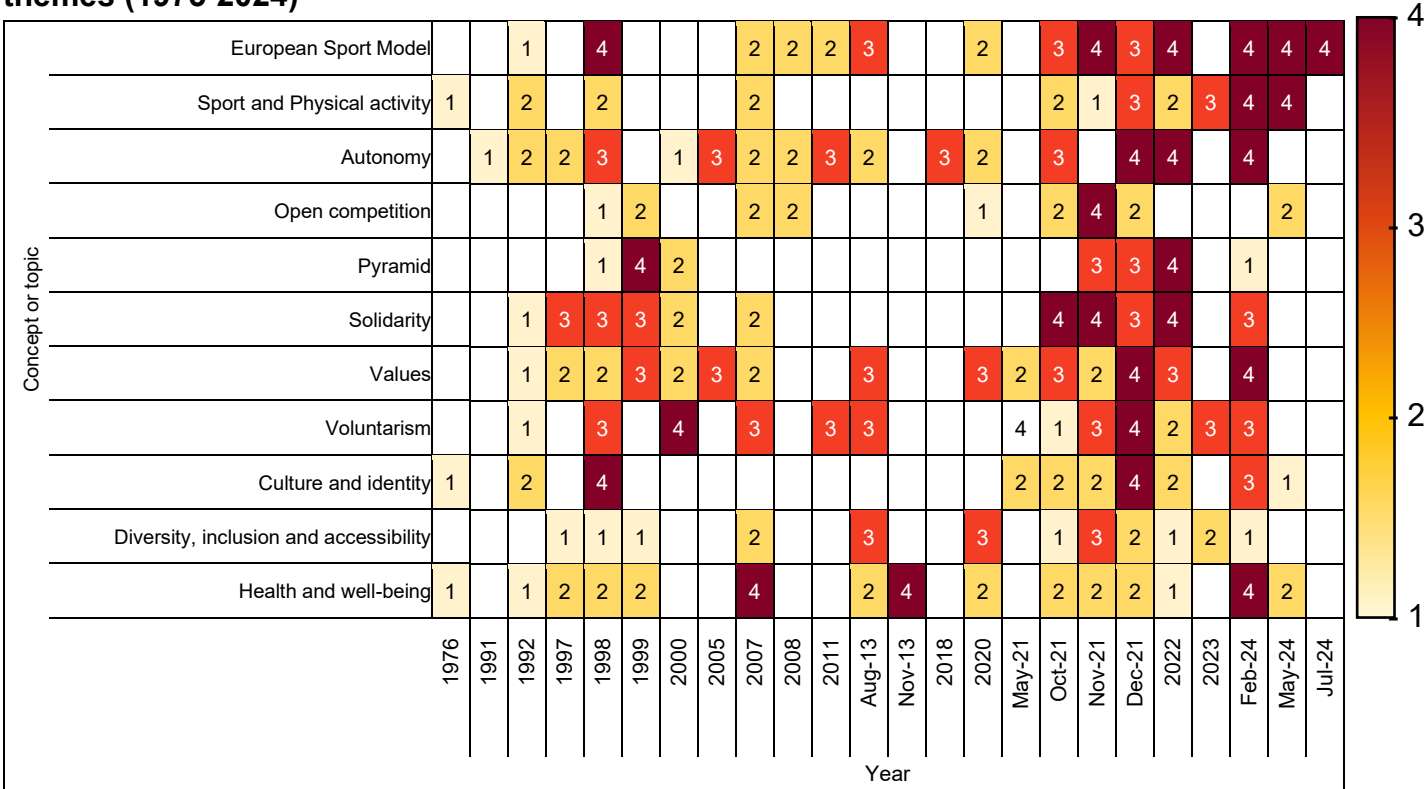
- Chapter 1: **ESM definitions and understandings of concepts and topics prove to be inconsistent.**
- Chapter 2: **Society-facing topics lack substance and assessment, while current key features lack mechanisms and measurements.**
- Chapter 3: **A map of the relationships between civic life and sectoral contributions better captures the diversity of the organisation of and participation in sporting activity.**
- Chapter 4: **The diverse financial landscape of direct and indirect contributions to sporting activity in Europe remains largely unsupported by financial redistribution from sport governing bodies.**

Chapter 1: ESM definitions and understandings of concepts and topics prove to be inconsistent.

Chapter 1 concerns the consistency and comprehensibility of the ESM's six key features over the fifty-year timeframe (1975-2024), during which European institutions have debated a potential common framework for sport in Europe. The six key features of the ESM – autonomy, open competition, the pyramid structure, solidarity, values and voluntarism – are analysed across policy documents from European institutions, peer-reviewed articles from scholars, and the broader grey literature.

A policy analysis of the consistency of the definitions and understandings of all concepts over time is summarised in the heatmap visualised in **Figure 8**. It includes both the six key features of the ESM and the topics inductively identified as being important to the ESM, including culture and identity, health and well-being, and diversity, inclusion and accessibility.

Figure 8: Heatmap of ratings of definitions and understandings across ESM concepts and themes (1975-2024)



The high-level conclusion that can be gleaned from **Figure 8** is that the European Sport Model displays very little consistency. Nearly all concepts and topics have changed significantly over

time, and not in any discernible pattern or interrelated shifts. The current understanding of the ESM largely diverges from the original ideas underpinning the development of sport in Europe. Particularly, the concepts of autonomy, solidarity, voluntarism and of sport have all moved permanently away from their original meanings. For example, the ESM's understanding of 'sport' has evolved from a holistic approach to physical activity to a distinction between (1) formal, organised settings, which mainly focus on performance and competition; and (2) and informal, self-organised settings, which typically are a form of leisure and recreation with benefits related to health and social inclusion.

This observation could suggest the ESM and its concepts have evolved over time to reflect the ever-changing needs of citizens. The 'European Sport Model' itself and five of its six features (solidarity, voluntarism, values, pyramid, and autonomy) showcase the least consistency. The inconsistency across these concepts directly contrasts with the consistency seen across society-facing concepts like diversity, inclusion, and accessibility; health and well-being; and culture and identity. This appears to indicate that concepts that are politically charged are inconsistent, while the goals and aims related to citizens' needs have stayed relatively consistent.

Chapter 2: Society-facing topics lack substance and assessment, while current key features lack mechanisms and measurements.

Chapter 2 identifies potential gaps in the ESM. Like the approach to the key features, the research outlines an understanding and then challenges the ESM's approach to society-facing topics, like sport and physical activity; culture and identity; health and well-being; and diversity, inclusion and accessibility. Despite being of critical importance to the broader scientific literature on sport, these topics remain largely unassessed by scholars in the context of the ESM.

To further understand where scientific assessments are lacking, the research considered the six key features and categorised them by function. As shown in **Table 6**, each ESM key 'feature' is a concept. However, not all concepts have associated mechanisms for implementation, and even fewer have associated measurements. Where measurements do exist in the cases of autonomy and voluntarism, their efficacy in evaluating the concept proposed remains unassessed.

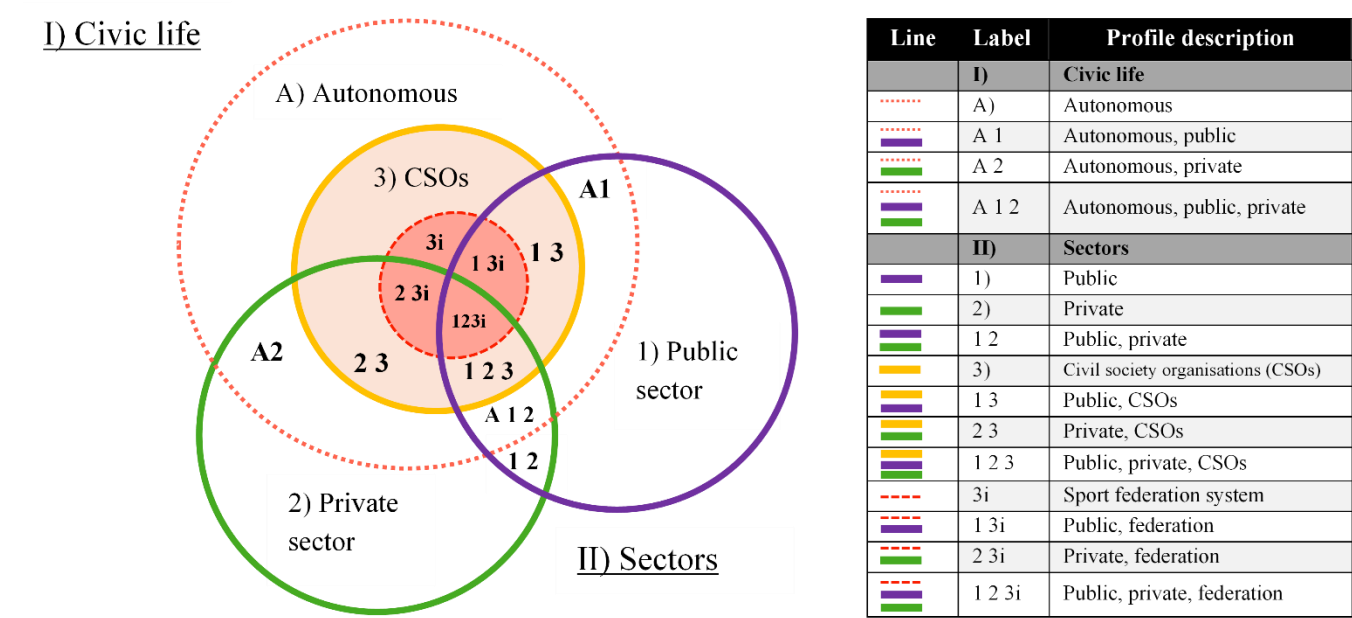
Table 6: Summary of literature review findings across six ESM features

Key features of the European Sport Model		<u>Concept</u>	<u>Mechanism</u>	<u>Measurement</u>
		<i>Abstract idea or principle</i>	<i>Concrete implementation action(s)</i>	<i>How concept(s) or mechanism(s) are evaluated</i>
	Autonomy	Yes	None	Good governance indicators; but applicability is not tested
	Open competition	Yes	- Promotion / relegation - Questionable applicability of financial redistribution	None
	Pyramid	Yes	- Hierarchical governance - Questionable applicability of financial redistribution	None
	Solidarity	Yes	Financial redistribution	None
	Values	Yes	None	None
	Voluntarism	Yes	Volunteers, but interpretation of concept as meaning a 'workforce' is questionable	- Quantitative measures of quantity of volunteers and hours, interpreted through economic measures - Volunteer satisfaction and retention surveys

Chapter 3: A map of the relationships between civic life and sectoral contributions better captures the diversity of the organisation of and participation in sporting activity.

Chapter 3 proposes an updated and validated framework to capture the diversity of how sporting activity is organised and practised in Europe. As shown in **Figure 13**, the Relational European Sporting Map seeks to visualise the overlap between civic life and the public, private and civil society sectors to capture how sporting activity is not only organised but also experienced by participants. This framework represents a key shift by refocusing the debate from organisations to an underlying common denominator: sporting activity.

Figure 13: Relational European Sporting Map



Vandenberg, L., & Riquier, O. (2026). *From the European Sport Model's Pyramid to a Relational Map of Sporting Activity*. Manuscript submitted for publication.

This framework was validated through an in-person facilitated pilot survey with 100 participants. The results of the survey were that every sporting activity presented and described to the researchers could be understood by one of the 12 possible profiles outlined. The following results present an example per profile, based on the in-person facilitated survey.

- **A** - Autonomous sporting activity that uses only the citizens' own resources and/or settings. A common example included self-organised running at home on a personal treadmill.

- **A-1** - Autonomous sporting activity that uses 1) designated public resources and/or settings. A common example included self-organised cycling in designated cycling lanes.
- **A-2** - Autonomous sporting activity that uses 2) private resources and/or settings. An example was self-organised exercise at home that relied on a paid mobile application to define the exercises.
- **A-1-2** - Autonomous sporting activity that uses 1) designated public AND 2) private resources and/or settings. An example included a triathlete who uses a public university's track and pays for a private gym membership to access a swimming pool.
- **3** – Sporting activities that are organised by a civil society organisation and use only the CSO's own resources and/or settings to deliver sporting activities (e.g., member-funded with household contributions only). An example included an employee at a civil society organisation who plays football as part of a work league, using facilities available through their employer.
- **1-3** - Sporting activities that are organised by a civil society organisation and use 3) the CSO's resources and/or settings (e.g., member-funded with household contributions only) AND 1) designated public resources and/or settings to deliver sporting activities. An example included a beach volleyball player who uses public volleyball courts as part of a civil society organisation's volleyball league.
- **2-3** - Sporting activities that are organised by a civil society organisation and use 3) the CSO's resources and/or settings (e.g., member-funded with household contributions only) AND 2) private resources and/or settings to deliver sporting activities. An example includes an equestrian who is a member of a civil society organisation for horseback riding and rents time at a private boarding stable.
- **1-2-3** - Sporting activities that are organised by a civil society organisation and use 3) the CSO's resources and/or settings (e.g., member-funded with household contributions only) AND 1) designated public AND 2) private resources and/or settings to deliver sporting activities. None of the survey participants themselves fit this profile; however, the researchers were told of an example of a civil society organisation for children that organises play activities in public playgrounds using equipment financed by the private sector.
- **3i** - Sporting activities that are organised by a civil society organisation within the sport federation system and use 3i) resources and/or settings supported by members (e.g.,

household contributions) and/or the federation system (e.g., solidarity payments). An example includes a kayaker who is a member of the national federation of the International Canoe Federation but only kayaks in public rapids, which are public access and are not maintained for the purpose of kayaking and therefore do not meet the criteria for a designated public resource or setting (a '1' profile).

- **1-3i** - Sporting activities that are organised by a civil society organisation within the sport federation system and use 3i) resources and/or settings supported by members (e.g., household contributions) and/or the federation system (e.g., solidarity payments) AND 1) designated public resources and/or settings to deliver sporting activities. An example includes a football player who is a member of an organised football federation and plays on public football pitches.
- **2-3i** - Sporting activities that are organised by a civil society organisation within the sport federation system and use 3i) resources and/or settings supported by members (e.g., household contributions) and/or the federation system (e.g., solidarity payments) AND 2) private resources and/or settings to deliver sporting activities. An example includes a karateka who is a member of the World Karate Federation and trains at a private dojo.
- **1-2-3i** - Sporting activities that are organised by a civil society organisation within the sport federation system and use 3i) resources and/or settings supported by members (e.g., household contributions) and/or the federation system (e.g., solidarity payments) AND 1) designated public resources AND 2) private resources and/or settings to deliver sporting activities. One example includes a squash player who competes in their national federation for World Squash and utilises both public and private squash courts to practice.

The proposal and testing of this new framework aim to guide conversations and provide individuals and organisations alike with the tools to map their activities and self-advocate.

Chapter 4: The diverse financial landscape of direct and indirect contributions to sporting activity in Europe remains largely unsupported by financial redistribution from sport governing bodies.

The Relational European Sporting Map framework is tested and applied to the concept of solidarity and the mechanism of financial redistribution in Chapter 4. Case studies of fourteen organisations in eight different countries showcase the diverse reality of the profiles of activities offered and the breakdown of organisational finances across the types of contributions and sources of contributions. In terms of sources, the cases underline the importance of contributions from households and the public sector. The cases also highlight the diversity of the type of contributions, including both direct (funding) and indirect (resources and settings) contributions. Analyses of the financial redistribution of profits from sport governing bodies demonstrate that the contributions from elite-level to grassroots sports are not universal and vary in amount. In terms of solidarity payments at the international level, only 0.2% (13.75 million EUR) of the Union of European Football Associations' (UEFA) annual revenue in the 2023/24 season (6.8 billion EUR) is mandated to be distributed for the purpose of grassroots sport. At the national level, as shown across five Danish national sport federations in **Table 16**, international solidarity schemes contribute very little to grassroots sport and public subsidies are required.

Table 16: Contributions to grassroots levels from Danish national sport federations (2024, in EUR)

	Football	Handball	Cycling	Volleyball	Badminton
Total revenue	83.466.399	11.831.470	7.557.438	2.365.391	6.438.894
Annual report indication of the amount of funding to the grassroots level	9.444.578	1.636.414	395.558	444.683	740.014
# of participants in grassroots (national registration figure)	393.466	117.004	40.671	20.315	107.424
Per participant contribution (total funding divided by # of participants at grassroots level)	24.00	13.99	9.73	21.89	6.89
Income from national public subsidies	4.115.663	3.699.948	2.463.542	882.492	2.199.251
Income from international subsidies	4.527.041	291.044	--	--	--
Funding for grassroots minus national subsidies	5.328.916	-2.063.534	-2.067.984	-437.809	-1.459.237
% as part of total revenue	6%	--	--	--	--
Per participant contribution (EUR, non-national subsidies to grassroots level)	13.54	-17.64	-50.85	-21.55	-13.58

This application of the Relational European Sporting Map framework and associated analyses helps us understand the mechanism(s) and measurement(s) of the key feature of solidarity. The mechanism of financial redistribution does not function universally. A critical variable affecting this mechanism appears to be the revenues of a given sport discipline from centralised broadcasting rights. However, high revenues from private sector sources like broadcasting partners do not guarantee effective redistribution. More critically, financial redistribution contributes little to the financing of grassroots sport even when it occurs. This finding challenges the ESM's assertion that financial flows in sport rely on the pyramid structure and the dual role of sport governing bodies as regulators and commercial entities with monopolies over centralised broadcasting rights.

In terms of measurements, these analyses highlight the difficulties of obtaining consistent and transparent data from sports federations. The lack of universal data reporting standards and measurements makes an already complex and diverse landscape of direct and indirect contributions extremely difficult to trace and compare. This intransparency could prove to be a significant obstacle to evidence-based solutions and policies.

Looking forward

With this research, we hope to contribute to evidence-based policymaking affecting the organisation of and participation in sporting activity in the European Union and beyond.

We hope that the new Relational European Sporting Map framework we present can facilitate a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the realities of sporting activity in Europe. This framework can help individuals and sport organisations advocate for their needs, ensuring the range of activities offered and financed reflect recent lifestyle trends and new expectations among the population. In doing so, it can also help policymakers design policies that are responsive to these needs and the practice of all forms of sporting activity, including self-organised sport.

Moreover, we hope this research points towards new research avenues and spaces where stakeholders could be engaged, including representatives from the public, private and civil society sectors involved in organising and financing sporting activity. In doing so, this research invites all stakeholders to shape a diverse European Sport Model that is as inclusive and representative as the continent it aims to serve.

CONTENT

Introduction

Review of the ESM

Identifying gaps in the ESM

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Financial flows

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References

Introduction

The European Sport Model (hereinafter "ESM") has been understood as a defining framework for how sport is organised, governed, and experienced across Europe. Apart from its associations with facilitating grassroots to elite-level sport with financial solidarity mechanisms and the principle of promotion and relegation in open competitions, it has established sport as a values-based activity and a critical instrument of social and public infrastructure.

However, the main observation underpinning this research is that the ESM does not fully capture how the majority of sports are organised and how Europeans engage with physical activity. This observation is not novel and has not gone unrecognised at the highest level of European policymaking. As early as 1998, the same year and in the same report that the term "European Sport Model" is first used, the European Commission recognises many grassroots and elite stakeholders felt unrepresented by the sports federations that claimed to speak on their behalf (European Commission, Directorate-General X, 1998b, Section 3.1). In the 2007 White Paper on Sport, the European Commission acknowledges that defining a single organisational model for sport in Europe was unrealistic given the complexity and diversity of national structures (Commission of the European Communities, 2007a, p. 12). This dynamic has spurred growing concerns and the research question guiding our inquiry: "To what extent does the ESM reflect the diversity of the organisation of and participation in sporting activity in Europe?"

This research builds on existing critiques in investigating and evidencing concerns that have persisted throughout the fifty-year debate from 1975 through 2024. Our primary objectives are to

- Outline the debates concerning the European Sport Model, including defining the key principles and tracing their evolution over time;
- Review the scholarship that has assessed these concepts using scientific approaches;
- Identify notable gaps in the current approach;
- Propose an evidence-based shift that may better reflect multiple stakeholders and ultimately serve European citizens by capturing the organisation of and participation in sporting activity; and
- Test the application of a proposed framework on the current ESM's key principle of solidarity to understand and map contributions to the financial landscape of sporting activity.

With this research, we hope to contribute to evidence-based policymaking affecting the organisation of and participation in sporting activity in the European Union and beyond.

We hope that the new RESM framework we present can facilitate a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the realities of sporting activity in Europe. This framework can help individuals and sport organisations advocate for their needs, ensuring the range of activities offered and financed reflect recent lifestyle trends and new expectations among the population. In doing so, it can also help policymakers design policies that are responsive to these needs and the practice of all forms of sporting activity, including self-organised sport.

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SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

This research implements a multi-method research design. The initial process to identify relevant literature and deduce key themes in the debate of the European Sport Model included

- (1) Asking the research partners¹ to propose references for both scientific and grey literature relevant to debates of the ESM, based on the assumption that these partners have experience and expertise in the field;
- (2) Conducting a focus group with the research partners on 4 March 2025 using human-centred design to inductively identify keywords related to the ESM; and
- (3) Consulting two documents for an initial review of the ESM, as presented by two primary stakeholders in the ESM debate not represented in the research partners: public authorities and international sport governing bodies (Commission of the European Communities, 2007b; International Olympic Committee, 2020).

As covered in Chapter 1, the first set of research tasks built upon this initial process to trace the evolution and consistency of the debates surrounding the ESM over time:

- (4) Compiling a timeline of authoritative policy documents published and/or commissioned by European institutions from 1975 through 2024; and
- (5) Assessing the consistency of concepts and topics throughout the selected policy documents.

¹ Please see the end of this report for a full list under “Partners.”

Following the identification of key features relevant to the ESM in the initial process (tasks no.1-3) and the confirmation of these topics in tasks 4-5, a scoping review of the scientific literature was conducted with the following research tasks:

- (6) Inclusion and exclusion criteria were identified to define searches conducted across four main databases;
- (7) Two equations were defined and run across the four databases to conduct a scoping review of the scientific literature;
- (8) The results were preliminary screened using an open source, artificial intelligence application with machine learning;
- (9) The titles, abstracts, and keywords of the articles from the preliminary screening were then manually screened by the research team; and
- (10) The resulting articles from the scoping review were analysed to compile a literature review of the assessments by scholars and specialists of the six identified key features in the ESM. A complementary review of the grey literature from research task no.1 was also conducted to add information as needed for clarity and understanding of these features.

As covered in Chapter 2 and building upon the foundations of research tasks 1-10, the following research tasks were undertaken to identify possible gaps in the ESM:

- (11) Keywords identified from the focus group in research task no.3 were cross-referenced with the Timeline documents in research task no.4 to deductively determine which concepts were most relevant as potential 'gaps';
- (12) Equation templates 3(A) and 3(B) were defined to validate if these 'gaps' were A) considered to be concepts critical to sport and B) concepts frequently mentioned by the ESM in a search across the same databases used in the scoping review; and
- (13) The identified gaps were validated using concentration factors to showcase the results of the equations.

As covered in Chapter 3 and in using the findings from the literature review (tasks no.6-10) and analysis of the gaps (tasks no.11-13), the next stages investigated the organisational structures that support participation in sporting activity in Europe across civil society, the public sector and the private sector. This resulted in the following research tasks:

- (14) A framework was mapped to capture the organisational structures and the direct and indirect contributions supporting a singular sporting activity; and
- (15) The framework was tested through an in-person, facilitated pilot survey with participants at the 2025 Play the Game Conference.

As covered in Chapter 4 and in building upon the foundations of research tasks no.1-15, two additional research tasks aimed to implement the framework (tasks no.14-15) to explain and assess the flows of direct and indirect financial contributions to sport in Europe:

- (16) Case studies about organisations that are representative of typical flows of contributions were generated based on activity profiles from the framework (tasks no.14 and 15); and
- (17) Original research was conducted on international and national sport governing bodies' reporting on revenues and financial redistribution, including to the grassroots level.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

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Other contributors to the research, as part of research partners of the “Real European Sport Model” Erasmus+ project, include International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA), DGI, the International Dance Organisation (IDO), Play the Game, Université Côte d'Azur, Unione Italiana Sport Per Tutti (UISP), the Sports Union of Slovenia (SUS), and Azur Sport Santé.

A note on the version of record

This report includes material adapted from research that the authors may publish in future peer-reviewed journals or that is forthcoming. While every effort has been made to cite the version of record where available, some material may appear here before formal publication. Readers should note that the published or forthcoming versions serve as the authoritative sources. The content presented in this report is intended for project purposes and should not be considered the final, peer-reviewed version of the research.

CHAPTER 1

Review of the European Sport Model

Although the discussion of a framework is cited as beginning as early as 1974, the terminology of the “European Model of Sport” was first used in 1998 (European Commission, Directorate-General X, 1998b). The call to cooperate towards a model was based on the realisation that the problems arising in achieving ‘sport for all’ – the term used to describe the principles outlined in the 1975/76 European Sport for All Charter – “cannot be satisfactorily solved within a purely national framework” (European Commission, Directorate-General X, 1998b). This intervention by public authorities was meant to be balanced by the “reciprocal cooperation with the sports movement,” or sport governing bodies and sports organisations (Council of Europe, 1992).

Other developments similarly signalled a need for cooperation between public authorities and the sports movement including “the rapid development of sport, especially professional sport” and the noted economic influence of sport, which constituted “3% of world trade” (European Commission, Directorate-General X, 1998a, p. 3); the development of commercial television (European Commission, Directorate-General X, 1998a, p. 7, 1998b, p. 2); and recent instances of public intervention in sport, including the 1995 European Court of Justice ruling on the Jean-Marc Bosman case, famously known as the “Bosman ruling,” which proclaimed the restriction of the freedom of movement of football players to be illegal, setting a precedent for the role of public authorities in influencing the regulation of sport (European Court of Justice, 1995).

These motivations may explain the beginnings of the European Sport Model, but they do not clarify how the debates have evolved over time. Further, it was unclear how scholars and specialists, through scientific and other literature, have assessed the European Sport Model.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Two categories of research sought to tackle a comprehensive understanding of the ESM from both the perspective of the policy documents and both scholarly and grey literature. The first explores consistent concepts and topics discussed in the broader debate of the ESM by tracing their evolution through policy documents from European institutions in the fifty-year period from 1975 through 2024. Building upon the content analysis of policy documents, the second featured a

literature review to understand the assessments that have been conducted on the ESM and its principles and their findings. To do so, the research deductively conducted a scoping review of scientific literature and reviewed grey literature relevant to the core six features of the ESM.

ANALYSIS OF POLICY DOCUMENTS

(4) Compiling a timeline of policy documents (1975-2024)

Building upon the initial process (tasks 1-3), research task no.4 compiled a Timeline (Annex A) of key policy documents concerning the ESM from 1975 through 2024 to trace the authoritative understanding or interpretation of various concepts and topics. The Timeline is comprised of 26 policy documents published and/or commissioned by European institutions and bodies and their representatives, including

- Council of Europe
- Council of European Union
- European Commission and its predecessor, the Commission of the European Communities
- European Committee of the Regions
- European Court of Justice
- EU Ministers of Sport
- European Parliament
- European Union

Understandings and interpretations of these concepts and topics are assumed to be representative of the debate across the broader region of the European Union in line with the assumption that a certain level of interconnectedness and communication between and amongst European institutions and bodies exists.² Alongside strictly policy documents, studies commissioned by these same bodies, which were used in consultation for policymaking, are also included where relevant. The Timeline and related documents were shared and confirmed with the research partners.

(5) Assessing the consistency of concepts and topics in selected policy documents

Using these documents as the basis for the content analysis, each document was reviewed to inductively identify key themes and concepts that repeatedly appear in policy concerning the ESM.

² This is based on direct mention of other documents and bodies in previous reporting, such as the list of documentation following statements like “whereas,” “recalling,” “noting,” and “having regard to” in European policy documents. It is also based on direct mention of other bodies in previous reporting, such as the 1991 report from the Commission of the European Communities, “The Commission has been attentive to the Council of Europe work on sport: much has been done there at meetings of Ministers for Sport and of the Sports Development Committee” (Commission of the European Communities, 1991, p. 6).

The following concepts and topics were identified through the content analysis of the policy documents found in the Timeline (Annex A):

- “European Sport Model”
- Sport and physical activity
- Autonomy
- Open competition
- Pyramid
- Solidarity
- Values
- Voluntarism
- Culture and identity
- Diversity, inclusion and accessibility
- Health and well-being

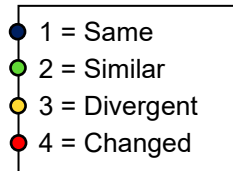
Please note this list is organised to reflect the review process, which included 1) reviewing the term, “European Sport Model,” and its variations, which inductively led to a specific section on sport and physical activity; 2) then by the “key features” of the European Sports Model, which were reviewed deductively and are presented in alphabetical order, including autonomy, governance and independence; open competition; pyramid; solidarity; values; and voluntarism; and 3) concepts and topics (in alphabetical order) that were inductively identified as being consistently mentioned or referenced but are not “key features” of the ESM, including culture and identity; diversity, inclusion, and accessibility; and health and well-being.

Once a concept was identified, it was traced by scanning each document in the Timeline to identify mentions of the concept.³ In research task no.5, each mention was analysed and then assessed against a rating system that sought to trace the consistency of the concept over time. The following qualitative scale was determined and colour coded in line with a traditional traffic light⁴ as follows and as shown in **Figure 1**.

³ Please note that due to the inductive nature of the review, every mention of these concepts across the analysed documents may not be reflected in or incorporated into this report.

⁴ Please note that while the colours of a traditional traffic light indicate “Go” (green), “Caution” (yellow) and “Stop” (red), the use of these colours is not mean to associate a negative connotation to the evolution of any given concept. The colour coding in this respect is applied to express the severity of distancing from the original concept without commenting that this severity is a positive or negative development.

Figure 1: Qualitative assessment and colour code



- A rating of '1' was used for original mentions of a concept and then again when the concept was the “same” as the original, meaning it expressed the exact same concept or same features of the concept. A '1' is colour coded dark blue.
- A rating of '2' was used when a mention was “similar” to the original concept in that it retained the original meaning expressed but implements a variation, either through different or clarified wording, without diverging from the original concept. A '2' is colour coded green.
- A rating of '3' was used when a mention was “divergent” from the original concept in some way, meaning that although some original wording or understanding of the concept was maintained, the new mention introduces an element or feature that is distinct from previous mentions. A '3' is colour coded yellow.
- A rating of '4' was used when a mention showcased the original concept had “changed” noticeably, reflecting a significant shift in the understanding or use of the concept. A '4' is colour coded red.

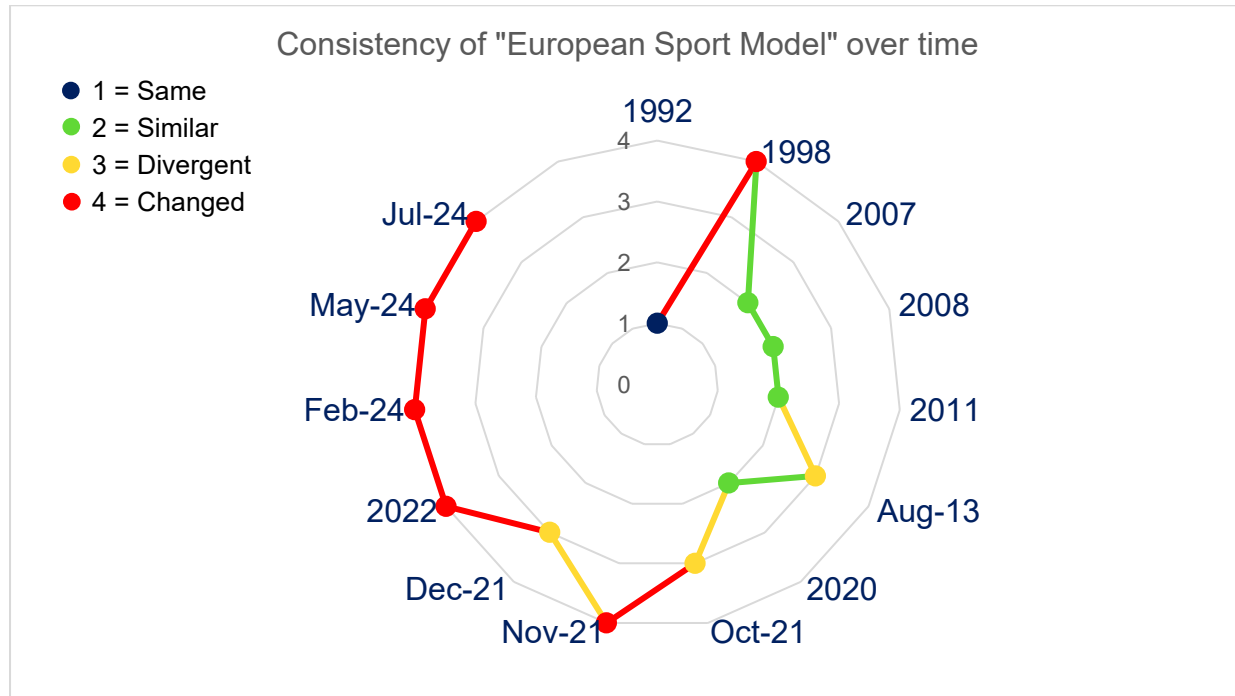
The visualisations seen throughout this report seek to capture the evolution of these concepts over time by plotting the colour-coded qualitative assessment on a clockwise structure in chronological order. While this analysis did not assign or attribute differences in ratings to specific events, crises, people, or other factors (e.g. causality), future research could seek to explore and analyse potential explanations.

As an example, please see the following policy analysis of the term “European Sport Model” itself.

“European Sport Model”

This section considers the specific mentions of the “European Sport Model” or alluding to a ‘model’ or ‘framework’ to organise sport in Europe.

Figure 2: Consistency of concept of the “European Sport Model” over time



The first mention of any sort of “framework” occurred in 1992 when the Council of Europe outlined the necessity of “a common European framework for sports development in Europe, based on the notions of pluralist democracy, the rule of law and human rights” and ethical principles (Council of Europe, 1992, p. 2). However, in 1998, documents emphasised a protectionist approach over a focus on development; moved away from a “common” framework (Council of Europe, 1992, p. 2) based on values towards a public-private nature of sport; and began to define key features of a “Pyramid model” (European Commission, Directorate-General X, 1998b, p. 7), including promotion and relegation and a commitment to national identity (European Commission, Directorate-General X, 1998b, p. 7). Although there is no mention of the “European Sport Model” or a framework in the 1999 Helsinki Report, it does set up the future conceptualisation of a framework by stating, “There are many common features in the ways in which sport is practised and organised in the Union, in spite of certain differences between the Member States, and there is therefore possible to talk of a European approach to sport based on common concepts and principles” (Commission of the European Communities, 1999, p. 3).

From 2007 through 2011, the concept stabilised in its return to referring to a “common” set of principles without explicitly naming model, in line with the logic that, “it is unrealistic to try to define a unified model of organisation of sport in Europe” given “the diversity and complexities of European sport structures it considers” (Commission of the European Communities, 2007a, p. 12).

However, the European Commission notes it could “help to develop a common set of principles for good governance in sport, such as transparency, democracy, accountability and representation of stakeholders (associations, federations, players, clubs, leagues, supporters, etc.)” (Commission of the European Communities, 2007a, p. 12), which leads to the development of a “European dimension of sport” (European Commission, 2011, p. 10; European Union, 2008b). This “dimension” is based on values of governance, including “autonomy within the limits of the law, democracy, transparency and accountability in decision-making, and inclusiveness in the representation of interested stakeholders” (European Union, 2008b). Another feature of particular focus includes open competition (Council of the European Union, 2020, p. 5; European Union, 2008b).

In August 2013, several features from the 2007 White Paper on Sport appear under the umbrella term, “European model of sport”: “whereas the European model of sport is based on a federation for each sports discipline, and whereas mechanisms for sports and financial solidarity, such as the principle of promotion and relegation and open competitions involving both clubs and national teams, are organised on an autonomous, democratic and territorial basis and in a pyramid structure, as the result of a longstanding democratic tradition” (European Parliament, 2013, p. 50).

2021 sees a continuation of this new understanding of the ESM. In October 2021, the Council of Europe presents several features of a “framework for European sport” (Council of Europe, 2021, p. 3) and “single reference standard” (Council of Europe, 2021, p. 3). This refuted the 2007 White Paper’s claim that no unified model is realistic: “Although due to the diversity of European sport structures there is no common definition of European Model of Sport, some key features make it recognizable. Such features include pyramidal structure, open system of promotion and relegation, the grassroots approach and solidarity, role in national identity, structures based on voluntary activity and its social and educational function” (Council of Europe, 2021, p. 1). One month later, however, the European Parliament diverges significantly in the principles attributed to a specific “European sport model,” citing “the principles of solidarity, sustainability, inclusiveness for all, open competition, sporting merit and fairness, and accordingly strongly opposes breakaway competitions that undermine such principles and endanger the stability of the overall sports ecosystem” (European Parliament, 2021, p. 5). In December, the Council of the European Union seems to straddle these opinions, referencing “values-based” sport with some similar features⁵ but attributes them specifically to a “common” European sport model (Council of the European Union, 2021, p. 2).

⁵ These features include “organisation of sport in an autonomous, democratic and territorial basis with a pyramidal structure, encompassing all levels of sport from grassroots to professional sport, comprising both club and national team competitions and including mechanisms to ensure financial solidarity, fairness and openness in competitions, such as the principle of promotion and relegation” (Council of the European Union, 2021, p. 2).

From 2022 through 2024 (Council of the European Union, 2024b, p. 3, 2024c; European Committee of the Regions, 2024, pp. 6–7), the ESM is fortified. The 2022 Revised European Sports Charter, in recognising its goals to “agree on a common European framework for the development of sport in Europe” and the “combination of standards on sports development and on sports ethics into one single reference standard,” states it “highlights the common features of a framework for European sport and its organisation, understood by the sports movement as the European sport model, and provides general guidance to the Council of Europe’s member States to refine existing legislation or other policies and to develop a comprehensive framework for sport” (Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport, Council of Europe, 2022).

More recent documents present a comprehensive interpretation by including all previously mentioned concepts under the ESM umbrella term (European Committee of the Regions, 2024, pp. 6–7).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Following the deductive identification of the six primary features of the European Sport Model, these six features were utilised to conduct research tasks no.6-10. Please note the version of record for the entirety of this section (Vandenberg et al., 2026).

(6) Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Research task no.6 focused on defining inclusion and exclusion criteria. To ensure consistency across database searches, each stage of this research implemented the following inclusion and exclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria considered the timeframe consistent throughout this research (1975-2024), the types of publications (full-text, peer-reviewed scientific articles), and the language of publications (English). Any articles missing critical source information, including author, year, publisher, etc. were excluded.

The following inclusion criteria were assigned and used:

- 1) 1975-2024
- 2) In English
- 3) Peer-reviewed, scientific articles
- 4) Full text available, either through open access or subscription database

The following exclusion criteria were assigned and used:

- Closed access information
- Partial text
- Missing any critical information about the source (author, year, publisher, etc.)

- Non-scientific articles, book chapters, etc.

(7) Defining and running equations for search across databases

Alongside these inclusion and exclusion criteria, equations needed to be defined to search for assessments of the six features of the ESM. Research task no.7 included defining two equations and running them across four databases.

Based on the basic description of the European Sport Model discovered in research task no.3, two equations were defined:

Research equation 1: “European Sports Model”

(europe sport* model*)*

Research equation 2: variations of European Sports Model and its identified features

("european sport model" OR (europe* AND sport* AND model*)) AND (pyramid* OR solidarity OR governance OR "open competition" OR volunt* OR value* OR autonomy OR independen*)*

While Equation 1 sought to test for explicit mentions and variations of the term “European Sport Model,” Equation 2 expounded upon this search to capture the key principles and their variations, which were assumed to be synonymous with the ESM.

In recognition that the term the “European Sports Model” did not emerge until the early 2000s, but the concepts and principles within that term had been debated and used in discussions as early as 1975 (Council of Europe, 1976), the following keywords were then identified as being related to the concept represented by the term the “European Sports Model”:

- Sport – as being the unnegotiable centrepiece of the concept represented by the term the “European Sports Model”.
- Autonomy – as the ‘autonomy of sport’ is recognised as a key component of the “European Sports Model”.
- Open competition – as “the open competition model” can be used as a variant of the concept underscored in the concept represented by the term the “European Sports Model”.
- Pyramid – as “the pyramid model” can be used as a variant of the concept underscored in the concept represented by the term the “European Sports Model”.
- Solidarity – as “the solidarity model” can be used as a variant of the concept underscored in the concept represented by the term the “European Sports Model”.

- Values – as “the values model” can be used as a variant of the concept underscored in the concept represented by the term the “European Sports Model”.
- Voluntarism – as freedom of association and volunteers are recognised as key components underscoring the concept represented by the term the “European Sports Model”.

Equation 2 captures the key principles either in directly including them or by including a version of the principle that could yield multiple search results. For example, the word “sport” could exclude variations of the word that are relevant to this research, including but not limited to “sports”, “sporting”, etc. In cases where a given word was anticipated to have variations, an asterisk (*) was used to allow the database to find results relevant to variations of the word. In this way, the following words were included with an asterisk: europe*, to include Europe and European; sport*, to include sports and sporting; model*, to include model, models, modelling; volunt*, to include volunteer, volunteers, volunteerism, and voluntary; value* to include value and values; and independen* to include independent and independence.

These two equations were then run across four databases to which we had access and were determined to be relevant and representative of potential searches for the following reasons:

- Scopus – A large, multi-disciplinary database managed by Elsevier, which was determined to be representative of broader search;
- Web of Science – A large, multi-disciplinary database managed by Clarivate, which was determined to be representative of broader search with different managing organisation than Scopus;
- SportDiscuss – A specialised databased focused on sport-related disciplines, which could yield more targeted results based on the centrality of sport to the research topic; and
- EU Open Resource Europe – An open access publishing platform for research funded by the European Commission, which could yield more targeted results based on the centrality of European policy to the research topic.

It is important to note that only three of these databases yielded useable results. The initial search of EU Open Resource Europe with Equation 1 yielded 17 results; however, none of these articles, upon immediate review, matched the ESM. In response to Equation 2, EU Open Resource Europe yielded the response, “There is no content matching your selection.” We believe this can be explained by several compounding factors, including a) the novelty of the database, which only contains documents from the last five years; b) the specific scope of the database, which is limited to research funded by the EU; and c) the capacity of a small database to handle such a complex inquiry, in particular Equation 2. This unexpected result has nonetheless been compensated for with the complementary process of reviewing the grey literature provided by research partners.

The results of three of these database searches are displayed in **Table 1**.⁶

Table 1: Results from scoping review of Equations 1 and 2 across three databases

	Equation 1	Equation 2	Total
Scopus	1188	50	1238
Web of Science	851	207	1058
SportDiscuss	1844	386	2230
Total results	3883	643	4526

(8) Preliminary screening

Research task no.8 featured a preliminary screening using ASReview, an open-source artificial intelligence software (Ferdinands et al., 2020; Schoot et al., 2021). This is a multi-step process that combines machine learning with manual review. First, all equation results were uploaded to ASReview. A researcher manually indicated ten articles that were highly relevant and ten articles that were irrelevant from the results. ASReview then prompts the researcher with articles from the uploaded results that appear relevant, and the researcher informs the tool by choosing if the presented article is relevant ('yes') or irrelevant ('no'). The researcher screened 984 articles with ASReview, which constitutes 33% of the total results originally uploaded from the results of the equations in the database searches. This meets the established threshold that if 33% of articles are screened, then the tool has a 95% accuracy rate in correctly guessing which articles are ir/relevant (Ferdinands et al., 2020; Schoot et al., 2021). The results are displayed in **Table 2**.

Table 2: Results from duplicate deletion and preliminary screening

	Equation 1	Equation 2	Total
No. results from scoping review	3883	643	4526
No. results after deleting duplicates	2950	548	3498
No. results after ASReview preliminary screening	104	42	146

(9) Manual screening

After 32 duplicates were found and deleted among the 146 articles identified and confirmed by ASReview, the titles, abstracts, and keywords of the remaining 114 articles were manually screened by three researchers. This manual screening was conducted using Rayyan, a web-based tool designed to assist teams in the screening and selection process for systematic reviews (Ouzzani et al., 2016). For this research, two researchers conducted a blind manual review of all

⁶ As detailed under research task no.7 in Chapter 2 of this report, the fourth database, EU Open Resource Europe, yielded zero relevant results.

titles, abstracts, and keywords of the articles and then voted one of three options: “Include,” “Maybe”, and “Exclude”.

A third researcher then reviewed all titles, abstracts, and keywords of the same articles to

- 5) Provide a tiebreaking vote in cases where the first two researchers disagreed, which included cases where one researcher voted to “Include” the article while the second voted “Maybe” or “Exclude”, and where one researcher voted “Maybe” while the second voted “Exclude”; and
- 6) Implement a tagging system to organise and understand all articles in the screening. This was implemented given the initial equations searched across the six key features of the ESM, which meant screened articles addressed very disparate topics.

The 114 articles were thus assigned multiple, non-mutually exclusive tags related to concepts and topics related to the ESM and other inductively identified themes. The following categories and tags were outlined to guide this tagging process:

- i) *Purpose of article*: these tags speak to the overall purpose in reviewing the article –
 - "Regulations" - applied to articles that directly discuss the ESM as a model or governance-related reforms.
 - "ESM principle testing" - applied to articles that speak to one of the major principles of the ESM and 'test' that principle in some fashion, e.g. volunteering; if this tag was used, a second tag related to the specific '*ESM principle*' was also tagged based on the categories available below.
 - "Gap identification" – as related to concepts and topics that are not key features of the ESM but inductively associated with the ESM through the policy review (e.g., health and well-being, physical education).
- ii) *ESM principles*: Specific principles have been tagged to build upon the article's purpose being 'ESM principle testing' –
 - "Pyramid" - refers to organisational structures, models, or elite and/or grassroots.
 - "Financing" - refers to financing models and flows, including solidarity mechanisms and grassroots development; as this tag was used, another category inductively appeared of “Professional level finance” which specifically distinguishes professional and elite-level financing that did not indicate overlaps with solidarity or grassroots.
 - "Volunteers" - refers to any volunteerism without distinguishing between mega sporting events, clubs, etc.
 - "Autonomy" - referring to mentions of sporting autonomy and independence.
 - "Values" - referring to specific mention of values or value-related topics, like human rights.

Please note that the total number of tags does not match the total number of articles (n=114) as articles may be associated with multiple concepts and themes. **Table 3** shows the breakdown of topics that appeared across these 114 articles. Please note other tags were used, including the level of the actors or organisations involved (national, ISGBs, NSGBs, schools, clubs); the country featured; and the sport featured. These tags were not used to in/exclude articles and are therefore not relevant to this research task.

Table 3: Tags of concepts and themes across 114 articles

Relevant tag	Total
As related to the analysis and assessment of key feature(s) identified with the ESM (non-mutually exclusive):	
- Autonomy and independence	22
- Open competition	2
- Pyramid or mention of a system that connects elite to grassroots levels	16
- Values	8
- Voluntarism and volunteers	13
- Financial solidarity mechanisms and grassroots development	9
'Regulations', as related to governance, history or legal background to the ESM and/or policy	32
As related to financing of professional clubs and leagues, including UEFA's Financial Fair Play regulations	10
As related to concepts and topics that are not key features of the ESM but inductively associated with the ESM through the policy review (e.g., health and well-being)	13

Following the manual screening, 81 articles were included as meeting the inclusion criteria, and 33 articles were excluded. In addition to the inclusion criteria, the thematic tags were used to determine if a given article appeared to be off topic; for example, articles tagged as 'gaps' were automatically noted to be excluded given they were, by nature, outside of the ESM.⁷ The results from the manual screening are displayed in **Table 4**.

Table 4: Results from manual screening

	Total
Results from ASReview preliminary screening with duplicates removed	114
Articles excluded through manual screening	33
Articles retained through manual screening	81

⁷ Despite being excluded from the scoping review, these 13 articles became of interest in the gap analysis undertaken in research tasks 11 and 12, which are explored in Chapter 2.

Before analysing these 81 articles retained through the manual screening in research task no.9, the research team reviewed the inductive tags and determined that certain topics appeared to be largely absent from the scientific literature. For example, as can be seen in **Table 3**, only two articles were tagged as being related to the key feature of ‘open competition’. To ensure a balanced approach to each key feature, a complementary review of the grey literature obtained through research task no.1 was implemented. This review did not once again cover the policy documents reviewed in research tasks 4-5.

(10) Review and analysis

Research task no.10 comprised the review and analysis of all results from the scoping review (obtained from tasks no.6-9) and of the grey literature (gathered through task no.1). To conduct the document analysis (Bowen, 2009), two researchers reviewed the documentation along the same three prompts:

- *How is the feature defined?* (i.e., definitions and any variations in the debate)
- *How is the feature interpreted or understood?* (i.e., details or examples of how the feature has been applied or interpreted)
- *How has the feature been tested or assessed in terms of its function in practice?* (i.e., examples and findings from scientific assessments)

The results from the review were then compiled and reviewed by the other three researchers working on the project. The results of this analysis are presented in the following section.

LIMITATIONS AND STRENGTHS

There are several limitations and strengths worth noting in these various methodologies. As concerns the policy tracing, this methodology and the resulting visualisations are a useful way to understand how concepts and topics, when mentioned, are used and interpreted. It is worth noting, however, that the inductive approach that led to these results means it does not comprehensively reflect omissions of a concept or topic. The omission of certain concepts or topics in certain documents by specific bodies are findings in themselves, speaking to agreement or disagreement with the concept or topic, or a deliberate attempt to not crystallise or enshrine a given concept or topic. For example, most notably, the “European Sport Model” as captured in **Figure 2** above cannot capture the critical omissions of the ESM in landmark documents and decisions by EU bodies, including but not limited to Article 165 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union (European Union, 2008b) and the Court of European Justice’s decision on the Superleague case (*Judgment of the Court in Case C-333.21 | European Superleague Company*, 2023). Future research could return to the tracing of concepts with the specific goal to note and trace omissions.

Further, this report does not capture all frequently mentioned concepts and topics relevant and mentioned across the Timeline's 26 documents. For example, "participation" is mentioned 358 times across the documents; however, given its intertwinement with ESM features like open competition and the pyramid and overlap with already covered debates like sport and physical activity, this specific word was not traced. Similarly, variants of "citizen" were also frequent with 189 mentions; however, given the perceived overlap with democracy and culture and identity, it was not individually traced. Other topics were inductively identified but were ultimately excluded given they have never been mentioned or connected to key features of the ESM, such as sustainability and sustainable development, which is nonetheless mentioned 205 times.

As concerns the literature review, the limitations include that no assessment was conducted regarding the quality of the articles included in the scoping review, and the grey literature was considered without standardised criteria for inclusion. The grey literature was a necessary and complementary addition to the scientific literature as it embraced key publications critical to the ESM debate that do not hail from scientific origins, including policy documents, social media posts, and other reports. The grey literature obtained through research task no.1 was deemed to be sufficient given the partners in the "Real European Sport Model" research project, co-funded by Erasmus+, were chosen based on their collective representativeness of the sport landscape and on the assumption of their expertise and experience in the field. Given the grey literature was reviewed as complementary to the scientific literature, the grey literature review was not exhaustive.

These limitations mean that the body of literature reviewed, both academic and grey, may not be wholly representative and will inevitably miss key documents to the topics. At the same time, this approach yielded the strength of surveying beyond the academic literature alone, allowing for the consideration of policy documents and other information available in the public discourse surrounding the European Sport Model.

ANALYSIS

The analysis from these methodologies focusses on the six key 'features' of the European Sport Model, as listed in alphabetical order:

- Autonomy
- Open competition
- Pyramid
- Solidarity
- Values
- Voluntarism

Each section concerns one key feature and includes the results of the tracing of policy documents along with the results of the analysis of the literature review. The analysis of the literature review is divided into subsections to present review of the literature specifically identified “from the scoping review,” which references the review of 81 scientific articles identified through the scoping review; and “from other relevant literature,” which includes a review of grey literature and other scientific literature identified through research task no.1. Please note the version of record for all data contained in the “from the scoping review” section (Vandenberg et al., 2026).

The goal of this overview is to provide a holistic perspective on each key feature of the ESM in

- Tracing how it appears in European policy over the last fifty years, including relevant definitions and debated concepts within the feature;
- Reviewing how experts and scholars have assessed the feature, including relevant definitions, interpretations, and findings of how it functions in practice; and
- Highlighting notable overlaps between this feature and concepts that have been explored elsewhere in the research, including other concepts inductively identified in European policy and the assessment of the literature review.

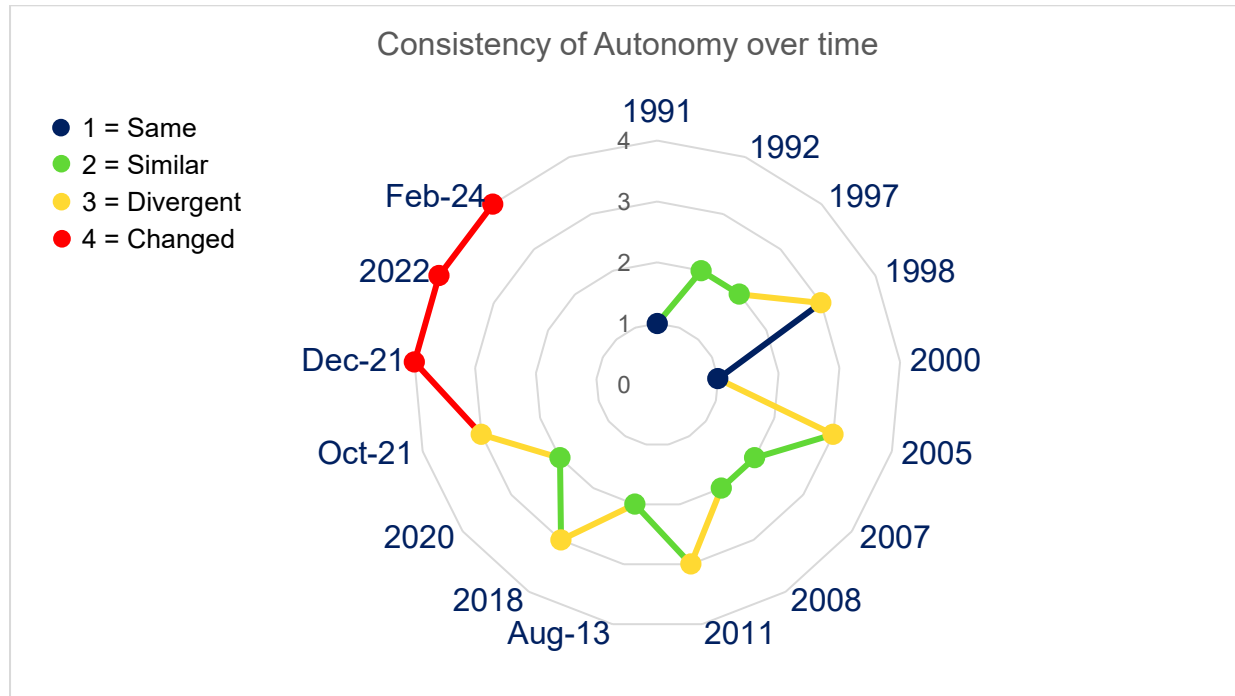
Please note that this limited scope to only the six key features of the ESM leaves out concepts and topics identified through the tracing of policy documents, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

AUTONOMY

The term ‘autonomy’ is used to encapsulate this key feature, although it overlaps with other terms including ‘independence’ and governance. This feature speaks to the independence, or ‘autonomy,’ of sport in its governance and functioning and has also been referred to as the “specificity” of sport (Commission of the European Communities, 2007b, p. 13). We explore them together as they appear somewhat interchangeably and in tandem across the literature.

European policy

The inductive content analysis of policymaking documents produced by European institutions revealed repeated references to the themes of autonomy, governance, and independence. We explore them together as they appear somewhat interchangeably and in tandem across the literature.

Figure 2: Consistency of concepts of Autonomy over time

The independence of sport in the eyes of the EU law and jurisprudence is first established with the assertion that sport is “an ideal area” for the application of the principle of subsidiarity, meaning EU intervention is only necessary when sport governing bodies (SGBs) are unable to effectively manage their area(s) of responsibility (Commission of the European Communities, 1991, p. 2). In line with this logic, the efficacy of government policy is positively referenced amidst a reinforcement of the right of voluntary sports organisations “to establish autonomous decision-making processes within the law” and the need for governments and sports organisations to mutually respect each other’s decisions (Council of Europe, 1992, p. 3).

This approach to recognising the independence and autonomy of sport alongside asserting the role of the EU and public authorities in regulating economic activity continues (Commission of the European Communities, 2007b) and is further clarified with the mention of the dual function of sport federations as both regulatory and commercial entities (Council of Europe, 1992; European Commission, Directorate-General X, 1998b, Section 3.1). The rhetoric returns to solely asserting the independence and freedom of association of sports in organisations “through appropriate structures” (European Council, 2000). A significant shift in the discussion of autonomy and independence begins with the promotion of good governance as a non-mandatory strategy to strengthen autonomy by improving respect and trust between SGBs and public authorities

(Council of Europe, 2005). However, the recommendation only invites other stakeholders to adopt policies that implement minimum requirements.

This shift towards good governance, however, temporarily disappears in 2007 and 2008. A return to the autonomous nature of sport is entrenched by the Treaty of Lisbon (European Union, 2007, Article 124) and the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union (European Union, 2008b), both of which draw from the 2007 White Paper on Sport, which introduces the “specific nature of sport,” otherwise known as the “specificity of sport,” and recognises “the autonomy and diversity of sport organisations” (Commission of the European Communities, 2007b, p. 13). The European Commission emphasises – without officially mandating – the importance of dialogue, the necessity for self-regulation to abide by EU law, and the EU’s readiness “to play a facilitating role or take action if necessary” (Commission of the European Communities, 2007b, p. 13). These bases provide a substantial foundation for the future referencing of sporting autonomy and specificity, leading to the entrenchment of the “specificity of sport” (European Parliament, 2013, p. 48). Mentions in 2013 and 2020 (Council of the European Union, 2020, p. 2) even state sport federations “do not operate as commercial companies, and whereas a distinction must be made between sporting and commercial interests” (European Parliament, 2013, p. 50).

The trend of emphasising good governance does not disappear for long, and in 2011, the Commission emphasises its role in sport despite sporting autonomy (European Commission, 2011, p. 3). The “autonomy of sport” is made conditional upon the good governance of sports organisations.⁸ In 2018, EU member states are recommended to implement monitoring and compliance regarding good governance in sport (Council of Europe, 2018). In October 2021, cooperation between public authorities and the sports movement is encouraged (Council of Europe, 2021, p. 2), and good governance is reinforced by reiterating the responsibility of public authorities to manage regulation mechanisms external to sport (Council of Europe, 2021, Article 3(1)). In December 2021, a more dramatic shift occurs when sport federations are specified as playing a central role in reconciling stakeholders, rather than being authoritative regulatory figures in their own right. This is compounded by the introduction of good governance as a mandatory “prerequisite” to autonomy, with a call to sports organisations to “raise their standards” of good governance (Council of the European Union, 2021, p. 2). The 2022 Revised European Sports Charter further recognises autonomous decision-making based on the freedom of association, but simultaneously describes the sports movement as “the main partner of public authorities” and

⁸ “Good governance in sport is a condition for the autonomy and self-regulation of sport organisations... Good governance in sport is a condition for addressing challenges regarding sport and the EU legal framework” (European Commission, 2011, p. 10).

reinforces the need for good governance (Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport, Council of Europe, 2022).

The mandatory nature of good governance appears to continue into February 2024, citing increased transparency, inclusion, and the protection of human rights as “necessary in order to safeguard the autonomy of sports federations and ensure respect for the values of the European Sport Model” (European Committee of the Regions, 2024, p. 12). Although “universal autonomy” is retained (European Committee of the Regions, 2024, p. 7), the sports movement is now referred to only as “largely independent” and national federations “shall base their operation on the principles and practices of transparency, good governance, inclusivity and diversity and accountability” (European Committee of the Regions, 2024, p. 2).

Literature review

From the scoping review (Vandenberg et al., 2026)

Autonomy of sport organisations is conceptualised as the non-interference of the nation-state, where “sports federations set up according to the act of association are active private actors; they are not under control, responsibility or supervision of State authorities” (Siekman & Soek, 2011, p. 94). This control, responsibility or supervision can occur in appointing members of the sporting authorities, adopting regulations governing competitions, and through self-financing professional competitions, among others. Another way of defining autonomy is through the level of intervention, with scholars similarly referring to systems as ‘interventionist’ when they do not respect autonomy and ‘non-interventionist’ when autonomy is respected (Szatkowski, 2022). Regulations and their manifestation at a national level have been explored in national contexts and comparatively (Bayle, 2005; Budevici-puiu & Budevici-puiu, 2022; Kamenecka-Usova et al., 2024; Szatkowski, 2022).

Scholars have explored areas where regulation or intervention has become necessary, as in the fight against crime (Zakharova & Melnik, 2020, p. 283); or where European institutions have further defined the relevance, extent, and content of the ‘autonomy of sport’ (Lewandowski, 2020). A pervasive angle investigates how the autonomy of sports governance has been shaped by EU policy and court decisions but not yet enshrined in law, with the effect(s) of the European Court of Justice on the private regulation of sport organisations being of particular interest (Agafonova, 2019; de Witte & Zglinski, 2022; Geeraert, 2016; Houben, 2023; Lewandowski, 2020; Poiares Maduro, 2023; Zglinski, 2024).

Scholars have assessed autonomy through various proxy indicators tied to sport governance. ‘Sport governance’ is defined as “the creation of effective networks of sport-related state agencies,

sports non-governmental organisations and processes that operate jointly and independently under specific legislation, policies and private regulations to promote ethical, democratic, efficient and accountable sports activities” (Siekmann & Soek, 2011, p. 93).⁹ Scholars have sought to assess sport governance and the ‘earning’ of autonomy through good governance ‘codes’ (Girginov, 2023), which can then be measured through indicators like transparency (Král & Cuskelly, 2018) and comparatively evaluated across countries (Chaker, 2004). Scholars have also looked beyond the traditional organisational structures and philosophical commitments of international and national federations to the social and societal functions of voluntary sport clubs, which serve an integrative role in society (de Witte & Zglinski, 2022, p. 298; Nowy & Breuer, 2019, p. 732). Beyond the definition and assessment of good governance indicators, the existence of proxy measurements means they can be leveraged by the EU to control or influence sport governing bodies (Geeraert & Drieskens, 2015).

From other relevant literature

The grey literature features the sports movement and responses to the sports movement in two primary areas: 1) establishing the ‘autonomy of sport’ and interpreting its application; and 2) establishing the relationship between autonomy and good governance.

Regarding establishing and interpreting the ‘autonomy of sport’, the Olympic Charter defines autonomy indirectly as “resist[ing] all pressures of any kind, including but not limited to political, legal, religious or economic pressures which may prevent them from complying with the Olympic Charter” (International Olympic Committee, 2025), which ultimately aims to maintain sport as “fair, transparent, and independent” (European Olympic Committees EU Office, 2025e). In response to this first objective, the reviewed literature reinforces the autonomy of sport as “a constant feature, and to some extent a paradigm of modern research on the regulation of relations in the field of sports” (Zakharova & Melnik, 2020, p. 285), evidencing its inclusion as a prominent feature of the European Sport Model. Notably, the word ‘autonomy’ is missing from other critical documents at the international level concerning access to sport, including the 2015 International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport (UNESCO, 2015). Other scholarly works identified outside of the scoping review make the critical connection between autonomy and the emergence of sport structures as tied to the concept of ‘freedom of association’ (Geeraert, 2020, p. 251), although it is noted sporting autonomy now extends far beyond freedom of association.

⁹ Although the broader term ‘governance’ is not one of the ESM’s primary principles and was not included in this review accordingly, the results of the scoping review show the prevalence of governance-related topics and its overlap with autonomy and independence in the literature. For example, seven of the 32 articles tagged in Table 4 as ‘Regulations’ were also tagged as autonomy and independence (22%), which can be explained by the reality that the principle of autonomy manifests in regulatory and governance structures and practices.

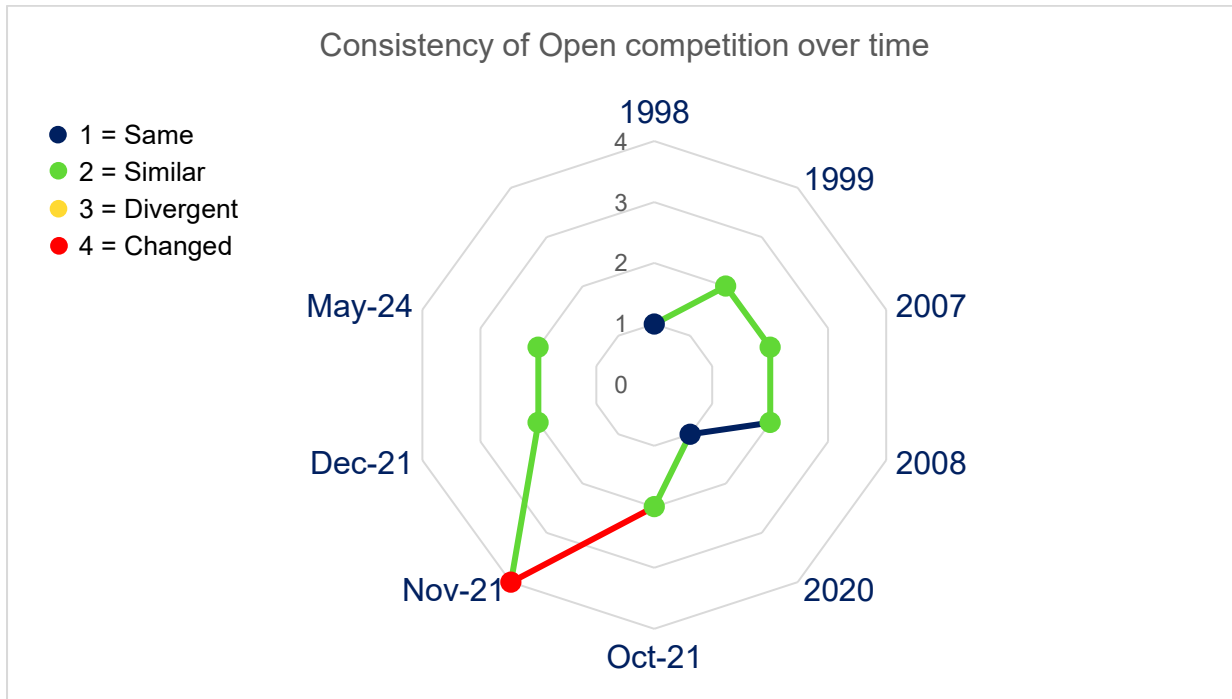
Regarding establishing the relationship between autonomy and good governance, the Olympic Charter lists the rights and obligations of autonomy as “including freely establishing and controlling the rules of sport, determining the structure and governance of their organisations, enjoying the right of elections free from any outside influence and the responsibility for ensuring that principles of good governance be applied” (International Olympic Committee, 2025). The IOC has also directly promoted the connection between autonomy and good governance, stating, “autonomy requires a high degree of good governance, transparency and accountability, and alignment with national and European legal frameworks” (International Olympic Committee, 2020).

Largely, the grey and scientific literature does not debate the relationship between autonomy and good governance. Some literature assumes the relationship between autonomy and good governance and uses it as a springboard for critique. General critiques of sport governance include strengthening its democratic principles through various strategies, including “profound renewal” through solutions to structural shortcomings (Commission d’enquête, 2024); “by involving clubs and members more closely in decision-making” (Keraudren et al., 2023); and for associations affiliated with social movements to resist “commodification of the social sphere” through “associative modes of action” (Bucolo et al., 2019). Within this collection of literature, a subsection begins to question the push-and-pull between the autonomy of sport and its role in society, including its social functions (Lefèvre & Bayeux, 2018; Mittag et al., 2021; Olivier, 2024).

Another section of literature presents the implications and consequences of pure self-regulation of an autonomous sport system. Geeraert (2019) evidences the difficulties of self-evaluation initiatives, particularly when there is little incentive for self-regulated bodies to delegate enforcement authority externally; and Sennet highlights that decreased state involvement has weakened “certain natural levels of protection of public interest and its link to policy” (Sennett, 2022, p. 5). This body of literature does not directly challenge good governance as the appropriate measure for autonomy but instead calls for external enforcement of self-regulated good governance (Geeraert, 2019), the incentivising of good governance practices by public authorities through funding allocation criteria and other conditions (Sennett, 2022, p. 5), and the enactment of “meaningful reforms” to enforce accountability (FairSquare, 2025).

OPEN COMPETITION

The concepts of “open competition” and its counterpart, “closed competition,” surfaced as key reference points in discussions on the structure of sport in Europe. Frequently mentioned alongside the principle of “promotion and relegation,” these references speak to the organisation of competitive frameworks in European sport.

European policy**Figure 3: Consistency of concept of Open Competition over time**

Open competition based on the principle of promotion and relegation has been hailed as “one of the key features of the European model of sport” since 1998, positioned in contrast to “closed championships” observed in the United States (European Commission, Directorate-General X, 1998b, p. 4). The only difference observed in the discussion of open competitions over time concerns the argumentation supporting the openness of competitions. While the original mention cites open competitions “are more interesting than closed competitions” (European Commission, Directorate-General X, 1998b, p. 4) and underpin “the commitment to national identity” (European Commission, Directorate-General X, 1998b, p. 7), future mentions appeal to several other arguments. One category reinforces the “interdependence” (European Commission, Directorate-General X, 1998b, p. 7) between open competitions and “solidarity” (European Parliament, 2021, p. 5) and “a pyramid structure of competitions from grassroots to elite level” (Commission of the European Communities, 2007b, p. 13). By being tied to other ESM principles, any threats to open competition and any “fundamental change in the sport qualifying processes usually based on sporting merit” (Council of the European Union, 2021, p. 3) actually “endanger the stability of the overall sports ecosystem” (European Parliament, 2021, p. 5).

Interestingly, these arguments were then used in November 2021 by the European Parliament to rationalise a positioning to “strongly oppos[e] breakaway competitions that undermine such

principles,” which is a significant deviation from previous assertions focused primarily on open competition (European Parliament, 2021, p. 5).

This divergence is temporary. Mentions in December 2021 builds upon the potential impact of closed competition with mentioning the consequences on organised sport (Council of the European Union, 2021, p. 3) and May 2024 returns to the original mention of open competition as a key feature of the ESM and solidifies its interconnection to other principles (Council of the European Union, 2024, p. 20).

Literature review

From the scoping review (Vandenberg et al., 2026)

Open competition straddles a number of different principles. It is based on open access to sporting competitions and a system of promotion and relegation, which can best be described as when “the teams performing worst in a given league will have to compete one tier lower in the subsequent year, and the other way around” (de Witte & Zglinski, 2022, p. 288). In football, for example, the teams that finish in the top positions of the domestic league qualify for pan-European football competitions run by the continental football confederation, the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA).

Another layer of open competition concerns merit-based qualification. The commentary from Athanasios Rantos, Advocate General at the Court of Justice of the European Union (ECJ), on the European Superleague case¹⁰ underpins the objective of sporting merit: “open competitions [occur] notably through a system of promotion and relegation which strives to maintain competitive balance and prioritises sporting merit” (Zglinski, 2024). While these principles are regularly referenced across various documents, there is no agreed-upon definition of open competition.

The feature of open competition, and more precisely the principle of promotion/relegation, has raised financial issues in the field. For example, in the specific context of professional elite soccer, the promotion/relegation system has been found to have a negative economic impact on both the club and the region when the club is relegated, which can be partly explained by lower attendance at sporting events for the club (estimated at a reduction of 28.7%) and its effects on the sports and related sectors in the region, like employment, production in the sports sector, pubs, restaurants, and hotels (Alaminos & Fernández, 2019). However, this impact may be counterbalanced by a “rearrangement of income expenditures” from sports into “other sections of the same region” (Brachert, 2021, p. 303).

¹⁰ For more information on this case, see (*Judgment of the Court in Case C-333.21 | European Superleague Company*, 2023).

Open competition is also discussed tangentially as open participation. A critical distinction remains, however, that the ESM feature of “open competition” refers to merit-based qualification largely accessible to a closed group of participants, while open participation more broadly means “open to the participation of everyone, without selection by skill and age” (Adelfinsky, 2021, p. 227).¹¹ In this way, open participation does not employ the principle of promotion/relegation and sporting merit, as there is no qualification process determining eligibility of participation.

From other relevant literature

The International Olympic Committee combines different terms in proposing a definition of open competitions as “accessible through a promotion/relegation system which maintains a competitive balance and gives priority to sporting merit” (International Olympic Committee, 2020).¹² This notion of open competition seems all the more characteristic of European sport as it is evoked in opposition to the North American model of ‘closed’ championships and formats, where teams are invited to participate rather than through merit-based qualification (Miège, 2021; Sennett, 2022).

Other relevant literature reveals that competitions that rely on promotion/relegation systems are closely linked to the pyramid model proposed to define the organisation of European sport, where only one federation represents a given nation or territory.¹³ The grey literature also offers a distinction between individual and team sports in this regard, finding that the principle of promotion/relegation was “almost universally followed... [in] all countries studied for football, basketball, rugby, handball and volleyball... whereas most individual sports covered in the study do not apply the promotion/relegation system but rather use a ranking system” (Sennett, 2022, p. 4). While the federation pyramid system is based on the sole ownership – a “de facto monopoly” (de Witte & Zgliniski, 2022, p. 305) – of governance in some sports, a competition model that mirrors this sole ownership of governance is not ubiquitously shared across all sports, with sports like rugby, tennis, and golf having different competition ‘owners’ (Nite et al., 2024).

Other relevant literature again discusses the feature of open competition in terms of its financial outcomes. While some scholars in the grey literature assert that closed competitions would risk “reduced solidarity” (Gaušas et al., 2024, p. 112), a scientific economic analysis identified outside

¹¹ As mentioned by Adelfinsky in the discussion of mass events, “such races are attended by participants from 16 to 85 years of age and older (...). Participants include both elite athletes and people of very modest abilities. For example, in running marathons, the highest finish density is observed approximately in 4 hours, the last runners finish within 6 hours, practically walking, while elite athletes set the time of about 2 hours” (Adelfinsky, 2021, p. 227).

¹² This definition aligns with the IOC's policy that all athletes, regardless of amateur or professional status, can compete to qualify for the Olympic Games (European Commission, Directorate-General X, 1998a).

¹³ This notion is also recognised in some policy documents. For example, the European Commission states, “It encompasses all the characteristics that make sport special, such as for instance the interdependence between competing adversaries or the pyramid structure of open competitions” (European Commission, 2011, p. 11).

of the scoping review offers that the promotion/relegation principle in action in open leagues actually reduces the incentive to redistribute income (Szymanski & Valletti, 2010). Sennet notes that promotion and relegation is not the sole principle in ensuring fair and open competitions, and financial distribution mechanisms (solidarity payments) are the basis for “the links between grassroots and elite sport” (Sennett, 2022, p. 7).

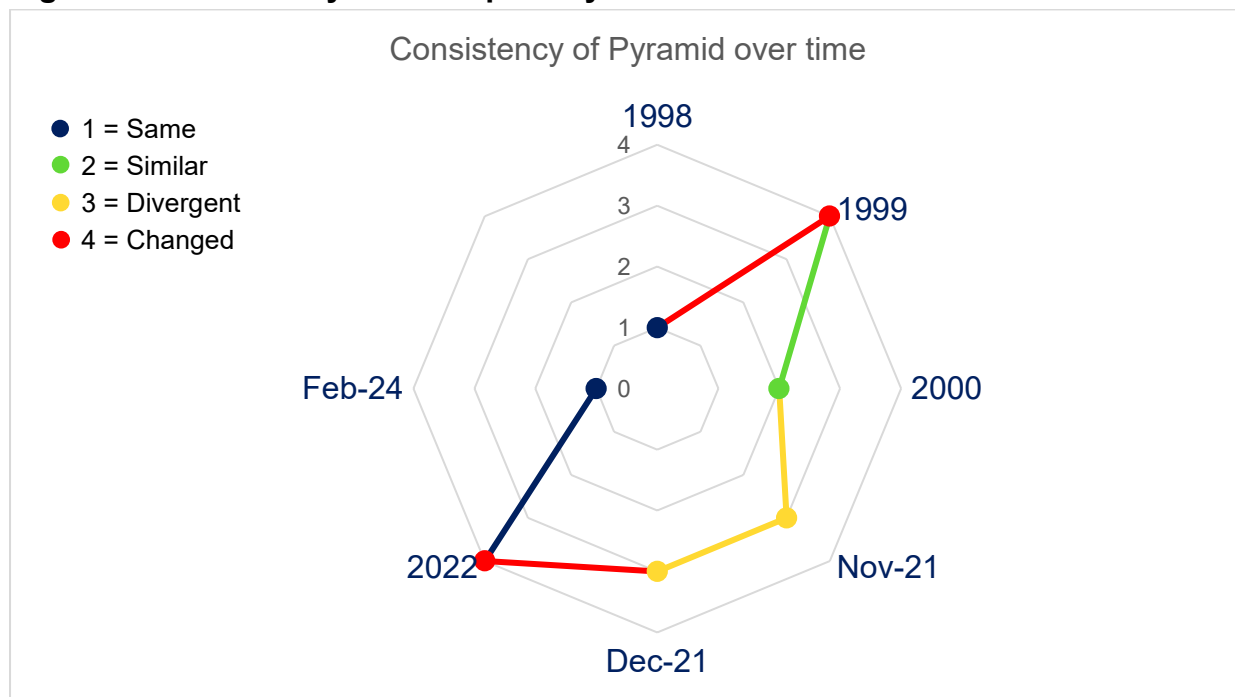
The feature of open competition again overlaps with voluntary or ‘open’ participation in the grey literature, where athletes not only have access to competitions but also have the right to voluntarily participate. This has been debated at the highest levels in cases where professional athletes who have the right to refuse playing for their national team, for example, without threat or particular pressure (EU Athletes, 2021).

PYRAMID

European policy

The notion of a “pyramid” structure is repeatedly invoked in the policymaking discourse around European sport and was identified through the inductive content analysis. It refers to vertically integrated model of governance and competition, from grassroots to elite levels.

Figure 4: Consistency of concept of Pyramid over time



The wide sweeping concept of the “Pyramid model of sport” is introduced in 1998, instituting a federation-based model and structural hierarchy in sport organisation from the top-level, consisting

of “European sport federations” to the most local level of “grassroots clubs/federations” (European Commission, Directorate-General X, 1998b, p. 2). In between these top and bottom layers exists regional sports federations and one national federation per country. The national-level federation is then associated with national identity and promotion/relegation in competitions.

This is directly contrasted to 1999, where the pyramid is justified only in relation to “national championships and the selection of national athletes and national teams for international competitions often require the existence of one umbrella organisation bringing together all the sports associations and competitors of one discipline” (Commission of the European Communities, 1999, p. 9). This relationship between competitive and amateur sport is backed by financial mechanisms.

In 2000, the pyramid concept was expanded by using the term “recreational” to refer to the lowest level of sporting practice, citing that the solidarity between this level and “top-level sport” constitute a “social function” (European Council, 2000). This social function is then used to justify the “special responsibilities for federations and provide the basis for the recognition of their competence in organising competitions.”

The concept, however, begins to shift over time away from accounting for all levels of sport and sporting activity. In November 2021, “the links between grassroots and elite sport” are noted, “in particular,” as requiring enhancement and protection (European Parliament, 2021, p. 5), signalling a questioning of the pyramid’s assertion of interdependence between the levels of sporting practice. In 2021, the pyramid is limited to “organised sport” and does not claim recreational or grassroots activities (Council of the European Union, 2021, p. 2). The structure is further justified by the “coherent development of sport and international solidarity” (Council of Europe, 2021, p. 2) and not on social function. The 2022 Revised European Sports Charter limits the concept of the pyramid – without mentioning the ‘pyramid’ directly – to “competitive sport,” stating that this “is mainly based on a national configuration with competitions at regional, national, continental and global levels, and which respects the regulatory role of international governing bodies” (Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport, Council of Europe, 2022, p. 9).

Most notably, the latest mention in February 2024 returns to the original understanding that the pyramid covers the extent of sporting activity, “where national sports federations play the main role, in charge of organising and drawing up the specific rules at professional, recreational and amateur level” (European Committee of the Regions, 2024, p. 1).

Literature review

From the scoping review (Vandenberg et al., 2026)

The “pyramid” gains its name from the pyramid-shaped structure representing the organisation and participation in sport, with international federations at the peak; followed by continental or regional federations; to elite-level sport, which includes the semi-professional level with competitions organised by national associations and leagues; and grassroots sports clubs at the bottom (Adelfinsky, 2021; de Witte & Zglinski, 2022; Nafziger, 2011). The base of the pyramid is particularly fluid, with some scholars anchoring sport and health-enhancing physical activity to voluntary sports clubs (Feiler et al., 2019) and others extending it to broader engagement in health and recreational activity (Irtysheva et al., 2022).

This pyramid structure is largely interpreted in two ways. The first way is the pyramid represents the hierarchical organisation and governance of sport, where each layer of the pyramid is vertically governed by the layer above it in successive order (de Witte & Zglinski, 2022, p. 287). This interpretation is a recurring theme in the literature on governance, autonomy and independence, where the interconnected layers of the pyramid justify the “de facto monopoly” (de Witte & Zglinski, 2022, p. 305) that extends throughout the structure, grounded in the notion that all levels operate “for the common good” (Nafziger, 2009). This has produced two opposite outcomes: on the one hand, it has justified the autonomy and monopoly of SGBs, with dual functions as regulators and commercial owners of open competitions that implement revenue redistribution mechanisms (Zglinski, 2024). On the other, this first outcome has actually limited the autonomy – and perhaps the efficiency, or market-responsiveness – of elite sport by binding it to mass sport (Gammelsæter & Jakobsen, 2008; Steen-Johnsen & Vidar Hanstad, 2008).

The second interpretation of the pyramid concerns the extent of participation in each layer, where each ascending layer becomes increasingly exclusive, and the flow of participation between layers. The pyramid structure poses two relational flows based on participation: top-down and bottom-up.

The top-down relationship is explained by Pierre de Coubertin, the co-founder of the IOC: “For one hundred to be engaged in physical culture, fifty must be engaged in sport. For fifty to do sport, twenty must specialize. For twenty to specialize, five must be capable of amazing feats” (Adelfinsky, 2021, p. 225). The “trickle down” or “demonstration” effect¹⁴ purports “a flow-on of benefits to the broader community in the form of increased participation as a direct result of elite sports success” (Hogan & Norton, 2000). Scholars have tested this assertion that success at elite

¹⁴ The analysis of the “trickle down” or “demonstration” effect in this paragraph combines scientific literature identified through and outside of the scoping review for clarity.

levels of sport “trickles down” in inspiring mass participation with mixed results, including positive and statistically significant effects of the German men’s national football team on amateur membership in clubs and teams (Frick & Wicker, 2016); significant negative effects of local football club relegation on mass participation in Denmark (Storm & Holum, 2021); insufficient evidence to confirm the “trickle-down” effect in the case of table tennis (Haut & Gaum, 2018); and mixed results of Danish handball success on mass participation, concluding that trickle-down effects are not inherent or automatic (Storm et al., 2018). Scientific literature has also explored the trickle-down effect as concerns hosting mega sporting events, which politicians or public authorities often assume to affect mass participation in host countries (Storm et al., 2018). These studies find the existing literature presents no evidence of the trickle-down effect (Lion et al., 2023) and trickle-down effects to be rare and to have small effect sizes when identified (Storm & Denstadli, 2024).

The bottom-up relationship proposes that participation at lower (amateur) levels of the pyramid ultimately feeds the top (professional) levels. This has also been tested by scholars with disparate results. In terms of how mass participation affects top-level achievements, scholars found that increased engagement of the general population and a focus on a healthy lifestyle reliably increases the number of participants in the Olympic Games and a greater number of podium finishes (Koibichuk et al., 2022). The logic of the causal relationship between pyramid layers has also been applied to developing talent both for national and professional teams. Scholars studying the connectivity of youth development programmes and professional club teams found that “the coherent progression of young players into the first team environment” was hindered by heterogeneous communication practices between youth environments and first teams, despite homogeneity in club organisational structures (Relvas et al., 2010). Other scholars studying handball found that focussing on success in youth competitions proved a basis for senior national teams across multiple models in several countries (Lazarov et al., 2019).

One area where the pyramid “metaphor” proves “dysfunctional” concerns individual motivations of participants and associated norms (Adelfinsky, 2021, p. 228). Adelfinsky suggests an iceberg structure to be a more accurate visualisation, where ‘Top-achievements’ norms (typically found at elite levels) are distinguished from ‘Expressive’ social norms (generally held by average sport participants). Another observation about the pyramid concerns the inverse relationship between the magnitude of the hierarchical layers and the attention paid to them (Kirkeby, 2007; as cited in Adelfinsky, 2021, p. 226). While the base of the pyramid involves the majority of practitioners and has a high potential impact on the health of the population, it receives the least attention. While the higher (professional) levels of the pyramid – which involves a minority of practitioners and has a low impact on public health – receive most of the attention.

From other relevant literature

The most direct explanation of the pyramid is outlined as follows:

“In Europe, the governance of sport is traditionally organised along a pyramid structure, as illustrated below. With a few exceptions, each discipline has its own pyramid structure. At the bottom of the pyramid one finds the sport clubs. One level above are the national federations, usually one per discipline. They cover both high-level (elite) and grassroots sport. Each national federation plays a leading role in implementing regulations and organising championships. In some countries (such as the United Kingdom, Germany, Spain and Austria), there are also regional associations which group the clubs in a given region, and which play an important role in the pyramid. At the top of the pyramid one finds the International sport federations and/or Continental federations (for example, a football federation automatically belongs to the UEFA and to the FIFA)” (Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 23).

Other literature continues the debate of the pyramid in 1) adapting its interpretation(s); 2) critiquing its representativeness; and 3) recognising its overlaps with other ESM features.

Statements from representatives from higher levels of the pyramid – including national and regional Olympic bodies – have expanded the idea of the pyramid to include sports participation beyond associations and major championships (Natorp, 2025). It claims that the pyramid connects “every part of the system” (European Olympic Committees EU Office, 2025a), they have also included public authorities and EU institutions (European Olympic Committees EU Office, 2025b). The critiques of this catch-all approach of the pyramid are not unified, with some stakeholders recommending to “look outside of the pyramid,” beyond the “simplified description” offered by the ESM (Sobrino, 2023) and others claiming the pyramid requires greater complexity to reflect reality (Kirkeby, 2025).

The pyramid has also been criticised for not adequately representing the “interests of people practicing sport at non-competitive or grassroots level” (Ecorys & KEA European Affairs, 2022) and the “‘diversity of models and approaches across sports and countries,’ recognising that the vast majority of citizens are active outside the pyramid of competitions” (International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA), 2021). This diversity of models includes “other forms of sport practice” outside the sports movement, where “individuals can practice sport on their own, at home or in public surroundings (for example, jogging or cycling)” (Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 23). An analysis commissioned by the European Commission seems to support these assertions in first narrowing its scope to “all the European team sports,” which rules out individual sports; and second, to limiting itself to “organised and competitive sports,” which excludes “more informal sport and physical activity participation activities” (Sennett, 2022).

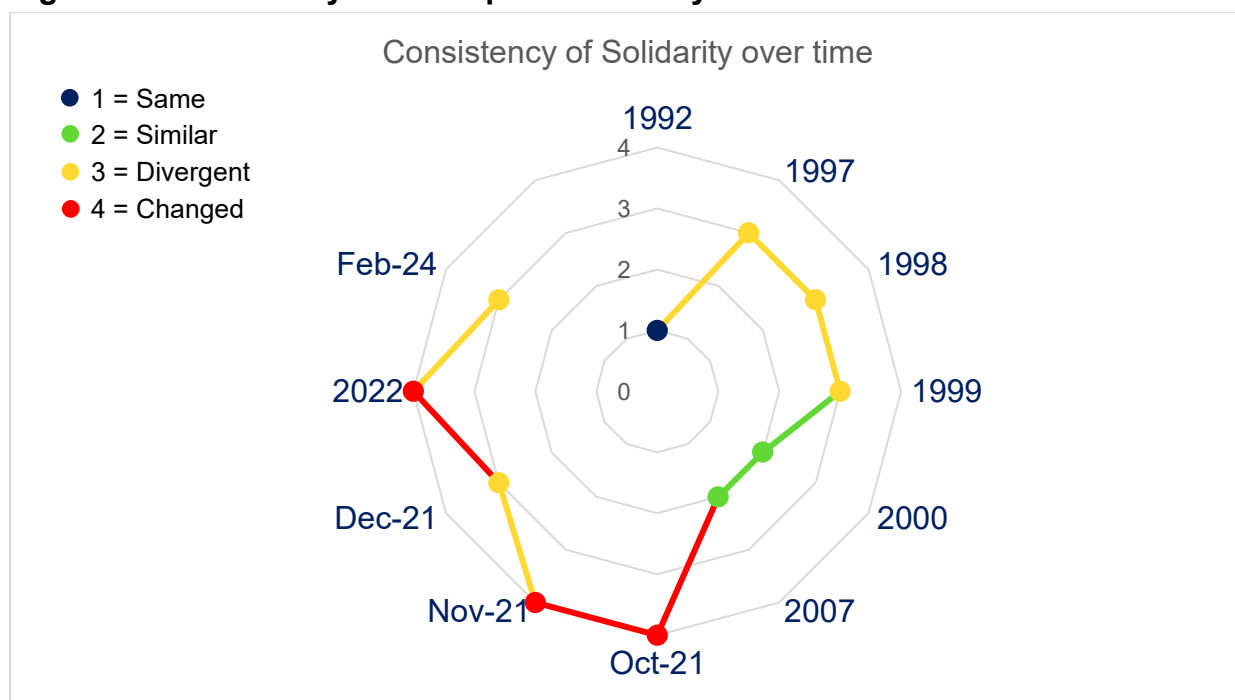
Other commentaries feature more explicit recognition of the overlaps between the pyramid and other ESM features. This includes autonomy, with the pyramid justifying the monopolistic and dominant position of SGBs, which is noted at the expense of athletes (EU Athletes, 2021); open competition, which is negated by the reality of partially or entirely closed competition systems, “which considerably reduce the importance of the pyramid structure for the organization of competitions” (Miège, 2021); and financial solidarity, on which the pyramid is inextricably dependent and exists as an extension of sport financing (Gougnet et al., 2011).

SOLIDARITY

European policy

This section considers the specific mention of the term “solidarity” in European policy documents, with references ranging from its framing as a value to its articulation as a mechanism of financial redistribution. This section considers the specific mentions of “solidarity” as concerns sport in Europe.

Figure 5: Consistency of concept of Solidarity over time



The concept of solidarity has evolved from evoking an understanding of solidarity as a value to solidarity as being redistribution of finances from the profit-making levels of professional sport to amateur levels of sport.

The first mention of “solidarity” in 1992 is amidst the outlined risk of overcommercialisation, which “could break the solidarity which exists between professional and amateur sport and between different sports and might even lead to the disappearance of sports seen as unprofitable” (Council of Europe, 1992, p. 8). While it occurs amidst an economic concern, the expressed risk evokes a values-based argument of solidarity, as it does not mention the sharing of this profit to be gained through commercialisation at the professional levels of sport. With this understanding, this original mention and its ranking of 1 interprets “solidarity” as being a value.

The 1997 mention of solidarity distinctly aligns with financial redistribution, building upon the idea that interrelated “solidarity and redistribution mechanisms” will train and develop amateur players, tying this to a values-based argument regarding inclusion of “players from disadvantaged backgrounds” (Pack & Committee on Culture, Youth, Education and the Media, 1997). This suggests that rather than address the previous concern and deter overcommercialisation, solidarity has been positioned so commercialisation can continue, as it will not pose a risk to the “disappearance of sports” and can promote values.

In 1998, the meaning of “solidarity” teeters between referencing values between people, now distinguished as “social” solidarity, and a “solidarity system” which provides grassroots members “with money earned by the federation” (European Commission, Directorate-General X, 1998b, p. 8). A solidarity system run by the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) is also referenced, which concerns “the distribution of Champions League revenues” and “serves to maintain a competitive and financial balance among the clubs and to promote football in general” (European Commission, Directorate-General X, 1998b, p. 9). This discussion of financing appears to address the understanding that “the income received from the sale of broadcasting rights is transforming the sports world and widening the gulf between amateurs and professionals and between the top and bottom of sport in Europe” (European Commission, Directorate-General X, 1998b, p. 9). This continues into the 1999 Helsinki Report on Sport, which although largely focused on financial solidarity as a knock-on effect of the commercial success of sport, nonetheless recalls the original connection between “the promotion of amateur and professional sport... [and] financial mechanisms of internal solidarity and the structural and solidarity-based relationship between competitive sport and amateur sport” (Commission of the European Communities, 1999, p. 9).

This reverts in 2000 and 2007, where the European Council emphasises solidarity as “ties... binding the practice of sports at every level,” (European Council, 2000) encompassing “various levels of sporting practice, from recreational to top-level sport” (European Council, 2000).

The European Commission stresses solidarity as a “strategic objective[e]” of the EU alongside prosperity (Commission of the European Communities, 2007b, p. 2), associating it with values like “fair-play, compliance with the rules of the game, respect for others, solidarity and discipline” (Commission of the European Communities, 2007b, p. 6).

Solidarity then becomes explicitly referenced as “financial solidarity,” which is associated with the redistribution of profits from the professional level and does not mention the promotion of values (Council of Europe, 2021, Article 4(4)). The mentions that follow, however, return to tying financial solidarity to values (European Parliament, 2021, p. 6), to the extent that policy claims:

“Financial solidarity is a key feature of values-based organised sport. It can help to establish, maintain and reinforce the link between professional and grassroots sport, co-financing of commercially less attractive competitions as well as training of volunteers, athletes, coaches, officials, etc. Furthermore, support should also be given to activities endorsing the respect of values in sport, such as fundamental and human rights, democracy, solidarity, social integration, gender equality, development of youth, rights of the child and education through sport” (Council of the European Union, 2021, p. 2).

Subsequent mentions vary in maintain this connection between financial solidarity and values. While some do not mention values and instead focus on commercial success as the underlying impetus for financial solidarity (Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport, Council of Europe, 2022, p. 15), others emphasise redistribution as providing “equal opportunities, starting from the lower levels of sport” (European Committee of the Regions, 2024, p. 2).

It is critical to mention that critiques of the efficacy of financial solidarity is recognised in European policy documents. Grassroots members claim the solidarity system “does not work properly” (European Commission, Directorate-General X, 1998b, p. 8) and smaller clubs related to UEFA’s model “complain that more money should go to the lower levels of the pyramid” (European Commission, Directorate-General X, 1998b, p. 9).

Literature review

Unlike other ESM features explored by this research, “solidarity” must first be briefly explained by grey literature sources, given that the scientific literature does not offer an explicit definition or understanding.

Sport bodies regularly associate “solidarity” with other values-based concepts like inclusion, accessibility, and equal opportunity (European Club Association, 2024; European Olympic Committees EU Office, 2025a; Ministrstvo za gospodarstvo, turizem in šport, 2024; Traifa, 2024).

At other times, it is used as a catch-all for the entirety of the ESM and all of its features, or specifically referred to as “robust solidarity funding mechanisms” and “a financial solidarity scheme” (International Olympic Committee, 2020). Solidarity as a redistribution mechanism means sport organisations redistribute revenue (e.g. through centralised media rights of their sporting competitions) to participants across the pyramid structure and/or competitions.

From the scoping review (Vandenberg et al., 2026)

The scientific literature identified through the scoping review addresses solidarity in discussions of finance, more strictly positioning solidarity as a financial redistribution mechanism. One foundational area of scholarship considers the financial models of professional sport from a historical perspective, tracing the shift and implications of financing professional sports from a spectator-subsidies-sponsors-local (SSSL) model to the media-corporations-merchandising-markets global (MCMMG) model (Andreff, 2024; Andreff & Staudohar, 2000). The MCMMG model and “big-money sport” have generated a system based on “fans receiv[ing] more games, fancier stadiums, greater exposure to television, and enhanced merchandise amenities associated with team identification,” which is connected to consequences like the domination of richer clubs, match-fixing, doping, and corruption (Andreff & Staudohar, 2000). This new system and its consequences led to changes in financial flows and investments, including ‘solidarity payments’, which in turn have been debated in terms of their impact on sporting goals.

One sporting goal assessed by scholars is based on supply and demand, where basic demand is affected by the quality of the sporting product and its outcomes (Storm & Solberg, 2018). In their analysis of the economics of financial regulation and management of professional clubs, Gallagher and Quinn test the efficiency of sporting clubs as a measure of the quality of the sporting product, finding that efficiency impairments reduce quality, and furthermore, that more commercially independent clubs – defined as “those whose revenues are less reliant on central distributions from UEFA, the Premier League and the Championship” – are “significantly more efficient” (Gallagher & Quinn, 2020, p. 164). In terms of outcomes, Koibichuk et al.’s assessment finds that engagement of the general population is a greater determinant of the impact of public financing on sporting outcomes than simply increasing state expenditure on the sport industry (Koibichuk et al., 2022).

Another set of outcomes features values-based goals of solidarity payments, where sport governing bodies aim to “prevent stratification and enhance competition” (de Witte & Zglinski, 2022, p. 288), ensure “fairness” (Csató, 2023), and uphold competition “integrity” (Dietl et al., 2009). The most common discussion centres around how investment of revenue differentiates the European and North American models of sport (Andreff & Staudohar, 2000; Dietl et al., 2009;

Irtysheva et al., 2022; Nafziger, 2009). The European model is referenced as being less profit-focused than the North American model (Andreff & Staudohar, 2000; Nafziger, 2009, p. 97). The reinvestment of revenues through financial redistribution is so critical an argument that it was a “justifying rationale” for the European Commission in granting UEFA’s Champions League an exception to antitrust restrictions on competitions, along with being leveraged as a hail-Mary pledge by the European Super League “to buy the consent of other stakeholders in football” after the ESL’s breakaway league proposal encountered strong public resistance (de Witte & Zgliniski, 2022, p. 302).

These values-based arguments seem shaky in light of the financial and political advantages enjoyed by dominant parties, like elite clubs and SGBs. Gallagher & Quinn (2020, p. 165) note the shift in measuring efficiency from sporting success to measures of financial outcomes may suggest that economic regulations on football clubs – implemented to achieve these same values-based goals – actually “serve to protect the elite clubs who built their sporting and financial dynasties” before regulations were introduced. Another perspective on the redistribution of revenues notes the political advantages it lends to democratically elected leaders in sports organisations; for example, FIFA World Cup revenues used to support poorer members create “a disparity whereby the world’s largest football nations (in Europe) are contributing the most revenue to FIFA, but are receiving less in return” (Storm & Solberg, 2018).

Scholarly assessments have also considered the diversity of financing options underpinning sports clubs in Europe, which extends far beyond the contributions of solidarity payments and financial redistribution from elite sports. This includes household contributions; private sources, like entrepreneurs in the forms of “fitness clubs, sports centers, sections, etc.” (Irtysheva et al., 2022); and public authorities, including regional and local bodies, through public funding and subsidies (Andreff & Staudohar, 2000; Feiler et al., 2019, 2019; Sever et al., 2000; Sugman & Bednarik, 1998). Literature identified outside of the scoping review analyses public funding in greater detail, diving into the use and outcome of public funding for professional team sports, particularly testing claims of local economic impact (Storm et al., 2017; Värja, 2016) and testing citizens’ “willingness to pay” to support the public financing of local stadia for professional team sports (Nielsen et al., 2019).

From other relevant literature

Other relevant literature considers how solidarity fits into models of sports financing. The financing landscape, particularly the financing landscape of grassroots sport, is of particular interest and debate. The grey literature names and accounts for the proportion of several sources of financing, including but not limited to household contributions (Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 287); local authorities,

through direct contributions like subsidies and indirect contributions like providing free or low-cost use of equipment and/or public facilities (Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 11; Groupe BPCE, 2022); national governments, including through funds from betting and lotteries, among other sources (Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 67); sponsors, through contracts with sport (Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 53); and solidarity payments, an indirect source of funding based on redistributed broadcasting rights, which are centralised by sport organisations that own and run profitable competitions at higher levels of the pyramid (Cour des comptes, 2017; Gouguet et al., 2011).¹⁵

Several critiques further assert that solidarity payments, in practice, are not reaching the lower levels of the pyramid effectively (Ecorys & KEA European Affairs, 2022; Gaušas et al., 2024, p. 108; International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA), 2021). It may also be the case that higher levels of the pyramid actually benefit more from the funds streaming upwards from the lower levels, as commercial models underpinning sport organisations rely on revenue streams that build upon other ESM features, like membership fees from lower levels of the pyramid (Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 295)¹⁶; and like household expenditures on sport, including tickets to games, TV sport channels, etc. (Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 287), which sustain the feature of open competition.

The grey literature also offers a critical association between ESM features and the growth of broadcasting rights (see the aforementioned MCMMG model): solidarity can be lobbied as a strong counterstrategy to rising commercialisation, where private commercial actors are discussed as endangering mass accessibility to sport (the pyramid model) and competitive balance and meritocracy (open competition) (Brocard & Anglade, 2021; Cour des comptes, 2017; Gaušas et al., 2024, p. 112).¹⁷ Solidarity is positioned as the necessary counterweight to this influx of private influence and “selfish interests” threatening European football (UEFA.com, 2024c) and professional clubs and leagues (Sennett, 2022, p. 6). The grey literature further notes the general lack of regulation of solidarity payments at national and EU levels (Brocard & Anglade, 2021; Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 56). Nonetheless, there is consensus that solidarity is and should remain a key feature of the ESM (Ecorys & KEA European Affairs, 2022; Sennett, 2022, p. 4).

¹⁵ Please note this list is ordered from greatest to smallest contributions to the overall financial landscape of grassroots sport in the EU (Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 287).

¹⁶ According to Gouguet et al., “It therefore appears that payments from the grassroots clubs to their federations (13% of their budget) account for a lot more than the revenue going from the federations to the clubs (which represent 2% of the grassroots clubs’ revenue)” (Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 295).

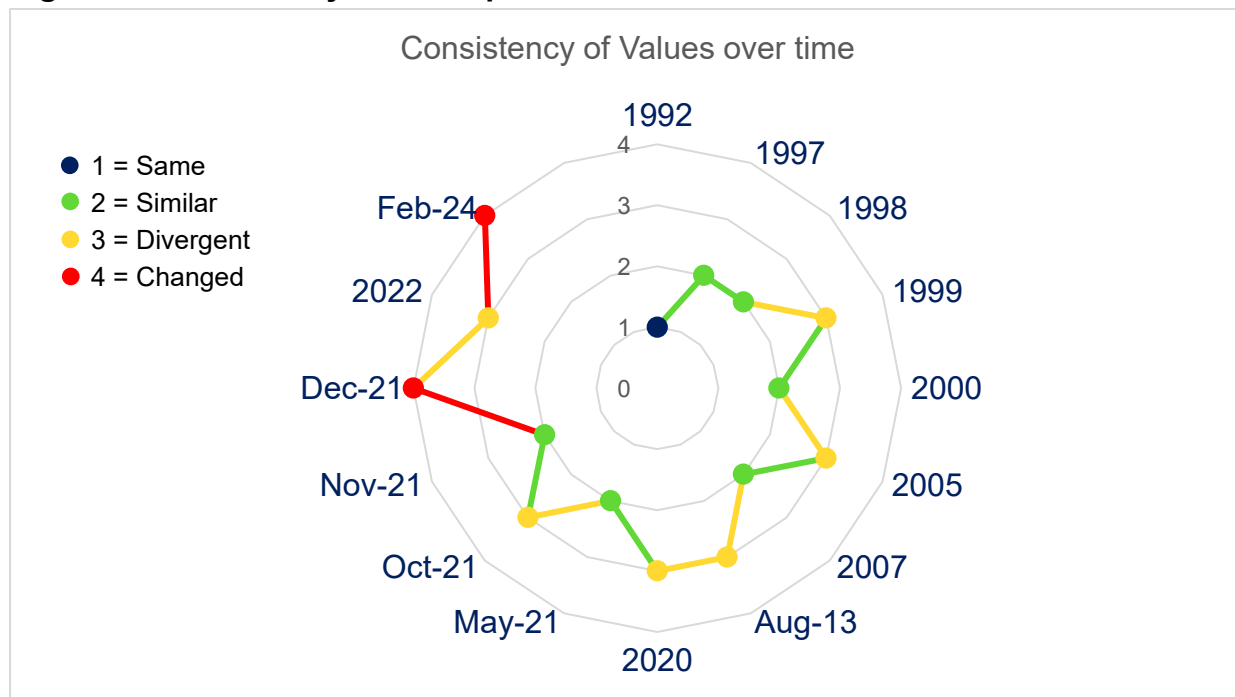
¹⁷ As noted by Gaušas et al., “The 2022 EC-commissioned Study on the European sport model, conducted as part of the EU Work Plan for Sport (2021-2024),⁴⁸³ highlights the increasing commercialisation of sport and the pressures that drive sport towards closed competition structures such as closed leagues, in order to attract sponsors and investors. It also highlighted the risks associated with closed leagues, including reduced solidarity” (Gaušas et al., 2024, p. 112).

VALUES

European policy

Mentions of “values,” and related variants, emerged as a prominent thematic pattern in European policy documents concerning sport. This section reflects an inductively identified cluster of references framing sport as a vehicle for promoting “values” and other shared principles.

Figure 6: Consistency of concept of Values over time



After the mentions of “values” were collected, the qualitative assessment sought to distinguish between a generic approach to moral and ethics, as not being inherent to sport nor Europe but as sport being based on them (rating of 1); a slightly extended approach to sport being based on or effective in fostering certain values (rating of 2); a divergence in sport being presented as having inherent sporting values (rating of 3); and a shift towards the ESM or sports organisation in Europe as displaying inherent values (rating of 4).

The original mention in 1992 does not explicitly mention “values” but rather the “moral and ethical bases of sport,” which connotes that sport is based on these principles but is not inherently moral or ethical (Council of Europe, 1992, Article I). This establishes an understanding that reappears frequently, where sport is conceptualised as being able to “foster positive values,” “act as a catalyst for negative values” (Pack & Committee on Culture, Youth, Education and the Media, 1997), “instil moral values” (European Commission, Directorate-General X, 1998b, p. 6), “giv[e] a

true view of some values in life” (European Commission, Directorate-General X, 1998b, p. 18), and “rest[s] on fundamental social, educational and cultural values” (European Council, 2000). It returns again in 2007, May 2021, and November 2021, with respective mentions of sport’s ability to convey values (Commission of the European Communities, 2007b, p. 5), and promote “common European values” (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2021, p. 4) among broader values (European Parliament, 2021, p. 3).

Debates appear to occur in a back-and-forth pattern in 1999, 2005, August 2013, 2020, and October 2021 across three different European bodies, respectively the Council of Europe, European Parliament (2013 and 2021), and the Council of the European Union. This shift sees the slow establishment of sport as having inherent values itself, embodied in the mentions of “preserving the traditional values of sport” in “a changing economic and legal environment” (Commission of the European Communities, 1999, p. 7), the “core values of sport” (Council of Europe, 2005), sport as “mak[ing] a huge contribution to positive values” (European Parliament, 2013, p. 49), “sport values” (Council of the European Union, 2020), “values-based sport” (Council of Europe, 2021, p. 5; Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport, Council of Europe, 2022, p. 12), “sports ethics” (Council of Europe, 2021, Article 7(1); Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport, Council of Europe, 2022, p. 18) and “sport integrity” (Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport, Council of Europe, 2022, p. 19). In two of these cases, the idea that sport has values in its own right is further entrenched in distinguishing sporting values from “EU values” (Council of the European Union, 2020) and the values underpinning the Council of Europe (Council of Europe, 2021, p. 3). In October 2021, the term “value-based sport” is introduced, which has features including human rights, education in values through sport ethics, integrity and sustainability. It also contains components of “sport for all”, including the right to sport, building foundations for the practice of sport, developing participation, improving performance and supporting top-level and professional sport (Council of Europe, 2021).

In December 2021, the organisation of sport in Europe is presented as being “based on” values (Council of the European Union, 2021, p. 1). The assertion that European sport itself claims to have “certain values and traditions” leads to “values-based organised sport” being a key feature of the ESM (Council of the European Union, 2021, p. 3). The application of values further becomes associated with sports governance itself (Council of the European Union, 2021, p. 3). The last mention of values in February 2024 not only promotes the “values of sport” (European Committee of the Regions, 2024, p. 2), but then advocates for a “values-based, bottom-up European sports model” which has the “same values and principles” as the EU (European Committee of the Regions, 2024, p. 9).

Literature review

From the scoping review (Vandenberg et al., 2026)

The ‘values’ feature of the ESM is not only highly variable across the scientific literature, but there is also little consensus regarding its definition, and it proves open to wide interpretation. This variable use can be attributed to the difficulty of dealing with values, as described by Zglinski in the context of the Superleague case: “Values are complex concepts which make comparison and adjudication difficult” (Zglinski, 2024, p. 22).

In connection with the ESM, the term ‘value’ is used to designate notions underlying the model, such as sport’s ability to convey positive values on which to build, particularly in terms of education, and promotes broader policies (Budevici-puiu & Budevici-puiu, 2022). In line with this approach, values are closely linked to an “affective dimension” of what makes football ‘European’, which is conceptualised as “a commitment to certain values, including a celebration of local spaces and identities as well as the centrality of sporting merit and solidarity” (de Witte & Zglinski, 2022). Several concepts are firmly tied to ‘values’ as an ESM feature, including local spaces and culture (Krawczyk, 2004); integrity, particularly in relation to doping and other infringements on fair play (Budevici-puiu & Budevici-puiu, 2022; Yilmaz, 2018); and discussions related to human rights (Mercado Jaén et al., 2024). In contrast, the two concepts of sporting merit and solidarity explicitly recall other ESM features, which represents another use of the term ‘values’ as a catch-all to describe other features of the model itself (Zglinski, 2024).¹⁸ Values also intersect with the social functions associated with economics (Budevici-puiu & Budevici-puiu, 2022; Vilaça, 2022).¹⁹

More than any other ESM feature, values underpin sport’s role in society, which is understood liberally and in many forms, including as “limiting excesses, developing a sustainable sports economy, promoting sport for health” (Olivier, 2024); sport having a “social function” (de Witte & Zglinski, 2022, p. 298) or “social, educational and cohesion purposes” (Vilaça, 2022)²⁰; and sport associations as serving integrative purposes (Nowy & Breuer, 2019, p. 732).

¹⁸ As Zglinski describes, “Besides the pyramid structure, the European Sports Model entails a set of values. AG Rantos had summarised these as including the promotion of open competitions, notably through a system of promotion and relegation which strives to maintain competitive balance and prioritises sporting merit, and financial solidarity, through a redistribution of revenue within a discipline” (Zglinski, 2024).

¹⁹ For example, the authors state, “Sport also makes a significant contribution to the growth of a state’s economy, including the development of its strategic objectives and social values (tolerance, solidarity, prosperity, peace, respect for human rights and understanding between nations and cultures)” and “eradication of corruption and doping in sport (a matter of public interest) that generate violation of ethical values, principles and the spirit of fair play, as well as endangering the health of athletes consuming doping substances” (Budevici-puiu & Budevici-puiu, 2022).

²⁰ This association with identity is also legally recognised in 1997 “in the Amsterdam Declaration which ‘emphasise[d] the social significance of sport, in particular its role in forging identity and bringing people together” (Commission of the European Communities, 1999, p. 4).

From other relevant literature

Other relevant literature confirms this heterogeneous view of the values associated with the ESM. For example, the International Olympic Committee adopts a rather broad view of the feature of values, stating the ESM is a “a values-based model grounded in the specific nature of sport, based on its fundamental social, educational and cultural values, which help deliver on European sports policy, contributes to regional development, fosters integration, tolerance, well-being and health, contributes to environmental protection, the fight against radicalisation, and social cohesion” (International Olympic Committee, 2020). Other declarations from the sports movement, including those from national federations, mirror this rhetoric (Ministrstvo za gospodarstvo, turizem in šport, 2024; Olimpijski komite Slovenije – Združenje športnih zvez, 2024).

This broad-reaching approach lends itself to a variety of applications, including as a basis for common citizenship and identity (Council of the European Union, 2024c); as being tied to sustainable development (Brocard & Anglade, 2021); as evidence of sport’s specificity due to its social, educational, health and cultural functions (Miège, 2021); as justification to consider sport beyond its economic activity, which is the basis for EU intervention (Alaphilippe & Brocard, 2023); as formalised law in Italy (Lovecchio, 2024); and as the ultimate objective of good governance, which “safeguard[s]” the autonomy of sport associations (Sennett, 2022, p. 5).

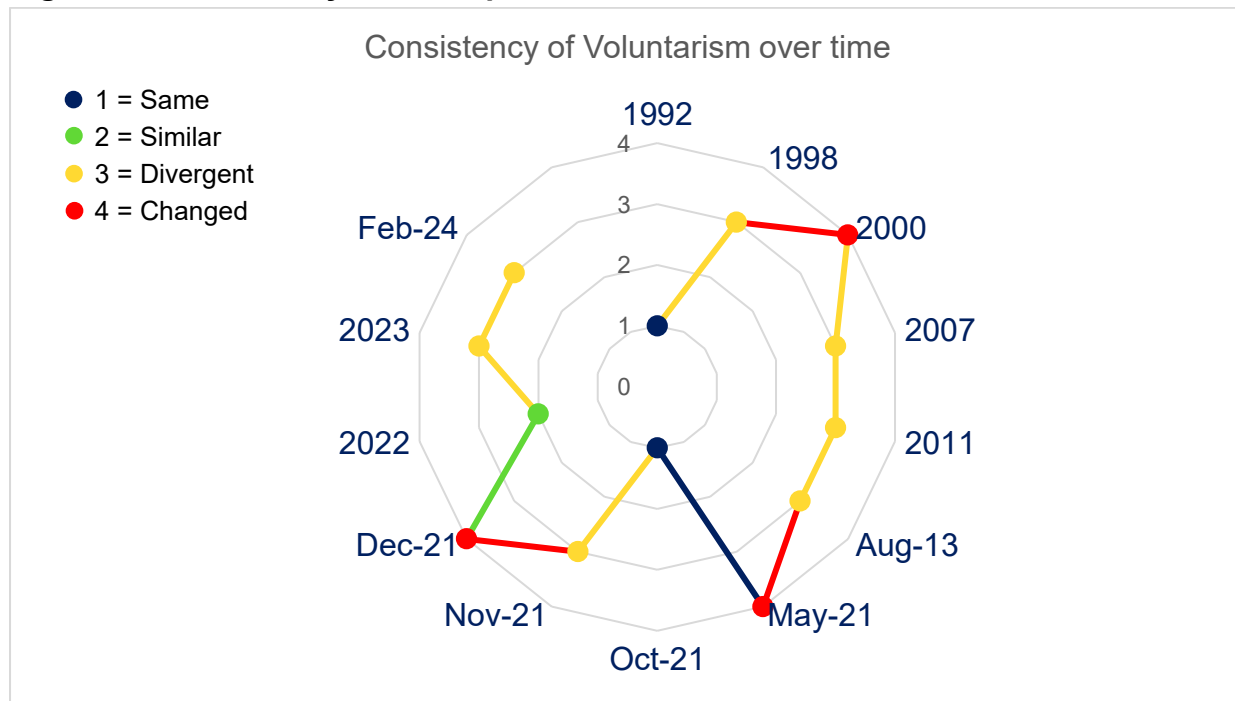
This literature also touches upon the realities of broad-based values, which are not only difficult in “drawing up an exhaustive list of the social functions attributed to sport,” but also in “evaluating them... [and] justifying the investment of public funds in sports policies” (Brocard & Anglade, 2021). The grey literature also indicates how the interpretation of values can produce conflict, as was the case during the 2021 Men’s European Championships, where UEFA banned the “political” illumination of Munich’s stadium in the colours of the LGBTQ+ flag (Gomez, 2022); and when sports governance actually reproduces social inequalities, including the overrepresentation or even exclusive representation of white men from higher social classes in leadership positions (Caprais, 2024).

VOLUNTARISM

European policy

This section considers recurring references to the terms “voluntary” and “volunteers” and their variations in the context of sport, which are used to describe a wide spectrum of meanings, from voluntary participation deriving from the freedom of association and choice to the structural reliance of sport organisations on unpaid labour. Their consistent appearance across documents highlights the central role of voluntarism in the ESM and, more broadly, the organisation and delivery of sport in Europe.

Figure 7: Consistency of concept of Voluntarism over time



The first reference to “voluntary” in 1992 refers to the nature of sports organisations (Council of Europe, 1992, p. 3) and as related to the “voluntary choice” to participate (Council of Europe, 1992, p. 1). However, this notion largely disappears from European policy documents²¹ and is instead replaced by an understanding of “volunteerism” as related to the unpaid labour of volunteers, which forms a critical structural support to the organisation of sport in Europe.

Although the shift to understanding the “voluntary” nature of sport to mean unpaid labour is significant, several mentions tie voluntarism back to values and education. Voluntary work in 1998 is presented “as an expression of social solidarity” (European Commission, Directorate-General X, 1998b, p. 6) associated with “combating social exclusion” (European Commission, Directorate-General X, 1998b, p. 3). Voluntarism is connected to accessibility and inclusion in August 2013 (European Parliament, 2013, p. 49), and a February 2024 mention connects volunteers – as a structural component of the organisation of sport – to the abstract “promotion of the values of sport” (European Committee of the Regions, 2024, p. 2). Future mentions connect volunteering to

²¹ With the exception of a October 2021 mention that returns to the original mention of “voluntary choice” as related to participation (Council of Europe, 2021, p. 2), and a 2022 mention Rating of 2 as the mentions evoke the “voluntary choice” of sport participation (Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport, Council of Europe, 2022, p. 8) alongside encouraging the “voluntary ethos” in the form of volunteers (Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport, Council of Europe, 2022, p. 15).

employment and education, positioning volunteering as “occasions for non-formal education which need to be recognised and enhanced” (Commission of the European Communities, 2007b, p. 6), which can “contribute to employability, social inclusion as well as higher civic participation, especially among young people” (European Commission, 2011, p. 4). Volunteering can further provide an opportunity for the development of “transversal skills” through non-formal learning (Council of the European Union, 2023, p. 4) and the achievement of qualifications (European Parliament, 2021, p. 10).

The most divergent understanding from the original mention of “voluntary” participation occurs when voluntarism is firmly recognised as a structural necessity to the organisation of sport in Europe, without acknowledging any benefit to volunteers or overall promotion of values. Volunteers are regularly recognised by European policy as “play[ing] a crucial role in the management of sports organisations and competitions” (European Committee of the Regions, 2024, p. 2). The entrenchment of volunteers as a structural component manifests in mentions of the “voluntary services” and “volunteer-driven structures” (European Council, 2000), even to the extent of grouping volunteers with paid employees under the broad heading of “sport staff” (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2021, p. 14). This structural reliance appears throughout several documents, where public authorities stress “the maintenance of “framework conditions that favour the active involvement of volunteers in sport” (Council of Europe, 2021, Article 4(2)).

Literature review

From the scoping review (Vandenberg et al., 2026)

The literature primarily approaches voluntarism through the angle of volunteers. Volunteering is defined as “the umbrella term for nonsalaried services and incorporates some form of altruistic benefit for the individual volunteer. In simple terms, volunteers are persons who work without coercion and without payment” (Wicker & Hallmann, 2013).

It is indisputable that volunteers are essential parts of sports clubs (Adams & Deane, 2009) and make “substantial contributions to communities and organizations” worth millions to billions of Euros (Wicker & Hallmann, 2013). Adams and Deane, basing their comments on Finlayson's work, take volunteering out of its simple sporting context and describe it as a structural element of statehood: “sports volunteering and voluntary sports clubs has become a key part of a modernising state structure” (Adams & Deane, 2009). This context sets up an interesting paradox: while sports clubs increasingly depend on volunteer participation, there are growing difficulties in recruiting and engaging volunteers over the long term (Wicker & Hallmann, 2013).

The literature covers a wide range of determinants of volunteer participation to explore this problem across several demographics. Schlesinger and Nagel (2013) found individuals who volunteered in club settings had “lower workloads, higher income, children belonging to the club, a strong commitment to the club, competition experience and longer club membership” (Schlesinger & Nagel, 2013). The literature has also paid particular attention to the determinants of women volunteers, who are under-represented in the voluntary sports sector, but have been found to be positively correlated with a high presence of women among leaders in sport organisations and a large number of female Olympic medallists (Scharfenkamp et al., 2023).

Beyond individual factors, motivational factors like “social/leisure, material and egoistic purposive, (...) job design, engagement, satisfaction, commitment, social class, [and] sense of community” also play a role in attracting and retaining volunteers, particularly during sporting events like marathons and the Olympic Games (Fysentzidis et al., 2024). The demographics of volunteers have also been considered in highlighting motivations of volunteers. Elderly populations, for example, have been described as “wish[ing] to contribute to their community... [and] viewed volunteering as a meaningful alternative to work and an opportunity to put their existing skills and knowledge to good use,” while young and unemployed volunteers “aimed to increase their employability” (Nedvetskaya, 2023). Other motives like “meeting new people, making friends, and expanding network” have been found to be “equally valuable for all volunteer groups” (Nedvetskaya, 2023).

However, these individual factors must be considered alongside a broader institutional context (Wicker & Hallmann, 2013) and multi-level analysis is needed to better understand this complex phenomenon (Schlesinger & Nagel, 2013). Other multi-level determinants have been identified as “shap[ing] the meaning of volunteering and the contribution that members make as volunteers” (Mills et al., 2024), like “the extended period of socialisation” in a club structure, which includes choosing a club, joining the club, being a new member, setting in, becoming an established member, activating within the club, and then a volunteer. This dimension of socialisation introduces the critical element of the experience of the volunteer, which is defined as “an individual’s comprehensive perception of their participation in a specific volunteer activity within a defined context,” and has been broken down into four recognised variables: “motivation, satisfaction, commitment, and sense of community” (Fysentzidis et al., 2024). This objective evaluation conducted on the part of volunteers of their experience, and its implications for long-term volunteer engagement, explains why the place and status of volunteers in sports clubs remain largely unclear and are difficult to conceptualise.

It is important to note that the literature does not deeply explore voluntarism from the angle of the voluntary nature of associations based on the fundamental freedom of association (Lewandowski, 2020, p. 64), which “includes the freedom to self-govern” regularly leveraged by sport governing bodies. This freedom of association is reflected in all levels of sport, with voluntary sports clubs being “originally founded to serve the organizational unit oriented towards the interests of the members – and not as governmental agents for wider societal goals” (Nowy & Breuer, 2019, p. 728).

From other relevant literature

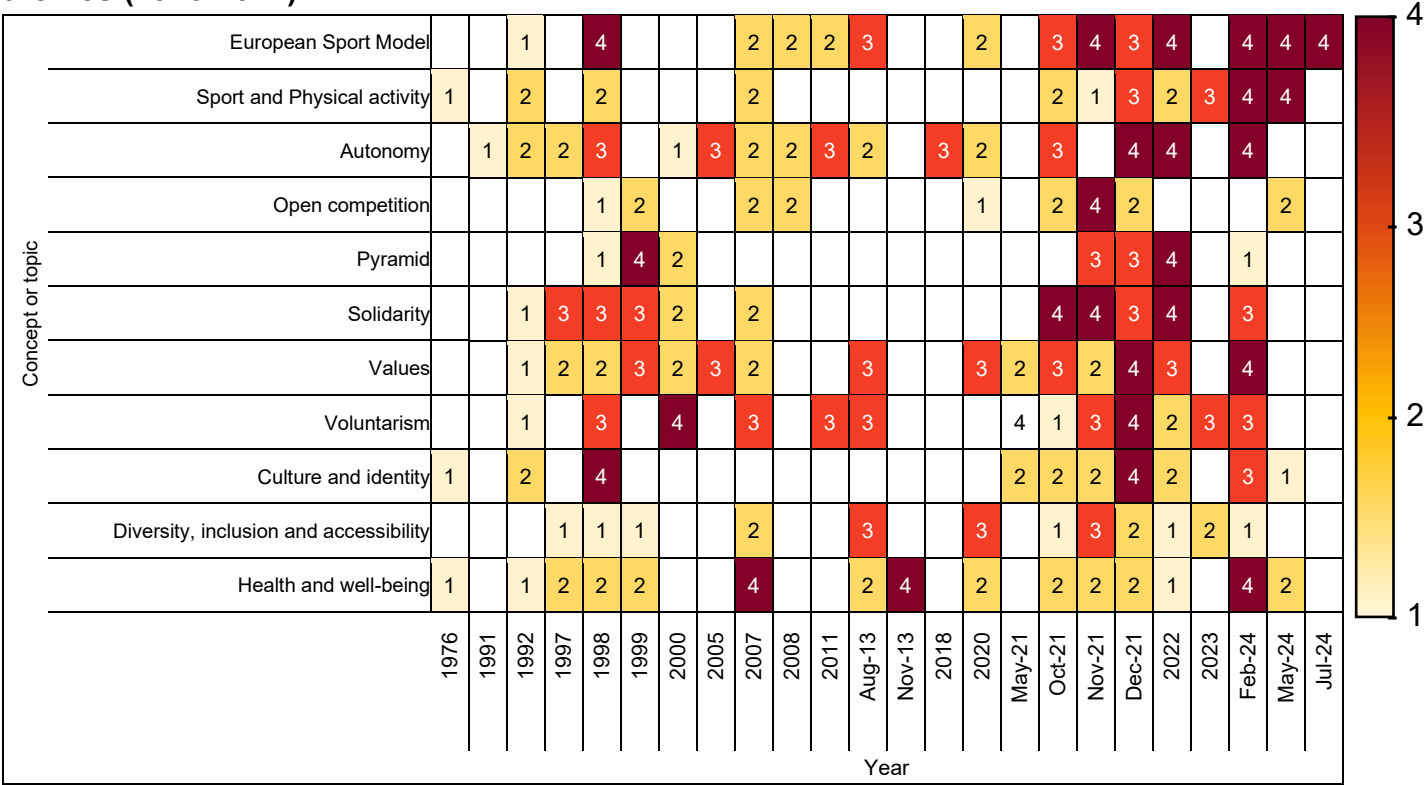
Other relevant literature affirms the specific focus on voluntarism as “a structure based on voluntary activities,” where volunteers constitute the “backbone” of all operational levels of European sport (European Olympic Committees EU Office, 2025d; International Olympic Committee, 2020; Sennett, 2022). Although the literature notes that the understanding of voluntarism has shifted from grassroots sport clubs to volunteerism in sport at large (Sennett, 2022, p. 7), the connection has not been entirely severed, as analysis of volunteers at mega sporting events (MSEs) still justifies their inclusion by investigating if volunteering at a MSE impacts a volunteer’s desire to participate in a sports club or association (Gauthier et al., 2025). The literature further showcases that the decline of volunteers underpinning the broader sport system remains of the utmost concern across the sports movement and policymakers alike (European Olympic Committees EU Office, 2025c; Gaušas et al., 2024, p. 108).

CONCLUSION

Our policy analysis and literature review sought to holistically define, interpret and analyse the six key features of the ESM. In doing so, it indicated areas of misunderstanding and lack of consensus across policymakers, stakeholders and scholars of the ESM and its components. It also led to the identification of other concepts and topics, which are outlined and then discussed in the next chapter.

Figure 8 introduces a heatmap of the changing nature of the definitions and understandings over time from the policy analysis across all concepts, including both the six key features of the ESM and the topics inductively identified as of importance to the ESM.

Figure 8: Heatmap of ratings of definitions and understandings across ESM concepts and themes (1975-2024)



The conclusion that can be gleaned from **Figure 8** is that the “European Sport Model” displays very little consistency. Nearly all concepts and topics have changed significantly over time, and not in any discernible pattern or interrelated shifts. The current ESM largely diverges from the original ideas underpinning the development of sport in Europe, particularly in the concepts of the “European Sport Model” as an inclusive term; of autonomy; of solidarity; of voluntarism; and of sport, which have all moved permanently away from their original meanings.

While this observation could suggest the ESM and its concepts have evolved over time to reflect the ever-changing needs of citizens, evidence against this idea is captured in **Table 5** below. While society-facing concepts like diversity, inclusion, and accessibility; health and well-being; and culture and identity are the most consistent, five of the six features of the ESM showcase the least consistency: solidarity, voluntarism, values, pyramid, and autonomy. Given these features, along with the ‘European Sport Model’ itself, show the most variability, this evidence rather seems to indicate that abstract concepts and ideas around sport in Europe have fluctuated greatly, despite their goals and aims staying relatively consistent. This appears to indicate that concepts that are politically charged are inconsistent, while the goals and aims related to citizens’ needs have stayed relatively consistent.

Table 5: Average ratings per concept

Concept or topic	Average of ratings
Diversity, inclusion, and accessibility	1.75
Open competition	2.00
Health and well-being	2.20
Culture and identity	2.30
Sport and Physical Activity	2.36
Autonomy	2.56
Pyramid	2.57
Values	2.60
Voluntarism	2.85
Solidarity	2.91
European Sport Model	3.00

This research did not endeavour to explain why these inconsistencies occurred. Ultimately, the history of volatility underpinning these individual concepts and topics associated with the ESM is critical as it brings into question the utility of the terminology of the “European Sport Model,” particularly in consideration of the evidence that the ‘model’ does not represent a universal understanding of its features and principles.

CHAPTER 2

Identifying gaps in the ESM

Several observations from research tasks no.1 through 10 indicated that there are concepts that appear to be critical to several stakeholders, including public authorities, scholars, and the types of organisations represented by the research partners, but do not appear prominently – or at all – in the European Sport Model. This repeated appearance of the same topics which fall outside of the key features of the ESM poses an extension to the original research question: Where might gaps exist in the current model, and how could the integration of these gaps improve the representativeness of the model? This question and its pursuit further aligns with the overall objective of the Real European Sport Model project to produce more robust evidence on the reality of sport's organisational and financial diversity.

This chapter contains three sections. The first explores the gaps in the current ESM, as resulting from inductive identification of frequently mentioned concepts in the policy analysis. The second explores a classification of the six key features from the literature review, finding these features to be concepts with limited mechanisms and measurements. Lastly, the third section builds upon observations from the policy analysis and the literature review by identifying gaps and conducting an early validation of these gaps through a comparative analysis of the presence of these concepts in the ESM against their broader importance to sport.

GAPS FROM THE EUROPEAN POLICY ANALYSIS

During research tasks no.4 and 5, several topics reappeared throughout the policy documents from European institutions for the fifty-year period from 1975 through 2024 that do not constitute a key feature of the ESM. However, multiple mentions of these topics indicate their importance to the ESM and its broader conceptualisation. These topics included, in alphabetical order:

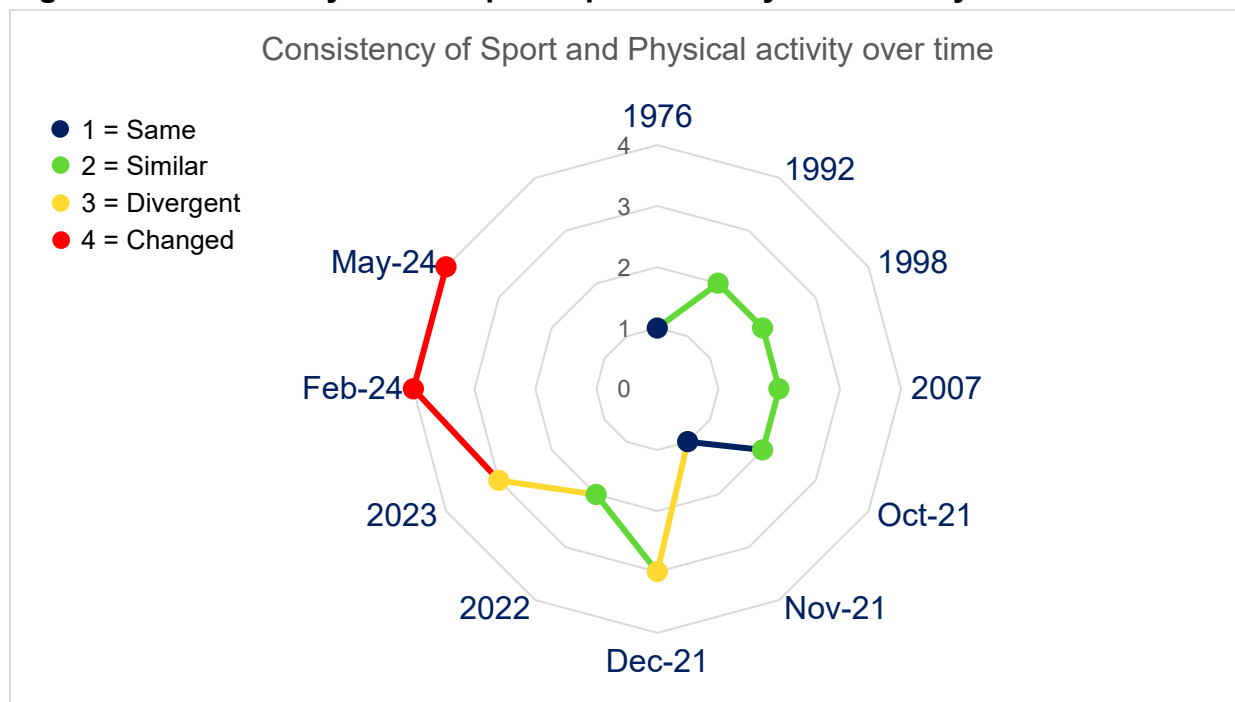
- Culture and identity
- Sport and physical activity
- Health and well-being
- Diversity, inclusion and accessibility

These inductively identified topics were then traced across the policy documents using the same methods and assessment system applied to the deductively identified six key features of the ESM. They are included in this report as they represent potential gaps not only between the policy documents and the assessments of the ESM, but also because they are indicative of the level of importance and priority attributed to topics within the broader conceptualisation of the ESM.

SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

This section considers the use and meaning of the word ‘sport’ as it is a critical term in understanding the scope of the “European Sport Model.” This review included the words “sport” and “physical activity” and their variations to trace how sport is defined and understood over time.

Figure 9: Consistency of concept of Sport and Physical activity over time



Sport shared a common definition for nearly 45 years, encompassing the range of physical activity from recreational and leisure-time physical activity to competitive play (Council of Europe, 1976). In expanding upon the 1975/76 original mention, a 1992 definition positions sport as “All forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels” (Council of Europe, 1992, Article 2(a)). This definition is referenced and reinforced several times (Commission of the European Communities, 2007b; Council of Europe, 2021, Article 2(1); Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport, Council of Europe, 2022, p. 12; European Commission, Directorate-General X, 1998a, p. 2). In November 2021, it even reverts to “active leisure” being included in “elite and grassroots sport” (European Parliament, 2021, p. 4).

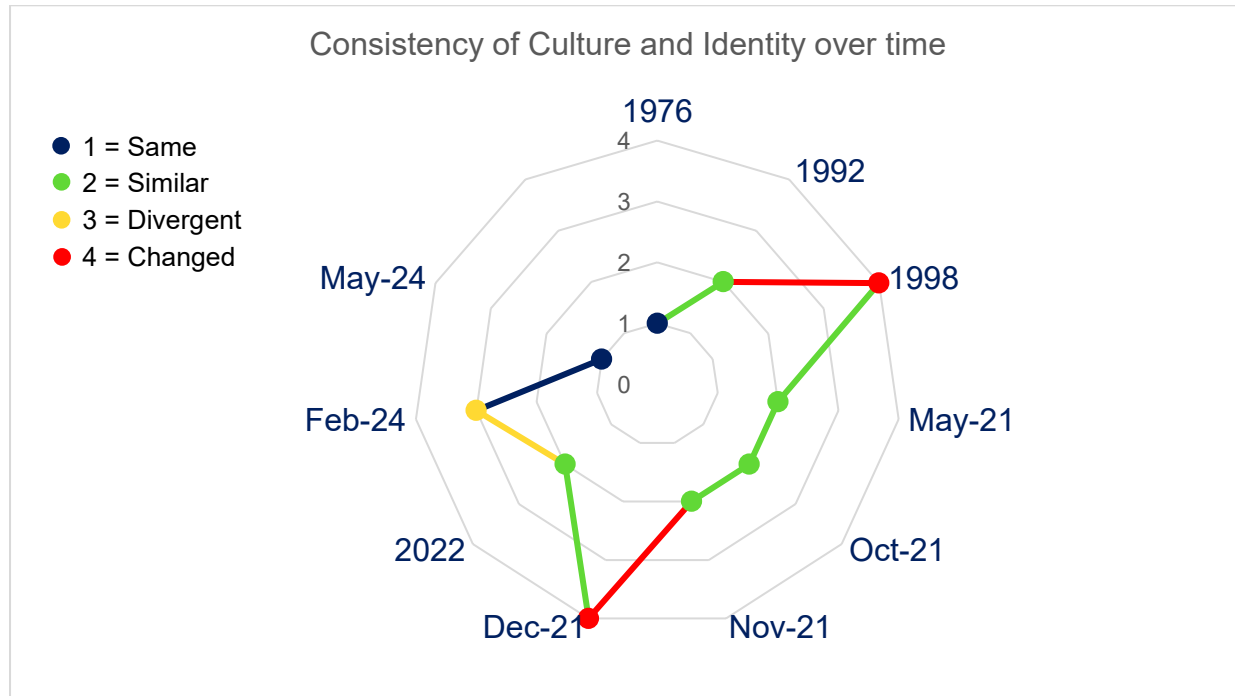
However, in December 2021, sport is specified as “values-based” and “organised,” recalling features attributed to the ESM rather than to ‘sport’ itself (Council of the European Union, 2021, p. 6). In 2023, specifically “grassroots sport” is characterised as a physical leisure activity with

benefits related to health, social cohesion and education (Council of the European Union, 2023, p. 1), with calls to “[develop] new types of grassroots sport, e.g., non-traditional sports” (Council of the European Union, 2023, p. 5). In 2024, the term “self-organised sport” appears and is recognised as “mak[ing] up a significant proportion of residents’ sporting activity” (European Committee of the Regions, 2024, p. 7). It is positioned as distinct from “organised sport” (Council of the European Union, 2024a, p. 3) and echoes the first definitions of ‘sport’ in that it includes “all forms of physical activity,” but has a specific emphasis on “informal settings” and “leisure time.” Health-enhancing physical activity is further distinguished alongside participation (Council of the European Union, 2024c, p. 5). Most notably, the sports movement is positioned as not inherent to these activities or goals (Council of the European Union, 2024a, p. 11).

The understanding of ‘sport’ has evolved from a holistic approach to physical activity to a distinction between formal (organised) settings, which focus on performance and competition, and informal (self-organised) settings, which are a form of leisure and recreation with benefits related to health and social cohesion. This distinction appears to have been made to more explicitly support EU goals to promote the accessibility of physical activity and therefore increase broader participation “in order to promote an active and environmentally-friendly lifestyle, social cohesion and active citizenship” (Council of the European Union, 2024c, pp. 5–6). This evolving definition, however, poses a difficult question to the ESM given that ‘sport’ in this sense is now recognised as “organised” and competitive play: how can the ESM, as a model limited to this updated understanding of ‘sport’, represent the reality of organisation – which, in the broad sense, includes both self-organisation formal organisation – and participation in Europe?

CULTURE AND IDENTITY

Several policymaking documents referenced variations of the words “culture” and “identity” and their connection to sport and the ESM.

Figure 10: Consistency of concepts of Culture and identity over time

The qualitative assessment of concepts related to “culture” and “identity” considered how these concepts were understood as related to sport and the ESM at either a national level or European level. Given the original mention in the 1975/76 Sport for All Charter, which mentions “pursuing common objectives designed to protect and promote European culture” (Council of Europe, 1976, p. 1), the default understanding and rating of “1” refers to generic sport as an aspect of European culture. The 1992 mention advances the understanding that sport “encourages contacts between European countries and citizens... reinforcing the bonds between peoples and developing awareness of a European cultural identity” (Council of Europe, 1992, p. 1). This same understanding is more or less expressed in the May 2021 mention of sports participation as part of “strengthening European identity” (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2021, p. 5), the October 2021 and 2022 reinforcement of the 1992 Charter (Council of Europe, 2021, p. 2; Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport, Council of Europe, 2022, p. 8) and November 2021’s mention connecting sport to “European cultural heritage and regional identity” (European Parliament, 2021, p. 11). There is a complete return to the original meaning in and May 2024 with a reiteration of traditional sport as a part of European culture (Council of the European Union, 2024c, p. 19).

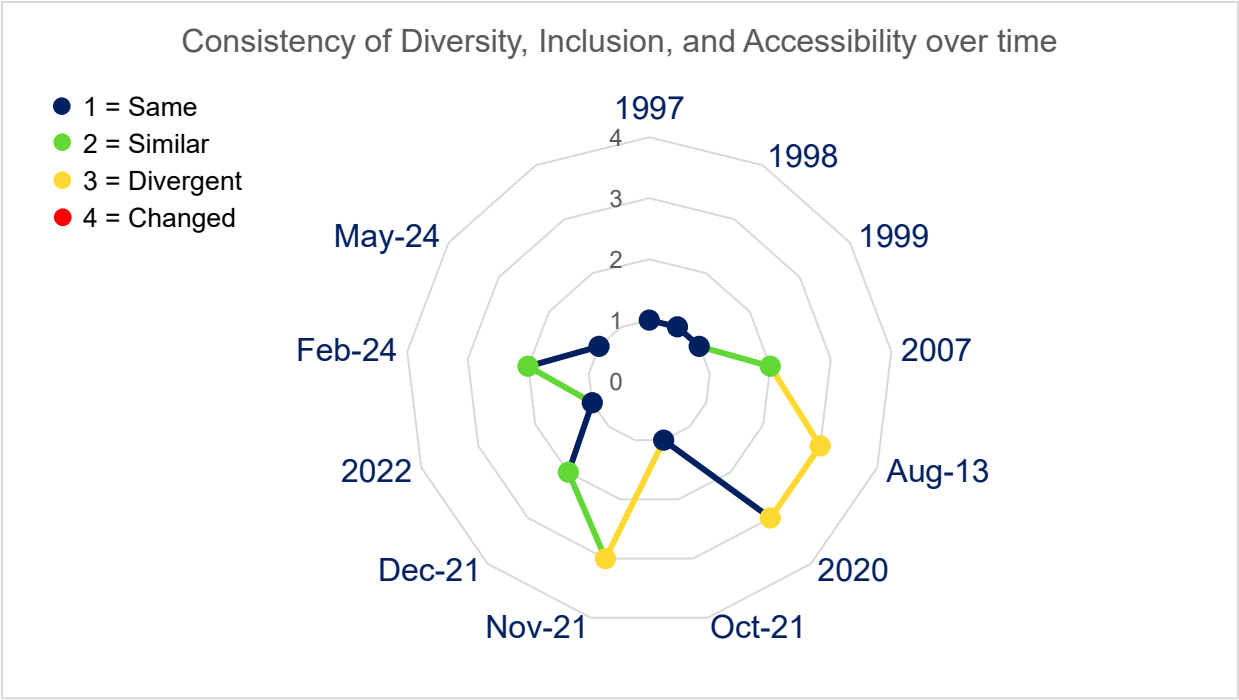
Significant deviations are marked by mentions of national identity or culture, along with any association beyond generic sport. This occurs when sport is associated with forging national

identity alongside a regional identity (European Commission, Directorate-General X, 1998b, p. 4) and “the commitment to national identity” is claimed as a “key feature of the European model” (European Commission, Directorate-General X, 1998b, p. 7). It also occurs when national team competitions are associated with national identity alongside other key features of the ESM, like solidarity and values, as seen in December 2021 (Council of the European Union, 2021, p. 3). A February 2024 mention connects the ESM to an EU identity, stating, “the EU bases its identity on the same values and principles that are currently shaping a European Sport Model” (European Committee of the Regions, 2024, p. 9).

DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY

Themes related to diversity, inclusion, and accessibility, along with other variations including equality and anti-discrimination, were identified through the inductive content analysis. A sample of concepts attributable to these concepts has been grouped under this heading to represent mentions that evoked the pursuit of “a society that is more open and tolerant” (European Commission, Directorate-General X, 1998b, Section 11) as related to sport in Europe. This section does not claim to comprehensively represent all mentions of these mentions but rather intends to provide an overview of content related to these ideas.

Figure 11: Consistency of the concept of Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility over time



The qualitative assessment was conducted based on the alignment with the original mention in 1997, which stated the contribution of “appropriate activities in the field of sport, to social integration and to the campaign against racism” (Pack & Committee on Culture, Youth, Education and the Media, 1997). Later mentions position sport as “a particularly effective weapon in the fight against intolerance, racism...” (European Commission, Directorate-General X, 1998b, p. 6), which can be used to “comba[t] exclusion, inequalities, racism and xenophobia” (Commission of the European Communities, 1999, p. 5) and integrate immigrants through a “shared sense of belonging” (Commission of the European Communities, 2007b, p. 7).

A slight variation of this approach to cohesion features an economic component. In 2007 (Commission of the European Communities, 2007b, p. 7) and then again in February 2024, the economic dimension of sport “should not be separated from a real social cohesion dimension” (European Committee of the Regions, 2024, p. 8).

Anti-discrimination also becomes a key feature, with the “the right to sport” dictating that “No discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, language, religion, gender or sexual orientation, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status, shall be permitted in the access to sports facilities or to sports activities” (Council of Europe, 2021, p. 6; Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport, Council of Europe, 2022, p. 22). The last mention in May 2024 emphasises sport in line with anti-discrimination rhetoric as sport being a “safe and accessible” environment (Council of the European Union, 2024a, p. 5).

The largest divergence is linked to the application of diversity, inclusion, and accessibility principles to SGBs themselves. While other mentions emphasise the ability of sport to be effective in these areas with the understanding that “sport in the EU represents an important social sphere by the representation of social and ethnic diversity in both, amateur and professional level” (European Committee of the Regions, 2024, p. 8), representation in sports governance begins to be called into question in August 2013 (European Parliament, 2013, p. 52). Other mentions follow suit (Council of the European Union, 2020, p. 5) and “urge international, European and national sports governing bodies and stakeholders to implement measures on diversity and inclusion, in particular to address the low numbers of women and ethnic minorities in leadership positions and on boards” (European Parliament, 2021, p. 6).

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

An inductive reading of relevant European policy documents revealed consistent references to health and well-being, often appearing interchangeably or in overlapping contexts. While sport and physical activity have been established to be evolving concepts, the consistent association of health and well-being with these terms justified their treatment as a distinct thematic cluster in this research.

Figure 12: Consistency of concepts of Health and Well-being over time



The biggest divergence in how sport and physical activity are discussed centres around the focus on health and well-being. As previously noted, the direct association between “sport” and “physical activity” has evolved and changed over time. However, there appears to be universal agreement that both sport and physical activity have benefits related to health and well-being. These benefits include not only physical and mental health, but also social cohesion as a concept related to well-being. The qualitative analysis thus assesses a ‘1’ rating to be aligned with the original mention of the benefits of sport – which, at this time, was synonymous with physical activity – to cover personal and social development, health and well-being (Council of Europe, 1976, 1992). This understanding is shared and slightly expanded with the consistent incorporation of social cohesion and integration as a concept related to well-being (Commission of the European Communities, 1999, p. 10; Council of Europe, 2021, p. 6; Council of the European Union, 2023, p. 1, 2024a, p. 3;

Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport, Council of Europe, 2022, p. 8; European Commission, Directorate-General X, 1998b, pp. 3, 5; European Parliament, 2013, p. 51; Pack & Committee on Culture, Youth, Education and the Media, 1997, p. 5).

On the other end of the spectrum lies a distinction where sport is not directly associated with health but is rather a “social movement” (Commission of the European Communities, 2007b, p. 3). This movement has “the ability to bring people together and speaks a universal language” (European Committee of the Regions, 2024, p. 9) and can be leveraged “as a tool for health-enhancing physical activity” (Commission of the European Communities, 2007b, p. 3). Sport also becomes a tool for the promotion of values, like “inclusion, anti-discrimination or fair play... to prevent prejudice and social stigma” (European Committee of the Regions, 2024, p. 4). Physical activity is then associated more directly with the more traditional health benefits specific to physical and mental well-being (Council of the European Union, 2013, p. 1).

GAPS FROM THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Please note the version of record for this section (Vandenberg et al., 2026).

The literature review yielded that the key ‘features’ of the ESM are not consistent in nature and therefore should be broken down into categories that better explain their function. The research distinguishes between these categories as “Concepts,” or abstract ideas or principles that have a broad meaning and interpretation but no precise or concrete definition; “mechanisms,” or concrete implementation actions; and “measurements,” or how concepts or mechanisms are evaluated. This resulted in the finding that while each ESM key ‘feature’ is a concept, not all concepts have associated mechanisms for implementation, and even fewer have associated measurements. Where measurements do exist in the cases of autonomy and voluntarism, their efficacy in evaluating the concept proposed remains unassessed. **Table 6** provides a high-level overview of these distinctions across the six features.

Table 6: Summary of literature review findings across six ESM features (Vandenberg et al., 2026)

Key features of the European Sport Model

	<u>Concept</u> <i>Abstract idea or principle</i>	<u>Mechanism</u> <i>Concrete implementation action(s)</i>	<u>Measurement</u> <i>How concept(s) or mechanism(s) are evaluated</i>
Autonomy	Yes	None	Good governance indicators; but applicability is not tested
Open competition	Yes	- Promotion / relegation - Questionable applicability of financial redistribution	None
Pyramid	Yes	- Hierarchical governance - Questionable applicability of financial redistribution	None
Solidarity	Yes	Financial redistribution	None
Values	Yes	None	None
Voluntarism	Yes	Volunteers, but interpretation of concept as meaning a 'workforce' is questionable	- Quantitative measures of quantity of volunteers and hours, interpreted through economic measures - Volunteer satisfaction and retention surveys

CONCEPTS

While the literature review provided individual insight into each key feature, our assessment of the scientific and grey literature on the ESM features reveals two potential categorisations of the features.²² The first categorisation includes three features that, through their abstract interpretations, function more like theoretical concepts or principles: autonomy, values, and voluntarism. Autonomy, which remains to be enshrined in law, speaks to the independence of sport organisations; the voluntary nature of sport organisations and the freedom to associate justifies the 'autonomy of sport' rendered to them; and both ideas are then tied to broad-reaching values-based arguments. At an abstract level, these underpin sport's role in society (de Witte & Zgliniski, 2022, p. 298; Nowy & Breuer, 2019, p. 732; Olivier, 2024); however, in practice, the

²² Please note this emanates from our own assessment. Scholars also offered other groupings of the features; for example, de Witte and Zgliniski state the ESM has "cultural elements" including "a commitment to local identity, sporting merit and solidarity" (de Witte & Zgliniski, 2022).

features of autonomy and voluntarism have shifted towards more tangible forms that can be assessed, as will be discussed below.

The second categorisation applies to the other three ESM features of solidarity, the pyramid, and open competition. Although these three concepts could be discussed at an abstract level as well, the interpretations of these features do not reflect abstract interpretations. For example, while open competition could have referred to accessibility in terms of ‘openness’, it instead refers to systems of promotion/relegation; and while “solidarity” could have represented the value of unity between and within sports, it refers to financial redistribution. The realities of these features in practice are presented as intricately related. The accessibility of open competitions serves as a tangible example of the interconnectivity between grassroots and elite play, which is in turn supported by the feature of the pyramid. The pyramid is fortified both philosophically and financially through solidarity, which manifests as financial redistribution mechanisms between the layers within the pyramid and from profits from elite-level open competitions. In this light, this research finds that the pyramid is not a standalone concept, as it is the ecosystem through which meritocratic promotion/relegation occurs (open competitions) and financial redistribution mechanisms can be allocated (solidarity).

MECHANISMS

Mechanisms are conceptualised as concrete implementation action(s) associated with each concept. As evidenced by the policy analysis and literature review, the concept of solidarity is most closely associated with the mechanism of financial redistribution. Financial redistribution is also strongly tied to the concepts of the pyramid and open competition. The intersection of these three key features is used as a justification for the dual function of SGBs as competition regulators and commercial entities, and the corresponding monopoly over governance and competition that underpin those functions. Despite this, the applicability of financial redistribution as a direct mechanism for the pyramid and open competition is questionable, given that both concepts serve other primary purposes and have more direct mechanisms associated with them. Open competition is more accurately actioned by the system of promotion and relegation, and the pyramid is more accurately actioned by the hierarchical governance it asserts through its layers. Voluntarism is actioned through the presence of the unpaid workforce of volunteers, although this action is questionable given voluntarism’s original connections to and justification in the freedom of association.

The questionable applicability of these mechanisms, paired with the absence of mechanisms associated with the key features of autonomy and values, means there is room for improvement in the ESM’s approach to concrete implementation actions. As an early step towards understanding

which mechanisms could be proposed, a list of many potential mechanisms was compiled and tested to kickstart future research and exploration.

Methodology

To do so, a survey was created in consultation with the International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA) to understand the potential importance and assignment of mechanisms across three primary areas critical to the organisation of and participation in sporting activity: organisations, human resources, and facilities. Within these three categories, further subcategories were listed to capture what were perceived to be the most prevalent units within that category. For organisations, these were identified as types of organisations, including

- Civil society / non-profit organisations;
- Professional clubs;
- Private companies (fitness centres etc.);
- Informal groups /self-organised; and
- Public authorities and schools.

For human resources, these were identified as different roles, including

- Volunteers;
- Paid employees;
- Professional trainers; and
- School teachers.

This list did not include specific titles, like coaches, given they can fall under any of the four listed categories. For facilities, these were identified as different settings where sporting activity takes place, including

- Outdoor facilities available to the public (nature, parks, streets, playgrounds, etc.);
- Public sport facilities;
- Public school facilities;
- Private household facilities; and
- Private facilities by payment.

Across all categories, an 'Other' option was listed for survey participants to specify other subcategories of importance.

Across these three categories, three questions were developed and applied consistently. These questions respectively addressed 1) the current status; 2) potential areas for support; and 3) mechanisms to address the areas in need of support.

- Question 1: “Which are CURRENTLY the most important for developing sport participation in your country? Please choose up to two.”
- Question 2: “Which requires greater support to develop sport participation in your country? Please choose up to two.”
- Question 3: “Which mechanisms would ensure these receive the support they require to develop sport participation in your country? Please choose up to three.”

The survey was deployed during the conference session, “The Real European Sport Model,” held from 09:00-10:30am on 31 October 2025 at the MOVE Congress in Copenhagen, Denmark, to gather data and facilitate discussion. This session was chosen for survey deployment due to convenience, and with the assumption that conference attendees, many of whom are active in the sport development space as ISCA members, have real-world experience and knowledge in this area. As shown in Appendix A, a one-page printout was developed for the discussion, which was then distributed to attendees as printouts. A digital survey was created to reflect the content of the printouts through survey questions; however, due to technical issues during the session, the survey was not utilised during the session. The survey is nonetheless showcased in Appendix B. Printouts were instead collected at the end of the session and then manually uploaded into an Excel. 56 respondents provided completed versions of the printouts.

Results

The results of the survey can be summarised in two tables. **Table 7** below shows the combined results of Question 1, “Which are CURRENTLY the most important for developing sport participation in your country? Please choose up to two.” and Question 2, “Which requires greater support to develop sport participation in your country? Please choose up to two.” These questions were asked across the three categories of A) organisations, B) human resources, and C) facilities. The results are showcased in the order in which options were listed on the original printout.

Table 7: Current status (Q1) and needs (Q2) for sport development

Topic	Category	Q1: Currently important	Q2: Requires support
A) Organisations	Civil society / non-profit	51	42
	Professional clubs	8	5
	Private companies (fitness centres etc.)	19	4
	Informal groups /self-organised	22	31
	Public authorities and schools	37	35
	Other...	1	0
B) Human Resources	Volunteers	40	41
	Paid employees	32	20
	Professional trainers	24	11
	School teachers	21	25
	Other...	3	3
C) Facilities	Outdoor facilities available to the public (nature, parks, streets, playgrounds, etc.)	40	40
	Public sport facilities	45	46
	Public school facilities	31	30
	Private household facilities	1	2
	Private facilities by payment	17	4
	Other...	2	1

For the 'other' open text option, the following responses were provided:

- Q1 Organisations: "media"
- Q1 Human resources: "municipality", "sport participants", "personally trained"
- Q2 Human resources: "spent minimum", "sport trainers in school", "parents and healthcare professionals"
- Q1 Facilities: "sport club", "public space"
- Q2 Facilities: "sport club public"

Table 8 below maps the mechanisms identified in Question 3, "Which mechanisms would ensure these receive the support they require to develop sport participation in your country? Please choose up to three," to the broader category of organisations, human resources, and facilities.

Mechanisms are listed in the randomised order in which they were listed in the “Possible mechanisms” box at the bottom of the printout.

Table 8: Mechanisms to specific improvements (Q3)

Mechanism	Organisations	Human Resources	Facilities	TOTAL
Education programmes and support	11	22	0	33
Safeguarding policy	4	4	2	10
Legislation	7	2	12	21
Tax exemptions for volunteers	6	17	1	24
Media coverage and campaigns	4	5	2	11
Domestic and international co-operation	4	6	3	13
Data and research	11	5	9	25
Public funding	23	11	21	55
Private funding	7	5	15	27
Private household funding	1	0	1	2
Funding from private foundations and private sponsorships	3	0	4	7
Better elite sports results	0	0	0	0
Hosting of major sport events	2	0	1	3
Human resources	8	10	1	19
Facility support and access	8	3	20	31
Other...	4	3	4	11

For the ‘other’ open text option, the following responses were provided:

- Organisations: “media”
- Human resources: “campaigns”, “collaboration”, “educating school teachers to integrate play”
- Facilities: “new sport system”, “construction tied to citizen development”, “more outdoor”, “user-friendly”

These results are an early indication of which mechanisms are considered, by stakeholders, to be best-positioned to address these needs. This survey could thus be considered a pilot needs

assessment. This research did not endeavour to conduct analysis of the results, which could be analysed in future research.

MEASUREMENTS

The literature review revealed that assessments of the ESM principles – scientific or otherwise – remain few and far between (Vandenberg et al., 2026).²³ The assessments that have been conducted focus on two of the most abstract ESM principles, autonomy and voluntarism. Autonomy is being measured through good governance criteria (Chaker, 2004; Geeraert, 2019; Geeraert & Drieskens, 2015; Girginov, 2023; Král & Cuskelly, 2018).

A key finding from the research is that reporting practices reflect a significant divergence between insular reporting on good governance on the one hand and indicators measuring sport's role in and impact on society on the other (de Witte & Zgliniski, 2022, p. 298; European Committee of the Regions, 2024, p. 12; European Parliament, 2021, p. 11; Lefèvre & Bayeux, 2018; Nowy & Breuer, 2019, p. 732; Olivier, 2024). This is further confirmed by work by Play the Game's Sports Governance Observer (Alm, 2019; Geeraert, 2018, 2019), where only one of four dimensions addresses "societal responsibility." Within this one dimension, only a handful of principles (no.44 through 57) address society-facing issues, with the majority of indicators within a given principle focusing on the organisational commitment via a policy or staff member(s).²⁴ Even fewer indicators evaluate the impact of the policy or commitments made.²⁵

What remains to be tested in scholarly assessments is the applicability of good governance indicators to justifying sporting autonomy. 'Good governance' standards can serve as proxy measures for organisational integrity and values congruence (Sennett, 2022, p. 5), which appear tied to the ESM principles of autonomy and values. It remarkably does not regulate performance indicators tied to operational principles like promotion/relegation and solidarity.

Voluntarism has become synonymous with the more quantifiable concept of volunteers and their satisfaction and retention (Fysentzidis et al., 2024; Mills et al., 2024; Nedvetskaya, 2023; Scharfenkamp et al., 2023; Schlesinger & Nagel, 2013; Wicker & Hallmann, 2013). These studies

²³ Please note the version of record for this section (Vandenberg et al., 2026)

²⁴ For example, Principle 45 related to policy aimed at mitigating the health risks of sporting activities; Principle 49, policy combating discrimination in sport; Principle 50, policy to promote gender equality in sport; Principle 52, policy for the promotion of environmental sustainability; Principle 54, policy on promoting sport for all; Principle 56, policy for the promotion and safeguarding of human rights; and Principle 57, regarding anti-corruption controls.

²⁵ Of the principles in the above footnote, only indicators 45.5, 45.6, 49.11, 50.6, 52.10, 54.6, and 56.9 address conducting analysis and evaluating impact.

concerning volunteers remain limited to the ESM principle of voluntarism and do not extend to other ESM features.

IDENTIFYING AND VALIDATING GAPS

- Several observations revealed overlapping concepts across research tasks no.1 through 10:
- The keywords raised by the research partners in research task no.2 both adapted and expanded upon current ESM features, mentioning different words and concepts beyond the six ESM key features;
 - The key concepts and topics inductively identified by the policy documents in research task no.5 overlapped or repeated concepts from research task no.2 that extended beyond ESM features; and
 - The tagging exercise revealed that 13 of the 114 manually screened articles (11%) in research task no.9 again covered similar topics reflected in the concepts seen in research tasks no.2 and 5.

METHODOLOGY

To understand potentially underrepresented concepts, the following process was conducted. To explore this, this Chapter seeks to confirm or refute whether these concepts are A) critical to sport, as a generic concept; and B) comparatively underrepresented in the “European Sport Model.”

(11) Keyword determination

Research task no.11 thus sought to define which concepts were most relevant as potential ‘gaps’. Relevant keywords received from the focus group in research task no.3, along with the terms used in tandem with these keywords (“matched terms”), were used to inform a basic search of the 26 Timeline documents for the same terms and close variants. The results of this search can be seen in **Table 9**.

Table 9: Selection process results for research task no.11

Concept to be tested	Focus group keywords (Task no.3)		Timeline documents (Task no.4)	
	Total mentions	Matched terms	Total mentions	Matched Terms
Participation	2	Participation	358	Participation, participant, participate
Health and well-being	5	Health and well being, well-being, Public health, health and well being, health and sport	303	Health, wellbeing, health and well-being, well-being

Accessibility	2	Accessible, barriers	285	Accessibility, accessible, access
Equality	2	Equality, inequality	179	Equality, inequality, equal
Physical activity	1	Physical activity	143	Physical activity
Inclusivity	2	From exclusive to inclusive, inclusive	139	Inclusion, inclusive, inclusivity, inclusiveness
Democracy	2	Democracy	121	Democracy, democratic
Grassroots	1	Grassroots sports	98	Grassroots
Diversity	2	Diversity, respect diversity	67	Diversity, diverse
Exclusivity	7	Exclusive, exclusion, exclusivity, monocultural	64	Exclusion, exclusivity, exclusive
Leisure	1	Leisure	24	Leisure
Monopoly	2	Monopoly	14	Monopoly, monopolistic

Based on the outputs of research task no.11, the following ‘gaps’ were determined with the following associations to be tested in the Equations in task no.12:

- **Participation and grassroots** – as a direct reflection of their individual strength in the analysis, the terms ‘Participation’ (358 mentions across the documents) and ‘Grassroots’ (98 mentions) were combined as mentions of participation can vary beyond the realm or specific context of sport, e.g., ‘participatory’.
- **Health and well-being** – as a direct reflection of its strength in the analysis.
- **Accessibility** – although accessibility could be grouped with “diversity and inclusion” in referring to disabled people and their rights to equal access, this was kept as a standalone term given the strength in the analysis and that potential mentions could reference other instances of accessibility that are not immediately associated with disabled groups, like broader public access to sport spaces.
- **Equality** – as a direct reflection of its strength in the analysis. This concept was further kept as a standalone term – and not grouped with “diversity and inclusion” as part of the broader “diversity, equality and inclusion” (DEI) – to capture potential mentions that are not associated with DEI concepts, like economic disparity in funding for men’s versus women’s sports.
- **Physical activity** – as a direct reflection of its strength in the analysis.
- **Diversity and inclusion** – the topics of inclusivity (139 mentions), diversity (67 mentions), and exclusivity (64 mentions) were combined based on the thematic logic that they speak to the same idea and can be easily referenced by the well-known umbrella term of “diversity and inclusion.” ‘Exclusivity’ was further incorporated as matched terms varied beyond the realm or specific context of sport, e.g., ‘exclusive competence.’

- **Leisure** – despite a low number of mentions, this term was retained given no other term in the dataset speaks to the recreational purpose of sport. A related term, ‘recreation,’ was not named by the focus group but nonetheless appeared across the documents thirty times.

The following concepts were tested in research task no.11 but were not included in the future research undertaken in task no.12:

- **Democracy** – as this topic is often referred to governance, this concept is well-represented by the discussion within this report’s section on “Autonomy.”
- **Monopoly** – as the topic with the least number of total mentions, this topic was excluded.

Using these keywords, equations were designed to be run through the three databases found to produce results from the original scoping review.

(12) Defining and running of equations across three databases

To validate these ‘gaps’, two equations were defined to determine the strength of association between the ‘gap’ and A) sport, generally; and B) the ESM. Equation 3(A) was defined to determine the association between the ‘gap’ and sport, and Equation 3(B) was defined to determine the association between the ‘gap’ and the European Sport Model. The following Equations 3(A) and 3(B) were adapted to each of the identified concepts defined, where the word ‘*concept*’ was replaced with the term identified in task no.11:

Equation 3(A): (sport*) AND (*concept*)

Equation 3(B): (europe* sport* model*) AND (*concept*)

Each concept’s Equation 3(A) and 3(B) were separately run through the same three databases in line with the inclusion criteria (full-text, peer-reviewed scientific articles in English between 1975-2024).

The **3(A) equations** were as follows:

(sport*) AND (health* OR wellbeing OR well-being)

(sport*) AND ("physical activ*")

(sport*) AND (leisure)

(sport*) AND (divers* OR inclusi* OR "diversity and inclusion")

(sport*) AND (accessib*)

(sport*) AND (equal* OR unequal*)

(sport*) AND (participa* OR grassroot*)

The **3(B) equations** were as follows:

(europe* AND sport* AND model*) AND (health* OR wellbeing OR well-being)

(europe* AND sport* AND model*) AND ("physical activ*")

(europe* AND sport* AND model*) AND (leisure)

(europe* AND sport* AND model*) AND (divers* OR inclusi* OR "diversity and inclusion")

(europe* AND sport* AND model*) AND (accessib*)

(europe* AND sport* AND model*) AND (equal* OR unequal*)

(europe* AND sport* AND model*) AND (participa* OR grassroot*)

It is important to note that the ultimate goal of this exercise was to confirm or refute associations between the 'gap' and (A) its criticality to sport and (B) its representation in the ESM. Therefore, it was determined that this could be ascertained from an analysis of the results as shown in **Table 10** below, and no further screenings of the results from Equations 3(A) and 3(B) were necessary and analysis could be based on the results from the database searches alone.

Table 10: Results from adapted Equations 3(A) and 3(B) to ‘gaps’ across three databases

Concept tested	Results from Equation 3(A): (sport*) AND (concept)				Results from Equation 3(B): (europe* sport* model*) AND (concept)			
	Scopus	Web of Science	SportDiscuss	Total	Scopus	Web of Science	SportDiscuss	Total
Health and well-being (health* OR wellbeing OR well-being)	43,149	34,509	110,149	187,807	283	197	764	1,244
Participation and grassroots (participa* OR grassroot*)	53,266	47,535	82,888	183,689	319	243	559	1,121
Physical activity ("physical activ*")	19,405	18,104	34,236	71,745	198	139	353	690
Diversity and inclusion (divers* OR inclusi* OR "diversity and inclusion")	10,605	9,042	13,784	33,431	75	64	1-2-3	262
Leisure (leisure)	5,094	4,443	13,258	22,795	63	54	93	210
Equality (equal* OR inequal*)	4,566	4,014	7,805	16,385	57	52	44	153
Accessibility (accessib*)	1,759	1,385	1,937	5,081	18	11	14	43

Interestingly, the topics rank in the same order in most to least results for both Equations 3(A) and 3(B), which indicates no divergences based on the ‘gap’ itself. It is worth noting that of the seven ‘gaps’ identified, ‘gaps’ that combined concepts (e.g., health and well-being, participation and grassroots, diversity and inclusion) yielded greater results than singular concepts (e.g. leisure, accessibility).

In comparing the results between the inductive approach taken in the policy tracing to this inductive approach to ‘gaps’, health and well-being leading the list confirms the inductive recognition of this concept in the analysis of the policy documents. Similarly, participation and grassroots speak to types of sport and physical activity is directly associated with sport in several mentions. The relatively small number of results related to accessibility further validates the inductive approach of the policy analysis including it alongside diversity and inclusion.

(13) Validation of identified gaps through concentration factors

To better understand the comparative nature of these results, a concentration factor was calculated to showcase the proportion of the results. The concentration factor was calculated by dividing the total number of results for Equation 3(A) by the total number of results for Equation 3(B) per ‘gap’. It is displayed as a ratio to highlight how concentrated or underrepresented each

concept is within the European Sport Model discourse relative to its broader relevance in sport. The results are shown in **Table 11**.

Table 11: Concentration factor between results from Equations 3(A) and 3(B) per ‘gap’

‘Gap’ tested	Results from Equation 3(A): (sport*) AND (concept)				Results from Equation 3(B): (europe* sport* model*) AND (concept)				Concentration factor / ratio
	Scopus	Web of Science	SportDiscuss	Total	Scopus	Web of Science	SportDiscuss	Total	
Health and well-being (<i>health* OR wellbeing OR well-being</i>)	43,149	34,509	110,149	187,807	283	197	764	1,244	151:1
Participation and grassroots (<i>participa* OR grassroot*</i>)	53,266	47,535	82,888	183,689	319	243	559	1,121	164:1
Physical activity (<i>"physical activ*"</i>)	19,405	18,104	34,236	71,745	198	139	353	690	104:1
Diversity and inclusion (<i>divers* OR inclusi* OR "diversity and inclusion"</i>)	10,605	9,042	13,784	33,431	75	64	1-2-3	262	128:1
Leisure (<i>leisure</i>)	5,094	4,443	13,258	22,795	63	54	93	210	109:1
Equality (<i>equal* OR inequal*</i>)	4,566	4,014	7,805	16,385	57	52	44	153	107:1
Accessibility (<i>accessib*</i>)	1,759	1,385	1,937	5,081	18	11	14	43	118:1

The ratios can be understood, for example, as for every 151 articles that speak to sport and health and well-being, there is only one article about the ESM that discusses health and well-being; for every 104 articles that discuss physical activity and health and well-being, there is only one article about the ESM that discusses physical activity; and so on.

While these results are already notable, it is critical to return to the fact that these database search results have not undergone any additional screening to confirm the relevance of the articles. The initial search results represent only a preliminary indicator of topic presence. To illustrate this, consider the results from research task no.5, where a total of 4,476 articles were identified (3,833 from Equation 1 and 643 from Equation 2). Of these, only 81 articles were ultimately deemed relevant after a preliminary and manual screening. This represents an accuracy rate of just 1.81%, where only 1.81% of articles from the original search of the databases were ultimately relevant. Inversely, the false positive rate, or the rate at which articles were found to match the search but were ultimately not relevant, is 98.19%. This accuracy rate of 1.81% can be reasonably applied to

Equation 3(B) results to calculate the upper and lower bounds of a plausible range. This is applied and showcased in **Table 12**.

Table 12: Upper and lower bounds of a plausible concentration factor range

'Gap' tested	Original results			Results with 1.81% accuracy rate applied	
	Equation 3(A) total	Equation 3(B) total	Concentration factor / ratio	Estimated Equation 3(B) results	Estimated concentration factor / ratio
Health and well-being (<i>health* OR wellbeing OR well-being</i>)	187,807	1,244	151:1	23	8166:1
Participation and grassroots (<i>participa* OR grassroots*</i>)	183,689	1,121	164:1	20	9184:1
Physical activity (<i>"physical activ*"</i>)	71,745	690	104:1	12	5979:1
Diversity and inclusion (<i>divers* OR inclusi* OR "diversity and inclusion"</i>)	33,431	262	128:1	5	6686:1
Leisure (<i>leisure</i>)	22,795	210	109:1	4	5699:1
Equality (<i>equal* OR inequal*</i>)	16,385	153	107:1	3	5462:1
Accessibility (<i>accessib*</i>)	5,081	43	118:1	1	5081:1

The original results therefore become the lower bounds of that range, while the estimated results (based on A-1.81% accuracy rate) represent the upper bounds of a range, as displayed:

- **Health and well-being:** For every one article about the ESM and health and well-being, it is plausible there are between 151 and 8,166 articles written on sport and health and well-being.
- **Participation and grassroots:** For every one article about the ESM and participation and grassroots, it is plausible there are between 164 and 9,184 articles written on sport and participation and grassroots.
- **Physical activity:** For every one article about the ESM and physical activity, it is plausible there are between 104 and 5,979 articles written on sport and physical activity.
- **Diversity and inclusion:** For every one article about the ESM and diversity and inclusion, it is plausible there are between 128 and 6,686 articles written on sport and diversity and inclusion.

- **Leisure:** For every one article about the ESM and leisure, it is plausible there are between 109 and 5,699 articles written on sport and leisure.
- **Equality:** For every one article about the ESM and equality, it is plausible there are between 107 and 5,462 articles written on sport and equality.
- **Accessibility:** For every one article about the ESM and accessibility, it is plausible there are between 118 and 5,081 articles written on sport and accessibility.

Even though one ‘gap’ may have more results than another gap, given that concentration factors are based on the relative proportion between two datasets, the ratio may be smaller. For example, even though the ‘gap’ of “physical activity” has more results than “diversity and inclusion,” its concentration factor is nonetheless smaller.

LIMITATIONS AND STRENGTHS

A limitation concerns the results of the analysis of gaps in assessments of the ESM. While the process of selecting and conducting a scoping review across the terms is strong, the concentration factors presented provide a very wide upper and lower range. This evidence makes it difficult to ascertain to which degree the gap is not addressed by the ESM. The application of a concentration factor for presentation of the results could also be debated in favour of other presentations of the results. Overall, the strength of the analysis of the gaps is its combination of both deductive and inductive approaches to understanding where the ESM may not address topics of importance to sport more generally.

CONCLUSION

These concentration factors confirm the observation leading to the primary inquiry of this Chapter: several concepts that are proven to be critical to ‘sport’ are notably underrepresented in the scientific literature’s analysis and assessments of the European Sport Model. While this does not speak to whether these concepts are or are not of importance to the ESM, this finding does indicate that these concepts represent ‘gaps’ in scientific inquiry meant to test and assess the ESM. This report has cited numerous critiques of the ESM for being unrepresentative and not reflective of the reality of the organisation of and participation in sporting activity in Europe, and future research could consider assessing these ‘gaps’ to determine the potential relationship between them and the ESM.

CHAPTER 3

Mapping a framework

The findings from the literature review and analysis of the gaps in the literature on the European Sport Model reveal that the current ESM's six key features not only mix concepts and mechanisms but also present an ill-defined approach to what constitutes "sport" itself, including its organisation, its governance structures, and what activities fall within its scope. Although the ESM names concepts that prove to be critical to policymakers and scholars – like health and well-being, physical activity, participation and grassroots, and leisure-time recreation – these ideas are not key features of the ESM.

This chapter explores the mapping of this framework in light of the literature review analysis of the current key features of the ESM, the testing and confirmation of the framework, and potential applications of the framework moving forward.

THE PROPOSED FRAMEWORK

Research task no.14 began with the understanding that a more nuanced model was required to capture the breadth and depth of the realities of the organisation of and participation in sporting activity in Europe. This new framework would need to be able to reflect the broad spectrum of sporting activity in Europe, along with the following topics:

- Organisation, ranging from self-organised to organised in the sport federation system;
- Activity type, ranging from health-enhancing physical activity to sport governed by agreed and maintained rules or guidelines;
- Motivations, ranging from leisure and recreation without competitive goals to competition-driven sporting activity;
- Participation, ranging from open participation with no restrictions to activities with strict eligibility criteria that are enforced; and
- Resources and settings, including from household contributions and public, private, and civil society sectors, among other considerations.

Two approaches were determined to encompass these needs:

- A. Create a framework that can capture the organisation of and participation in sporting activity that bridges civic life and several sectors, which can be used to map and profile individual activities and organisations that organise or facilitate sporting activity; and

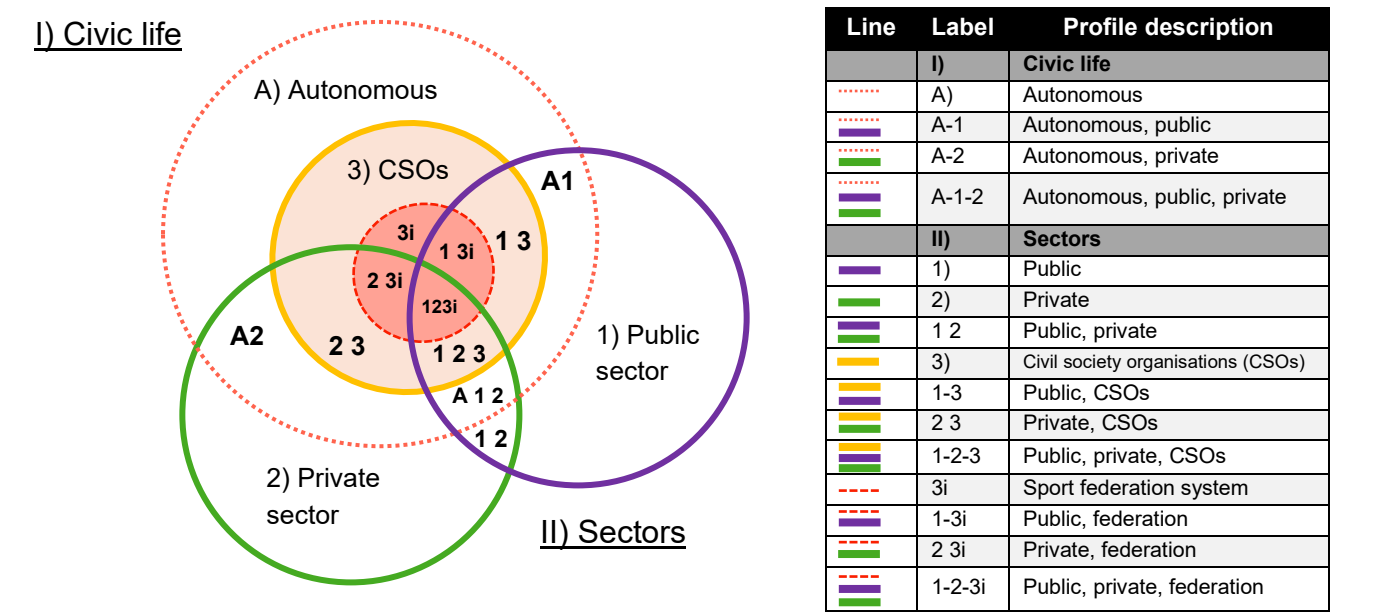
B. Create proxy measures that speak to the relevance of the organisational models of sport, which can be measured and applied to individual activities and organisations.

The following sections explore these two approaches.

FRAMEWORK TO MAP ACTIVITIES AND ORGANISATIONS

The framework visualised in **Figure 13**, the Relational European Sporting Map (Vandenberg & Riquier, 2026) presents a multi-set Venn diagram to showcase the interactions between I) Civic life and II) various Sectors. These interactions present a combined approach to participation and organisation, along with the resources and settings used. Please note the version of record for the information presented in this section and related to the RESM is drawn from Vandenberg and Riquier (2026), which was written to reflect the research conducted during this project and supported by its associated grant (GAP-101185488).

Figure 13: Relational European Sporting Map (Vandenberg & Riquier, 2026)



The breakdown of the major labels guiding the framework is as follows (Vandenberg & Riquier, 2026):

“I) Civic life

- I) Civic life, displayed in the large dotted orange circle, is conceptualised as where citizens make choices regarding their lives.

- Within I) Civic life is A) Autonomous, conceptualised as being a subsection within the broader orange circle of I) Civic life, represents citizens autonomously and independently making choices about their participation in sporting activity.

II) Sectors

- II) Sectors, displayed by three circles representing the public sector (in purple), the private sector (in green) and civil society organisations (in light orange), are conceptualised as being the setting and resources available for sporting activity
- Within II) Sectors is 1) Public sector, displayed in purple as a subsection of II) Sectors, conceptualised as the designated provision of public settings and/or resources for sporting activity
- Within II) Sectors is 2) Private sector, displayed in green as a subsection of II) Sectors, conceptualised as private settings and/or resources for sporting activity

Overlapping with both I) Civic life and II) Sectors

- 3) Civil society organisations (CSOs), otherwise called ‘the third sector’,²⁶ displayed in light orange, represents a subsection of autonomous civic life where citizens associate with civil society organisations by exercising their right to freedom of association
- 3i) Sport federation system, displayed in the dashed light red circle, represents a subsection of CSOs as citizens can freely associate with civil society organisations that fall within the governance structures of sport governing bodies within the one federation pyramid system, like the IOC and FIFA” (Vandenberg & Riquier, 2026).

In conversation with the current ESM

The proposed framework considers the literature review of the following ESM key features: autonomy, pyramid, solidarity, and voluntarism.

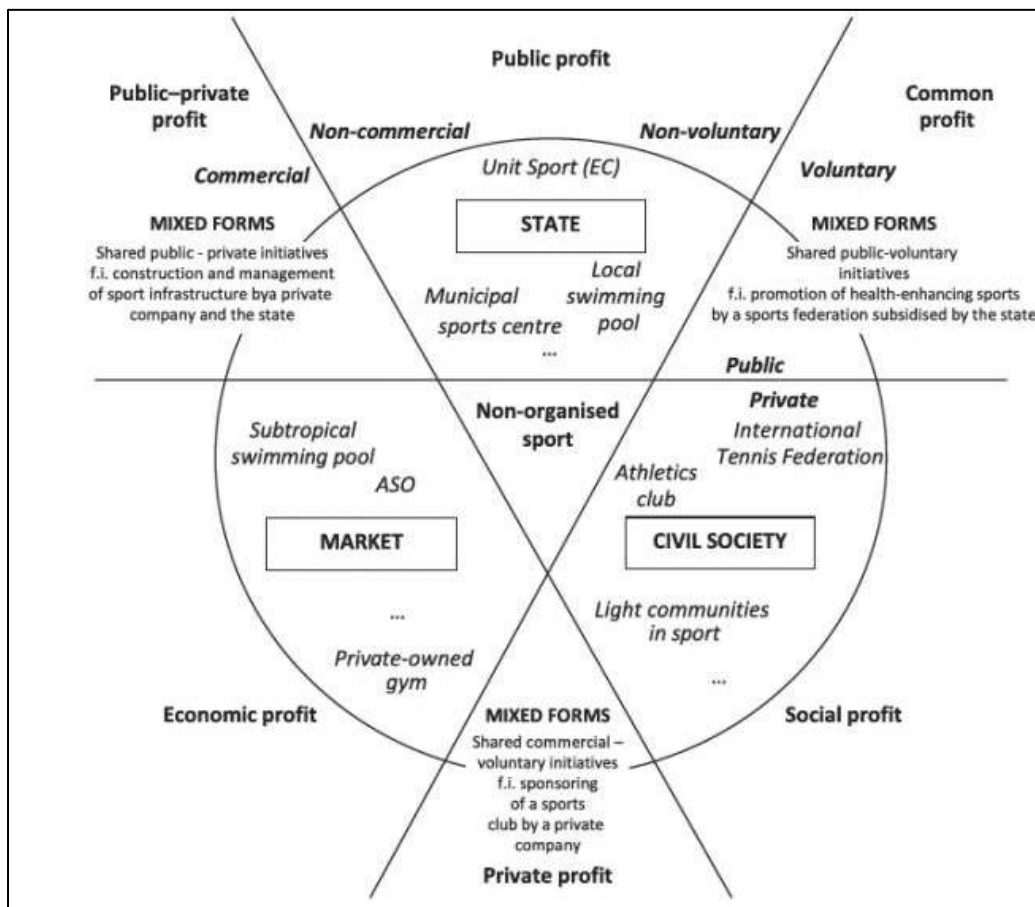
The ‘pyramid’ and other models

As discussed in the literature review of the ESM key feature of the ‘pyramid’, there have been several proposals of visual models to capture the organisation of and participation in sport in Europe. The current ‘pyramid’ claims to represent the hierarchical governance structure and

²⁶ For the purpose of clarity for participants, the ‘third sector’ terminology was used during the survey for an assignment of the ‘3’ label. However, for the purposes of this report and future research, the assignment of a label of ‘3’ is better conceptualised as ‘civil society organisations’ (CSOs). The assignment ‘3i’ refers to the federation system, which is conceived as a subsection of CSOs based on it being a specific manifestation of a type of civil society organisation.

participation in sport. Other variations have included a multi-actor model (Scheerder, 2007), a ‘church’ model (Scheerder, 2020; Scheerder et al., 2011), and a ‘rectangular model’ (Canadian Sport for Life, 2020). Of these, the “multi-actor model of sport” displayed in **Figure 14** below was the most influential in this research’s framework (Scheerder, 2020, p. 158), as the representation of cross-sector influence was deemed the most representative of the organisation of sport. The other models were assessed to reflect an understanding of participation and player pathways.

Figure 14: “Multi-actor model of sport” (Scheerder, 2020, p. 158)



Autonomy

The framework proposed by Vandenberg and Riquier (2026) offers the distinction between the “state” as conceptualised in the multi-actor model (Scheerder, 2020, p. 158) and designated public settings and resources. The survey specified the use of “designated” public resources and/or settings to assign a ‘1’ profile. This was done to account for the ‘autonomy of sport’ principle, which requires organisations within the sport federation system to remain independent from their respective states. In this sense, using resources and/or settings that are generally public access

are not considered a violation of this independence; however, the direct use of designated public resources and/or settings would constitute an overlap with the state and could be explored as a potential dependence between the sport organisation and a violation of autonomy. If the logic behind the 'autonomy of sport' stands as claimed, then the following profiles of civil society organisations within the sport federation system ('3i' profiles) would be considered to violate sporting autonomy, given they rely on designated public resources and/or settings:

- **1-3i** - Sporting activities that are organised by a civil society organisation within the sport federation system and use 3i) resources and/or settings supported by members (e.g., household contributions) and/or the federation system (e.g., solidarity payments) AND 1) designated public resources and/or settings to deliver sporting activities.
- **1-2-3i** - Sporting activities that are organised by a civil society organisation within the sport federation system and use 3i) resources and/or settings supported by members (e.g., household contributions) and/or the federation system (e.g., solidarity payments) AND 1) designated public resources AND 2) private resources and/or settings to deliver sporting activities.

However, based on the policy documents concerning the ESM, it is clear that designated resources and/or settings are critical to sporting activities of the sport federation system. This then presents a unique complication of the 'autonomy of sport' principle set out by the ESM.

Solidarity

Based on the understanding that the mechanism of financial redistribution occurs within the pyramid and is financed by profits from open competitions, we would only expect civil society organisations within the sport federation system (a '3i' profile) to be eligible for solidarity payments. These four profiles include:

- **3i** - Sporting activities that are organised by a civil society organisation within the sport federation system and use 3i) resources and/or settings supported by members (e.g., household contributions) and/or the federation system (e.g., solidarity payments).
- **1-3i** - Sporting activities that are organised by a civil society organisation within the sport federation system and use 3i) resources and/or settings supported by members (e.g., household contributions) and/or the federation system (e.g., solidarity payments) AND 1) designated public resources and/or settings to deliver sporting activities.
- **2-3i** - Sporting activities that are organised by a civil society organisation within the sport federation system and use 3i) resources and/or settings supported by members (e.g., household contributions) and/or the federation system (e.g., solidarity payments) AND 2) private resources and/or settings to deliver sporting activities.

- **1-2-3i** - Sporting activities that are organised by a civil society organisation within the sport federation system and use 3i) resources and/or settings supported by members (e.g., household contributions) and/or the federation system (e.g., solidarity payments) AND 1) designated public resources AND 2) private resources and/or settings to deliver sporting activities.

However, the literature review also revealed that financial redistribution remains largely limited to sports with significant revenues from broadcasting partners, which would qualify as a private resource ('2' profile). Solidarity payments would then seem to only apply to organisations who rely on private resources ('2' profiles), limiting the potential to two organisational profiles: 2-3i and 1-2-3i. This is explored further in Chapter 4, where case studies target success stories and challenges and/or failures of solidarity payments from the federation system to civil society organisations.

Voluntarism

If we understand voluntarism as a concept underpinned by the right of freedom of association, CSOs (the 'third sector') are distinguished from broader civic life based on the human right of freedom of association. Freedom of association is an expression of autonomous civil life and is voluntary by nature. Freedom of association is further entrenched in foundational and international human rights law (Council of Europe, 1950; United Nations, 1948). In order for a citizen (and their sporting activity) to move from autonomous civic life (an 'A' profile) to a civil society organisation (a '3' profile), the citizen must voluntarily join or affiliate to that civil society organisation. If we understand voluntarism as volunteers, or unpaid labour currently upholding the ESM, volunteers are reflected in the framework as being a resource of the organisation for which they volunteer.

PROXY MEASURES FOR THE RELEVANCE OF ORGANISATIONAL MODELS OF SPORT

The second stage of the research applies branching logic across several questions to assess the relevance of the organisational models of sport to the given sporting activity. One critique the RESM could not address is that the pyramid model does not reflect the individual motivations (Adelfinsky, 2021). To address this, we consulted Adelfinsky's 'iceberg' model as a guide, which posits that the norms can be interpreted to understand motivations by distinguishing between 'top-achievements' norms, which are typically found at elite levels, and 'expressive' social norms, generally held by average sport participants (Adelfinsky, 2021). Instead of norms, we sought to test if the level of organisation could be reflective of motivations. We designed to test this through our pilot survey, which could seek to validate both the proposed visualised framework and reveal if individual motivations could be related to the organisation of their activity as being self-organised or organised.

The questions that were asked served as proxy measures to determine the relevance of organisational models of sport to the sporting activity across the following three categories:

- 1) The first category of proxy measures concerned successively competitive levels and competition and measured
 - I. The availability or access to successively competitive levels and/or competitions; and
 - II. The relevance of having successive competitive levels and/or competitions to the participant.
- 2) The second category concerned sport rules or guidelines, measured through
 - III. The provision of rules or guidelines for the sporting activity; and
 - IV. The relevance of those rules or guidelines to the participant's form of participation.
- 3) The third category concerned eligibility and restriction of participation, measured through
 - V. The existence of rules or guidelines that restrict eligibility or restrict participation; and
 - VI. The relevance of those rules or guidelines to determining eligibility or restricting participation.

In conversation with the current ESM

The framework is proposed in light of the literature review of the following ESM key features: autonomy, the pyramid structure, open competition, and voluntarism.

Autonomy

As part of sporting autonomy, SGBs have been noted for being responsible for sport rules, such as 'laws of the game'. If a given participant is practicing a sport by the rules outlined by a SGB, there is logic that at least one of the functions of the SGB may be relevant to that participant. As this inquiry is not able to be reflected in the discussions about organisation, settings and resources interrogated in Part I of the framework, Part II's proxy measures therefore sought to integrate this possibility and its relevance to participants.

Pyramid

The measures in the second category of questions sought to measure the concept that a SGB sets relevant rules and regulations for its respective sport, and participants who participate in this sport are thereby falling within the SGB's governing reach or structure.

Open competition

Open competition has been understood as having access to more successive competitive levels within the pyramid structure. The proxy measures in the first category of questions sought to measure this ESM key feature of ‘open competition’ as the literature review’s alternative explanation as participation without restrictions based on eligibility or other rules or guidelines. This concept captures that participants outside of the sport federation structure also seek out competitive levels and competitions. These competitions may or may not be executed by SGBs, but they nonetheless may play a role in individual participants’ motivations in their sporting activity. The proxy measures in the third category of questions sought to measure this.

Voluntarism

Although voluntarism has evolved to imply volunteers as a mechanism, voluntarism as a concept implies the right of freedom of association discussed earlier in this chapter. In this way, the ability of a survey participant to choose the relevance of a given measure to them or their chosen activity was intended to invoke autonomous choice to determine if certain organisational models, even when offered, were relevant.

A note on Values

Of the ESM’s six key features, the feature of ‘values’ is not represented in this proposed framework or in the proxy measures. As evidenced by the literature review, ‘values’ remain an abstract concept in the ESM. This is not an exclusive challenge in discussions of the ESM, but in broader policymaking concerning other society-facing topics.

METHODOLOGY

Research task no.15 sought to externally validate this theoretical framework through a pilot survey with two primary tests:

- Part I: Profiles for individual activities – this test assessed whether any singular sporting activity could be captured with one of the twelve profiles showcased in **Figure 13**’s RESM.
- Part II: Relevance of organisational models of sport – this test assessed whether the proxy measures related to the relevance of organisational models of sport had any relationship with the level of organisation of the activity (‘autonomous’ or ‘organised’).

The in-person pilot survey was facilitated by two researchers at the Play the Game 2025 conference in Tampere, Finland, from 5 to 8 October. The survey high-top booth was placed in the main reception and lobby of the conference and was open at every coffee and lunch break, along with several conference sessions, throughout the four-day period.

This conference was chosen as the site for the pilot survey for several reasons (Vandenberg & Riquier, 2026). First, the researchers had access to this event and could organise the survey booth as Play the Game is a partner in the RESM research project. Second, conference attendees were anticipated to have a high literacy rate in sporting activity and governance given that Play the Game is an initiative within the Danish Institute for Sport Studies promoting democratic values in world sports with an emphasis on freedom of expression, transparency, and open dialogue. Third, conference attendees are adults over the age of eighteen, and therefore surveying participants with anonymous demographic information yielded very little risks. Given the attendees are adults, we hypothesised that this population would represent a variation from the majority demographic of organised sporting activity, which is typically associated with children and youth. Lastly, Play the Game's audience is not only pan-European, but global, and their experiences could potentially yield an understanding of the potential for the 'Brussels effect,' where European Union policy affects non-EU countries (Anderson, 2010; Bradford et al., 2021; Jeaneau, 2021).

Individuals were the target respondents, rather than organisations, as the first test sought to understand if individual sporting activities could be captured on the theoretical framework. Further, the concept was that the most basic common denominator and unit of understanding for this concept was an individual sporting activity, rather than an individual or an organisation. In this sense, individual sporting activities can be used in the aggregate to describe the portfolio of an individual's activities, of an organisation's activities (e.g., a club), and the activities of an organisation that boasts multiple organisations within their membership (e.g., the IOC).

Individual participants were asked to scan a QR code to access a digital version of the survey. The first two questions of the survey ensured the inclusion criteria of participation were met, which included participants self-identifying as being European and/or living in Europe. No definitions were provided for these two terms. Participants were then asked for basic demographic information, with identifying information like the name of their organisation being non-mandatory. Participants were then led through the survey questions in conversation with one researcher. The survey was designed based on the branching logic of two separate decision trees, and participants were guided using visualised copies of this branching logic for both Part I and Part II of the survey, as respectively shown in Appendices C and D. Participants clicked relevant answers on the digital survey as the conversation progressed and then submitted the digital survey at the end of the interaction. Please see Appendix E for a complete presentation of the digital survey questions.

The survey was administered in two consecutive parts. Part I of the survey sought to assess the organisational structures and resources used for a given sporting activity. Part II sought to measure how relevant the organisational models of sport may be to that given activity.

Part I: Profiles for individual activities

Part I of the survey related to the framework sought to assign profiles based on individuals' descriptions of a singular sporting activity that they do the most to stay active. Participants were then asked questions regarding

- The **organisation** of their sporting activity, whether it be self-organised or organised for them;
- The **setting** of their sporting activity, from which they could select multiple options from a list including their own setting; in a public space (e.g., on the street, in the forest, on the beach, etc.); in a designated public setting (e.g., in a park, at a community facility, at a school, etc.); a private setting (e.g., a commercial gym, private sports clubs, commercial studios, apartment complex facility, the office); or in an organisation-owned setting (e.g., a member-owned space); and
- The **resources** they use when they do the sporting activity, from which they could select multiple options from a list including their own resources; general public resources (e.g., sidewalk); dedicated public resources (e.g., street workout infrastructure, cycling lane, public track); private resources (e.g., equipment in a commercial gym, the office's resources); or organisation-provided resources (e.g., member-owned equipment).

A participant's sporting activity was then assigned a profile based on their responses. The multi-set Venn diagram effectively creates fifteen total profiles to comprehensively capture the entirety of the sporting landscape (Vandenberg & Riquier, 2026). Twelve of these profiles can be applied to individual sporting activities and organisations that support those sporting activities. Of the total 15 profiles possible from the framework, an individual sporting activity was assigned one of 12 possible profiles:

- **A** - Autonomous sporting activity that uses only the citizens' own resources and/or settings.
- **A-1** - Autonomous sporting activity that uses 1) designated public resources and/or settings.
- **A-2** - Autonomous sporting activity that uses 2) private resources and/or settings.
- **A-1-2** - Autonomous sporting activity that uses 1) designated public AND 2) private resources and/or settings.
- **3** – Sporting activities that are organised by a civil society organisation and use only the CSO's own resources and/or settings to deliver sporting activities (e.g., member-funded

with household contributions only).

- **1-3** - Sporting activities that are organised by a civil society organisation and use 3) the CSO's resources and/or settings (e.g., member-funded with household contributions only) AND 1) designated public resources and/or settings to deliver sporting activities.
- **2-3** - Sporting activities that are organised by a civil society organisation and use 3) the CSO's resources and/or settings (e.g., member-funded with household contributions only) AND 2) private resources and/or settings to deliver sporting activities.
- **1-2-3** - Sporting activities that are organised by a civil society organisation and use 3) the CSO's resources and/or settings (e.g., member-funded with household contributions only) AND 1) designated public AND 2) private resources and/or settings to deliver sporting activities.
- **3i** - Sporting activities that are organised by a civil society organisation within the sport federation system and use 3i) resources and/or settings supported by members (e.g., household contributions) and/or the federation system (e.g., solidarity payments).
- **1-3i** - Sporting activities that are organised by a civil society organisation within the sport federation system and use 3i) resources and/or settings supported by members (e.g., household contributions) and/or the federation system (e.g., solidarity payments) AND 1) designated public resources and/or settings to deliver sporting activities.
- **2-3i** - Sporting activities that are organised by a civil society organisation within the sport federation system and use 3i) resources and/or settings supported by members (e.g., household contributions) and/or the federation system (e.g., solidarity payments) AND 2) private resources and/or settings to deliver sporting activities.
- **1-2-3i** - Sporting activities that are organised by a civil society organisation within the sport federation system and use 3i) resources and/or settings supported by members (e.g., household contributions) and/or the federation system (e.g., solidarity payments) AND 1) designated public resources AND 2) private resources and/or settings to deliver sporting activities.

The three profiles that are possible within the visualised framework in **Figure 13** but cannot be applied include the profiles of 1) the public sector; 2) the private sector; and 1 and 2, which are

encapsulated by hybrid organisations and public-private partnerships. These are not applied as, given they fall outside of civic life given they do not overlap with citizens' participation and organisation.

An important note regarding this approach is that individuals that participate in multiple sporting activities oftentimes advocated that the profile assigned was not representative of them as an individual. The researchers would clarify that these profiles were specific to an activity, and an individual may have multiple profiles based on multiple activities. Some individuals circumvented this by providing multiple sporting activities that seemed to them to be connected (e.g., all done at home or in a private gym).

Part II: Relevance of the organisational models of sport

Part II sought to test the relationship between the level of organisation and motivation through the relevance of the organisational models of sport to the described activity. The outlined questions used branching logic, which were used for in-person guided facilitation, are showcased in Appendix D. The hypothesis was that the organisational models of sport would be less relevant to self-organised sporting activities than to organised sporting activities. This test was developed based on the idea of individual motivations, where organised activities with higher relevance of organisational models of sport to the individual indicated the activity was more competitive in nature; while autonomous organisation and a lesser relevance of the organisational models of sport to the individual indicated the activity as being more recreational in nature.

Our second test thus concerned the relationship between motivations and level of organisation. Our pilot survey incorporated proxy measurements for the relevance of organisational models of sport, which incorporated the following six questions, in accordance with the description of the three categories above:

- I. The possibility to qualify for more successively competitive levels;
- II. The relevance of qualifying for more successively competitive levels;
- III. The provision of rules or guidelines for the sporting activity;
- IV. If those rules or guidelines were followed or enforced;
- V. The setting of rules or guidelines that restrict eligibility or exclude participation; and
- VI. If those rules or guidelines concerning eligibility were followed or enforced.

These proxy measures sought to understand, in the first instance, whether the level of organisation of the activity lent a standard, and, in the second instance, if this standard was of relevance to the survey participant. To measure these outcomes, each 'yes' reply to one of the six proxy measurements was assigned an unweighted value of 1, while 'no' replies were coded as an unweighted 0. The total number of points was then added at the end of the survey section to

determine an overall relevance of the organisational models of sport to the sporting activity, using the following possible six outcomes and associated labels:

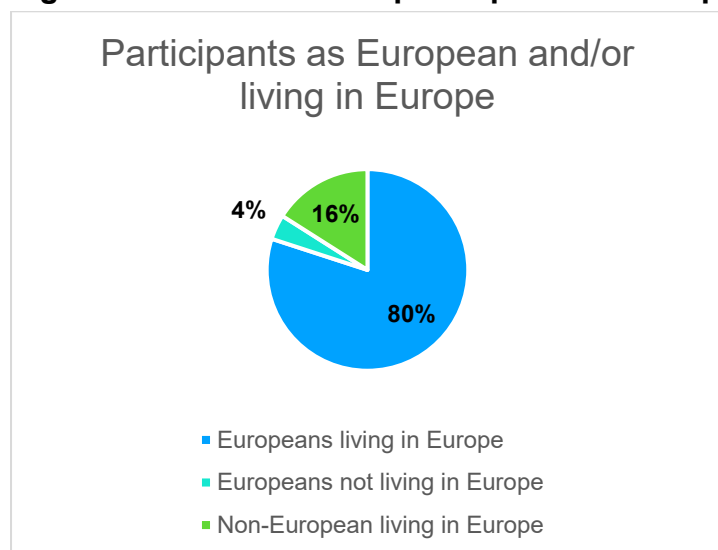
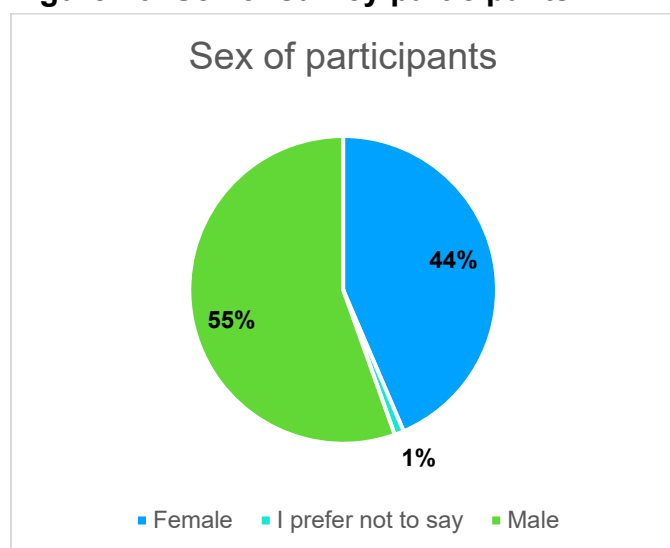
- 0 points - **None**; organisational models of sport are of no relevance to the sporting activity.
- 1 point - **Very low**; organisational models of sport are of very low relevance to the sporting activity.
- 2 points - **Low**; organisational models of sport are of low relevance to the sporting activity.
- 3 points - **Moderate**; organisational models of sport are of moderate relevance to the sporting activity.
- 4 points - **Considerate**; organisational models of sport are of considerate relevance to the sporting activity.
- 5 points - **High**; organisational models of sport are of high relevance to the sporting activity.
- 6 points - **Full**; organisational models of sport are fully relevant to the sporting activity.

One limitation to this approach is that points were aggregated in number and not based on which question(s) received points. Further, no weighting was involved, so each 'yes' answer was awarded one point and was not evaluated for its comparative representativeness of organisational models of sport.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS & ANALYSIS

The pilot survey was facilitated with 100 participants to verify the model (Vandenberg & Riquier, 2026). As shown in Appendix C, questions 1-6 provided basic demographic information. Please note this information is outlined as part of the preliminary results to underscore the diversity of participants interviewed, not the representativeness.

As shown in **Figure 15**, all participants self-identified as being European and/or living in Europe. As shown in **Figure 16**, participants included men, women, and non-binary persons. As showcased in **Figure 17**, participants were between the ages of 21 and 79 years old. However, as **Figure 18** reveals, these the ages were not evenly distributed across this range.

Figure 15: Breakdown of participants as European and/or living in Europe**Figure 16: Sex of survey participants²⁷**

²⁷ Please note that this research was advised by a participant to follow current best practices for future surveys as outlined in a blog post (Ruth, 2023), which would include using the question, “Which most accurately describe(s) you?” rather than asking for the biological sex of participants. It was further recommended to provide multiple selections from a list of options including “Man,” “Woman,” “Non-binary,” “I prefer not to say,” and providing participants the option to type a response.

Figure 17: Age range of survey participants

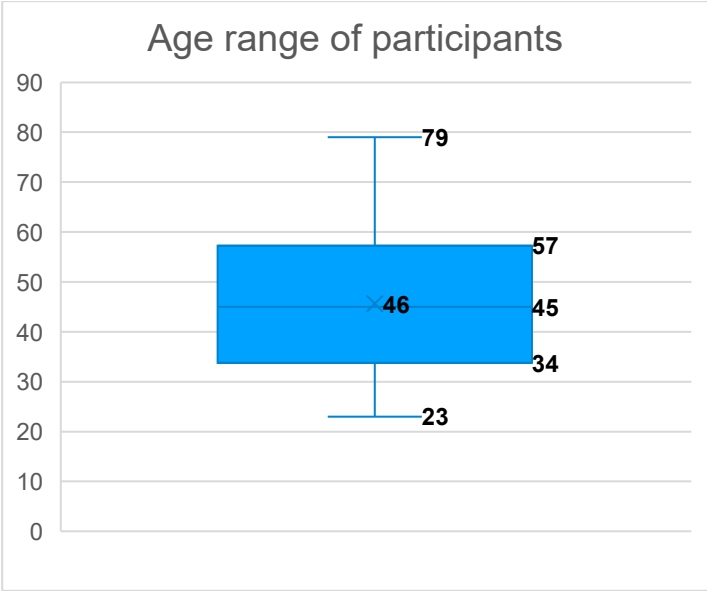
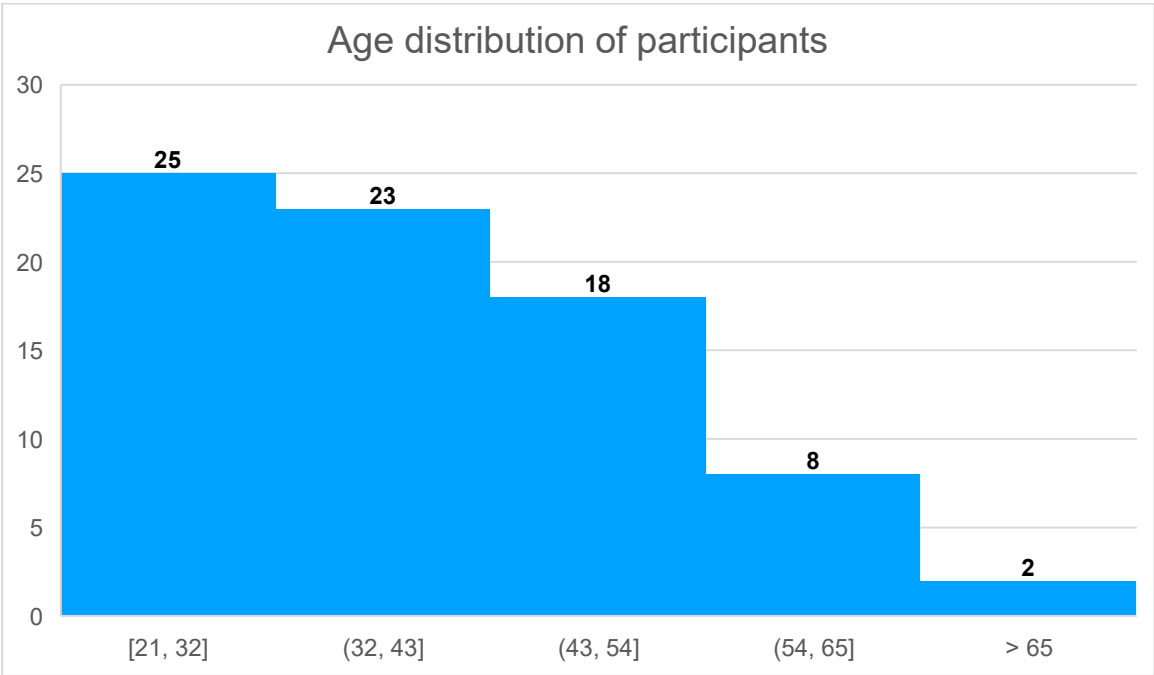


Figure 18: Age distribution of survey participants



Following the completion of questions 1-6, participants were provided with the spoken prompt, “What sporting activity do you do the most to stay active?” and the written information, “You may think of ‘sporting activity’ however you wish, but if you need some direction, here's how the WHO defines it: ‘Sport covers a range of activities performed within a set of rules and undertaken as part

of leisure or competition. Sporting activities involve physical activity carried out by teams or individuals and may be supported by an institutional framework, such as a sporting agency' (World Health Organization, 2020).

Following these spoken and written prompts, participants described the following unique sporting activities as the sporting activity they do the most to stay active. Please note that researchers clarified if a sporting activity that was provided was for the purposes of leisure and recreation, rather than for work or commuting. This included 42 unique activities, provided in no particular order:

- Functional strength / strength training
- Weightlifting
- Gym
- Home workout
- Fitness
- Playing with the kids
- Swimming
- Cycling / biking
- Mountain biking
- Adventure bike riding
- Dog walking
- Walking
- Jogging
- Running
- Marathons
- Hiking
- Football / soccer
- Futsal
- Stretching
- Yoga
- Floorball
- Snowboarding
- Surfing
- Beach volley
- Karate
- Judo
- Jiu Jitsu
- Horse riding / Dressage riding
- Kayaking
- Bouldering
- Medieval fencing
- Golf
- Triathlon
- Basketball
- Futsal
- Dance
- Tennis
- Ping pong / table tennis
- Padel tennis
- Squash
- Volleyball
- Cricket

The two major tests corresponded with the two sections of the survey.

Part I: Profiles for individual activities

Part I of the survey related to the framework and aimed to assign profiles based on individuals' description of a singular sporting activity that they do the most to stay active. The first test was whether any activity presented to the researchers could not be captured on the theoretical framework. This would represent a gap in the framework that would need to be considered before it can be claimed to reflect a comprehensive tool for any activity and/or organisation.

The results of the survey were that every sporting activity presented and described to the researchers could be understood by one of the 12 possible profiles outlined. The following results present an example per profile, based on the in-person facilitated survey (Vandenberg & Riquier, 2026):

- **A** - Autonomous sporting activity that uses only the citizens' own resources and/or settings. A common example included gardening in one's own backyard.
- **A-1** - Autonomous sporting activity that uses 1) designated public resources and/or settings. A common example included self-organised cycling in designated cycling lanes.
- **A-2** - Autonomous sporting activity that uses 2) private resources and/or settings. An example was self-organised exercise at home that relied on a paid mobile application to define the exercises.
- **A-1-2** - Autonomous sporting activity that uses 1) designated public AND 2) private resources and/or settings. An example included a triathlete who uses a public university's track and pays for a private gym membership to access a swimming pool.
- **3** – Sporting activities that are organised by a civil society organisation and use only the CSO's own resources and/or settings to deliver sporting activities (e.g., member-funded with household contributions only). An example included an employee at a civil society organisation who plays football as part of a work league, using facilities available through their employer.
- **1-3** - Sporting activities that are organised by a civil society organisation and use 3) the CSO's resources and/or settings (e.g., member-funded with household contributions only) AND 1) designated public resources and/or settings to deliver sporting activities. An example included a beach volleyball player who uses public volleyball courts as part of a

civil society organisation's volleyball league.

- **2-3** - Sporting activities that are organised by a civil society organisation and use 3) the CSO's resources and/or settings (e.g., member-funded with household contributions only) AND 2) private resources and/or settings to deliver sporting activities. An example includes an equestrian who is a member of a civil society organisation for horseback riding and rents time at a private boarding stable.
- **1-2-3** - Sporting activities that are organised by a civil society organisation and use 3) the CSO's resources and/or settings (e.g., member-funded with household contributions only) AND 1) designated public AND 2) private resources and/or settings to deliver sporting activities. None of the survey participants themselves fit this profile; however, the researchers were told of an example of a civil society organisation for children that organises play activities in public playgrounds using equipment financed by the private sector.
- **3i** - Sporting activities that are organised by a civil society organisation within the sport federation system and use 3i) resources and/or settings supported by members (e.g., household contributions) and/or the federation system (e.g., solidarity payments). An example includes a kayaker who is a member of the national federation of the International Canoe Federation but only kayaks in public rapids, which are public access and are not maintained for the purpose of kayaking and therefore do not meet the criteria for a designated public resource or setting (a '1' profile).
- **1-3i** - Sporting activities that are organised by a civil society organisation within the sport federation system and use 3i) resources and/or settings supported by members (e.g., household contributions) and/or the federation system (e.g., solidarity payments) AND 1) designated public resources and/or settings to deliver sporting activities. An example includes a football player who is a member of an organised football federation and plays on public football pitches.
- **2-3i** - Sporting activities that are organised by a civil society organisation within the sport federation system and use 3i) resources and/or settings supported by members (e.g., household contributions) and/or the federation system (e.g., solidarity payments) AND 2) private resources and/or settings to deliver sporting activities. An example includes a karateka who is a member of the World Karate Federation and trains at a private dojo.

- **1-2-3i** - Sporting activities that are organised by a civil society organisation within the sport federation system and use 3i) resources and/or settings supported by members (e.g., household contributions) and/or the federation system (e.g., solidarity payments) AND 1) designated public resources AND 2) private resources and/or settings to deliver sporting activities. One example includes a squash player who competes in their national federation for World Squash and utilises both public and private squash courts to practice.

Please note the survey results concern the main test of comprehensibility of the framework's application. Due to limitations in sample size (100 participants) and representativeness of the sampled population, the distribution of the participant responses against the assigned profiles is not incorporated into this report. Having now proven the comprehensiveness of the framework, there are two ways to implement this in future research: 1) public deployment of the survey for original data gathering; and 2) mapping existing participation data into the survey to generate results. These approaches could yield representative results about the distribution of the European population and its sporting activity across the possible profiles to inform policymaking and resource allocation.

Part II: Relevance of organisational models of sport

The second test conducted concerned the relationship between the proxy measurements and the level of organisation of the activity. Part II's hypothesis was organised activities, with higher relevance of organisational models of sport to the individual, indicating the activity was more competitive in nature; while autonomous organisation and a lesser relevance of the organisational models of sport to the individual indicated the activity as being more recreational in nature.

A quantitative approach was employed to understand if the results from Parts I and II of the survey had any relationship. The total unweighted score of a participants' replies across the six questions (questions no.13-18 of Appendix E) representing proxy measures were considered alongside the participants' replies to question no.8, "Do you organise this activity yourself?" in the forms of "Yes – I organise it myself" or "No – it is organised for me." The total responses to question 8 were distributed and coded as follows: 25 responses that answered "No, it is organised for me" were each assigned a code of '0'; and 75 responses that answered "Yes, I organise it myself" were each assigned a code of '1'.

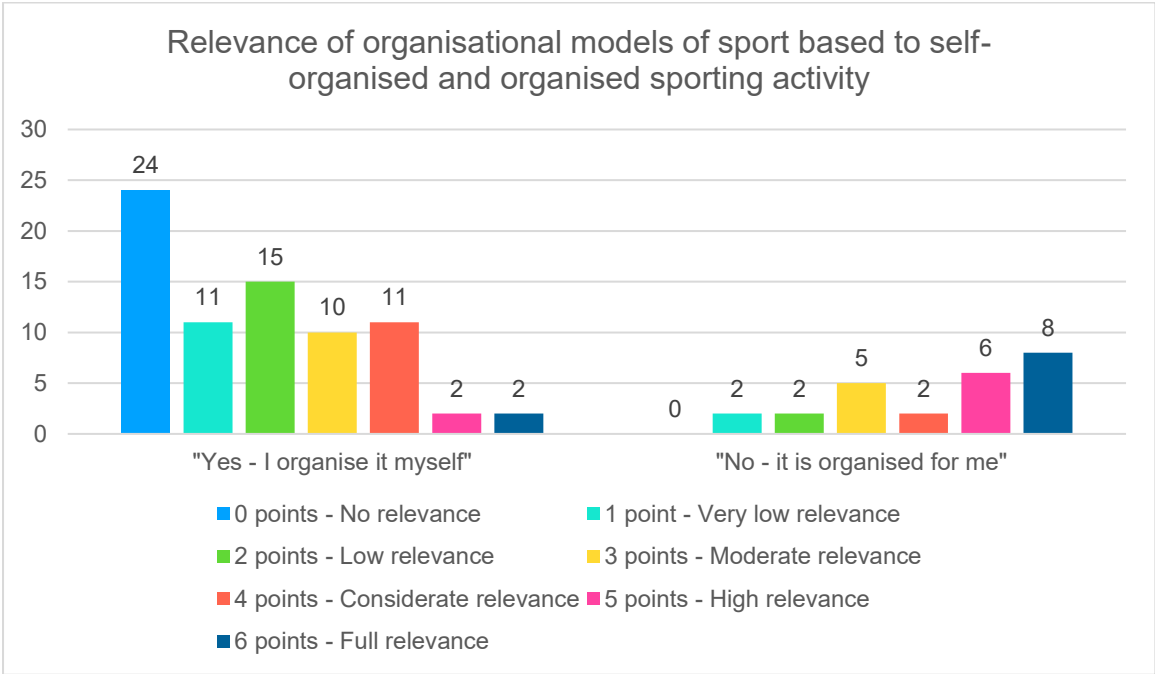
Across these responses, a one-tailed, two-sample unequal variance Welch t-test was conducted in Excel, resulting in $p < .001$.²⁸ This indicates a statistically significant relationship, with participants who organised their activity themselves ("Yes – I organise it myself" responses) reporting lower

²⁸ A one-tailed test was employed given the research's original hypothesis that the organisational models of sport would be less relevant to self-organised sporting activity.

relevance of organisational models compared to those whose activity was organised for them (“No – it is organised for me” responses). Despite this positive significance, it remains important to note that the average relevance of organisational models of sport for self-organised activities equals 1.8, or between “very low” and “low” relevance. This means reflects that while self-organised activities (“Yes – I organise it myself” responses) occur outside of traditional organised sport structures, the competitions, rules and regulations set by sport organisers may remain relevant to some degree. The standard deviation was 1.8. The average relevance of organisational models of sport for organised activities (“No – it is organised for me” responses) equals 4.3, or between “considerate” and “high” relevance. The standard deviation was 1.67. This positive relationship suggests our model is at least broadly aligned with individual motivations.

The overall distribution of responses is shown in **Figure 19**. This reveals several findings. First, the extremes of the point scale, most notably 0 points and 6 points, seem to align and be indicative of motivations. Activities to which organisational models of sport have no relevance (0 points) were always self-organised (24 responses of ‘autonomous’); while activities to which the organisational models of sport were more likely to be organised (8 responses of ‘organised’, 2 responses of ‘autonomous’). This confirms a version of the hypothesis, where organised activities with the highest relevance of organisational models of sport to the individual indicated the activity was more competitive in nature, while autonomous organisation and a lesser relevance of the organisational models of sport to the individual indicated the activity as being more recreational in nature. However, respondents across self-organised and organised activity nonetheless had varying degrees of relevance of the organisational models of sport.

Figure 19: Distribution of activity organisation and relevance of organisational models of sport



This distribution supports qualitative reflections of the researchers who conducted the in-person facilitation, which included that Part II of the survey was experienced and responded to entirely differently from Part I of the survey. While Part I measured organisation, resources and settings, Part II measured the application of ‘sport’ through a different lens. Future research on participation is therefore recommended to consider measuring not only the tangible elements of sporting activity but also to incorporate the individual approach to the activity. This data speaks to how aligned that sporting activity is with formal sport structures and governance, along with individual motivations. Future research could also consider establishing and applying weighting to the proxy measures to reflect strength of its indication relevant to organisational models of sport.

Another important consideration for future participation data gathering is the nuance within each individual’s approach to their sporting activities. It was very common during the facilitation for the researchers to have to ask follow-up or clarifying questions about the individual’s activity, its organisation, its settings or its resources. Individuals may not know how the organisations to which they affiliate are funded, organised, or otherwise managed. The strength of this survey is it did not ask individuals for specific information about the resources and settings they use while participating in their sporting activity.

Ultimately, this positive relationship can only affirm that the Relational European Sporting Map reflects potential motivations. This is not a substitute for explicitly capturing motivations, and other

models that do so may be required to fully reflect participation in sporting activity. Future research should establish if the preliminary result that sporting activities are self-organised (75 responses) more than they are organised by organisations (25 responses) holds true in representative surveys. Research could explore why this has happened, particularly given that the literature review and policy documents about the ESM seem resolute in the idea that sport club structures are critical for individual sporting activity.

CONCLUSION

The proposed framework, the Relational European Sporting Map, seeks to contribute to the conceptualisation of the European Sport Model by offering a different approach from those proposed by other models (Vandenberg & Riquier, 2026). The overlap between civic life and sectoral contributions can be utilised to shift the conversation from one about individuals and organisations to the underlying common denominator: sporting activity.

The validation of the framework through an in-person survey, facilitated with 100 participants, found that the RESM can map any activity, accounting for nuance in how these activities are organised and what supports participation at both individual and organisational levels. The second part of the survey, by using proxy measures for the relevance of organisational models to a given sporting activity, is a first step towards a new understanding of how motivations can be reflected in organisation and participation. The second test concerning individual motivations yielded a positive relationship between the defined proxy measures and the level of organisation; however, this positive relationship can only affirm that our model could be said to reflect potential motivations.

The proposal and testing of this new framework aim to guide conversations and provide organisations with tools to map themselves and self-advocate. Future research concerns adding detail and examples to bring this framework to life across the twelve profiles relevant to sporting activity to create an organisational mapping tool.

CHAPTER 4

Financial flows

Research tasks no.1 through 15 present two important developments that warrant a deeper investigation into the financial flows of European sport.

The first development is that research tasks no.1 through 13 underline the critical positioning of both the concept of solidarity and the mechanism of financial redistribution to the current European Sport Model. This reveals several contradictory assertions regarding the financing of sport in Europe. The exploration of the key feature of solidarity in Chapter 1 reveals that the abstract notion of unity is restricted within sport disciplines and is associated with financial redistribution mechanisms, where commercially successful, professional and elite sports are purported to share revenues with lower levels of the pyramid. The summary of the literature review, as shown in **Table 6** of Chapter 2, identifies solidarity as a critical mechanism underpinning the intertwined key ESM features of solidarity, the pyramid, and open competition. Solidarity also proves such a critical argument to the ESM that it was a “justifying rationale” for the European Commission in granting an exception to antitrust restrictions on competitions (de Witte & Zgliniski, 2022, p. 302).

These notions of solidarity, while incredibly important in justifying the role of SGBs in the sport federation system’s pyramid structure, have not been universally adopted and valued by all stakeholders. From critiques of the efficacy of the ‘trickle-down’ effect of financial redistribution of revenues (European Commission, Directorate-General X, 1998b, p. 9), to the proposition that bottom-up revenues to sport governing bodies are actually greater than their trickle-down contributions (Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 295), it is clear that solidarity requires further study and understanding to justify its claims.

The policy analysis and literature review identified that both policymakers and scholars recognise a much broader landscape of financing of sport in Europe, where solidarity payments within the sport federation system only constitute one indirect contribution – among many others – to grassroots sport. The 2011 report, “Study on the Funding of Grassroots Sports in the EU: With a Focus on the Internal Market Aspects Concerning Legislative Frameworks and Systems of Financing,” is utilised as a comprehensive overview of the financing of grassroots sport in Europe (Gouguet et al., 2011). Although the figures presented are fifteen years out of date, the characterisations and categorisations of funding sources are assumed to prevail today, particularly given that these same understandings continue to be shared. For example, the most recent report on the European Sport Model from July 2025 sets a precedent in European bodies’ understanding

of the funding of grassroots sport, stating, “the majority of grassroots sports revenue is based on citizens’ own payments, unpaid work by volunteers, support from local businesses and subsidies from municipalities” (Zdrojewski, 2025). This reflects some of the earliest critiques in 1998 (European Commission, Directorate-General X, 1998b, p. 9), suggesting that the trickle-down effect of solidarity payments has been ineffective in reaching the lowest levels of the pyramid system as claimed for nearly thirty years.

This research’s compilation of the above understandings and contradictions would remain a descriptive exercise if it did not introduce a new framework for analysis. The second important development thus concerns the new RESM framework outlined through research tasks no.14 and 15. Applying the framework as a lens to understanding solidarity as a concept and financial redistribution as a mechanism not only supports the applicability of the framework itself but also advances an understanding of potential measurements for financial flows.

METHODOLOGY

These three observations led this research to consider the financial flows of contributions to sport in Europe to 1) evidence the landscape through case studies; and 2) assess solidarity as a contributor within this landscape, including how any potential limitations and conditions may justify or discredit its centrality in the ESM.

To accomplish this, two additional research tasks were undertaken:

- (16) Generate case studies about organisations that are deemed representative of flows of contributions based on activity profiles from the framework created and validated in tasks no.14 and 15, and based on the recommendations of research partners; and
- (17) Compile data on international and national sport governing bodies’ reporting on revenues and financial redistribution, including to the grassroots level.

(16) Organisational case studies

Case studies were explored and requested from partners to illustrate “typical cases,” or cases with a high degree of representativeness (Gerring, 2009) in referencing the twelve activity profiles presented by the RESM. Although cases presented in this study were requested to be representative, their representativeness was not assessed and cannot be definitively claimed. They should be approached as illustrative examples.

“Typical” cases were understood to represent how sporting activity outside of civil society organisations is funded and positioned, with the following four profiles related to

autonomous activities underscoring how other sectors and organisations facilitate (but do not organise) sporting activity:

- **A** - Autonomous sporting activity that uses only the citizens' own resources and/or settings.
- **A-1** - Autonomous sporting activity that uses 1) designated public resources and/or settings.
- **A-2** - Autonomous sporting activity that uses 2) private resources and/or settings.
- **A-1-2** - Autonomous sporting activity that uses 1) designated public AND 2) private resources and/or settings.

“Typical” cases were also identified as being representative of the financial flows of organisations that organise sporting activities fitting one of the following eight profiles:

- **3** – Sporting activities that are organised by a civil society organisation and use only the CSO's own resources and/or settings to deliver sporting activities (e.g., member-funded with household contributions only).
- **1-3** - Sporting activities that are organised by a civil society organisation and use 3) the CSO's resources and/or settings (e.g., member-funded with household contributions only) AND 1) designated public resources and/or settings to deliver sporting activities.
- **2-3** - Sporting activities that are organised by a civil society organisation and use 3) the CSO's resources and/or settings (e.g., member-funded with household contributions only) AND 2) private resources and/or settings to deliver sporting activities.
- **1-2-3** - Sporting activities that are organised by a civil society organisation and use 3) the CSO's resources and/or settings (e.g., member-funded with household contributions only) AND 1) designated public AND 2) private resources and/or settings to deliver sporting activities.
- **3i** - Sporting activities that are organised by a civil society organisation within the sport federation system and use 3i) resources and/or settings supported by members (e.g., household contributions) and/or the federation system (e.g., solidarity payments).
- **1-3i** - Sporting activities that are organised by a civil society organisation within the sport federation system and use 3i) resources and/or settings supported by members (e.g., household contributions) and/or the federation system (e.g., solidarity payments) AND 1) designated public resources and/or settings to deliver sporting activities.
- **2-3i** - Sporting activities that are organised by a civil society organisation within the sport federation system and use 3i) resources and/or settings supported by members (e.g., household contributions) and/or the federation system (e.g., solidarity payments) AND 2) private resources and/or settings to deliver sporting activities.
- **1-2-3i** - Sporting activities that are organised by a civil society organisation within the sport federation system and use 3i) resources and/or settings supported by members (e.g.,

household contributions) and/or the federation system (e.g., solidarity payments) AND 1) designated public resources AND 2) private resources and/or settings to deliver sporting activities.

Lastly, given this research's observations about financial redistribution through solidarity payments, "typical" cases were also identified as focusing on profiles of activities within the sport federation system (the four '3i' profiles: 3i, 1-3i, 2-3i, and 1-2-3i) to understand success stories and challenges and/or failures of solidarity payments (financial redistribution). In line with the understanding of the bi-directional flows within the pyramid structure (Vandenberg & Riquier, 2026), two flows were further distinguished:

- 1) Solidarity payments from the federation system to civil society organisations, otherwise demonstrating the "trickle down" effect of funds from the top-down; and
- 2) Other flows in the federation system, including from civil society organisations to the federation system, demonstrating a bottom-up flow of funds.

These two flows were justified from understandings hailing from Gouguet et al. (2011). For top-down flows, this understanding included that "revenue from media rights allocated to grassroots sport represents € 0.5 bn (0.7% of the total)" (Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 287). "The estimate used in this study is a share of 15% of total revenue from sponsorship to grassroots sport in the EU, i.e. €1.6 bn annually. This is the total revenue channelled to grassroots sport, excluding revenue from the compulsory levies on lotteries, betting and gambling operators that are not channelled to sport via the state or local authorities' budgets, and media rights' revenue allocated to grassroots clubs through regulated solidarity mechanisms (in Italy and France)" (Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 55). For bottom-up flows, the understanding included

"It therefore appears that payments from the grassroots clubs to their federations (13% of their budget) account for a lot more than the revenue going from the federations to the clubs (which represent 2% of the grassroots clubs' revenue). The difference represents the payment by the clubs of services provided to them by the federations, and in some cases insurance payments for the members: on average, at EU level, the solidarity mechanisms channelling resources from media rights, sport betting and even national governments to the grassroots clubs via the sport federation do not fully fund the services provided by the federations to their member clubs" (Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 295).

Several resources were produced to guide the collection of case studies from research partners and other organisations. Interviews were conducted by partner organisations, as cited in Annex B. Please see Appendix F for the guiding criteria, along with Appendix G for a defined template for

case study interviews and data gathering. As shown in Appendices F and G, the guiding criteria were broken into three categories. The first concerned a 1) broad overview of the organisation, including

- The name of the organisation;
- The country where the organisation operates;
- A short description of the organisation, which can include a broader scope of their activities or a description of the activities offered by the organisation that are of specific relevance to the case study “(e.g., you do not need to describe and list every activity offered by the organisation, and any broad activities and their profiles can be indicated in C) the short description above).”

The second concerned 2) activities organised by the organisation, including

- A description of the activity;
- The percentage that the given activity constitutes of the organisation’s total activities;
- The percentage that the given activity’s budget constitutes of the total organisational budget;
- The profile of the given activity, drawing from the twelve options developed through the RESM framework in Chapter 3 (A, A-1, A-2, A-1-2, 3, 1-3, 1-2, 1-2-3, 3i, 1-3i, 2-3i, 1-2-3i), along with the relevance of organisational models, where relevant; and
- The justification for the activity profile chosen.

The third concerned 3) a financial overview of the organisation, including funding, resources, and settings, encapsulated by the following:

- A description of the contributor or source of the contribution;
- The profile of the contributor or source of the contribution, using the sectors determined through the Relational European Sporting Map framework in Chapter 3, including 1) Public, 2) Private, 3) CSO and 3i) sport federation system;
- A description of the contribution, including if it is a donation, a grant, a sponsorship, a solidarity payment, a revenue-generating activity from the organisation itself (i.e., registration fees from competitions, membership fees, renting out spaces, other household contributions);
- An indication if the contribution is a direct or indirect contribution, where direct is distinguished as “money” and indirect as “resources and settings,” in alignment with the idea that “direct support involves the subsidisation of certain activities or projects, the financing of infrastructure and equipment, and making available human resources, among others. More indirect forms of support include making facilities available to the clubs below market price, sometimes even free of charge” (Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 26); and

- The percentage that the given contribution constitutes of the organisation's total budget.

This template was used to guide questions and data, but may not have been pursued in its entirety based on the nature of the organisation being interviewed. Further, any completed templates are not included in this research, as the findings for any organisation are written out into case studies.

Case studies were also intended to describe a wide scope of activities from the RESM profiles, along with a diversity in geography. The fourteen cases that are presented cover the twelve activity profiles of the RESM. Cases hail from Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, the Isle of Man, and Slovenia. Locations outside of the European Union were not excluded from this scope based on the idea of the 'Brussels effect', where EU policy influences non-EU countries (Anderson, 2010; Bradford et al., 2021; Jeauneau, 2021).

(17) Compiled data

Research partners were requested to provide the following information to facilitate an analysis of financial flows, particularly to the goal of calculating a per-participant contribution from the national sport federation to grassroots participants in the top five biggest commercial sports in each partner country. To do so, the following four data points were requested for each of the five biggest commercial sports in a given country:

1. The name of the country;
2. The list of the top five most commercial sports in your country;
3. A copy of the most recent annual report from the national sport federation responsible for the sport that indicates the amount of funding that reaches the grassroots level of that sport, indicating the amount and currency of the contribution; and
4. The most recent participation data available for the number of participants in the grassroots level of that sport in the country.

Research partners succeeded in providing data to this effect for two countries: Denmark and France. The results of this data gathering exercise are not presented comparatively, given that not all commercial sports were able to be analysed due to limited reporting from certain federations. Further, the data received from various sources is compiled from different years, depending on the year of the data available.

The result of this exercise yielded the following two approaches:

- A. For Denmark, the sports of football, handball, cycling, volleyball and badminton were selected based on the availability of transparent data from public-facing reports from the respective national federation responsible for that discipline. While the exercise sought to

understand the per-participant contribution from the national sport federation to grassroots participants and did not originally distinguish the source of that top-down contribution, in-depth research and compiling of figures from various sources (as shown in Appendix H) was able to yield a more segmented breakdown of the contributions from Danish national federations to their respective grassroots levels, distinguishing between funds from public sources (a '1' profile) and from solidarity payments within the sport federation system (a '3i' profile).

- B. For France, data across the top five commercial sports of football, tennis, basketball, handball and rugby was found. However, figures received from the two research partners conducting this task differed. While the figures discovered did yield the requisite four data points requested to estimate a per-participant contribution from the national sport federation to grassroots participants, further data regarding the sources of those contributions (e.g., distinguishing between public or solidarity payments within the sport federation system, as in the Danish examples) was unavailable due to the intransparency of data across French sport federations, which has been noted at the national level (French National Assembly, 2023). In addition, it was difficult to reconcile some of the differences between the two partners' findings, as official, detailed and standardised public sources were not always available for verification.

It is recognised that these two cases both hail from strong, liberal, democratic governance systems and are not widely representative of other governance structures and welfare systems across Europe. Our findings could be more reflective of contexts where financing to sport would be anticipated to be transparent and functioning well. Other contexts with less transparent data and functioning welfare systems, along with systems with greater market orientation, would be expected to yield different results.

RESULTS

This chapter is structured to align with the framework proposed and validated in Chapter 3, the Relational European Sporting Map, and its intervention of sectoral contributions through both direct and indirect resources and settings. It therefore includes the A) Autonomous contributions from households, along with the three sectors: 1) Public, 2) Private, and 3) CSOs. However, presentation of the contributions of these sectors in numerical order was found to be misleading, and it was decided to explore the case studies in order from most to least contributions to grassroots sport, in line with Gouguet et al.'s (2011) order: "household contributions; local authorities, through direct contributions like subsidies and indirect contributions like providing free or low-cost use of equipment and/or public facilities; national governments, including through funds from betting and lotteries, along with grants and other sources; sponsors, through contracts

with sport; and solidarity payments, in the form of redistributed profits from centralised broadcasting rights” (Vandenberg & Riquier, 2026). The chapter is thus structured as first presenting A) Autonomous and then 3) CSOs to provide an understanding of the contributions of civic society, followed by sectors demarcated as 1) Public and 2) Private.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF CIVIC SOCIETY

The contributions from civic society, characterised as contributions from ‘A) Autonomous’ and ‘3) CSOs’ profiles, are grouped to illustrate the impact of household contributions in the organisation of and participation in sporting activity across the range of profiles in the Relational European Sporting Map. This section only considers two of the twelve profiles from the Relational European Sporting Map: an ‘A’ and a ‘3’ profile.

A) Autonomous

First, we recognise that ‘A) Autonomous’ profiles (A, A-1, A-2, A-1-2) still contribute to their own participation in sporting activities, and these profiles constitute “about two-thirds of those who practice a sport regularly” (Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 37). These “other forms of sport practice... beyond the organised sport movement” include an activity where an individual participates in the following ways:

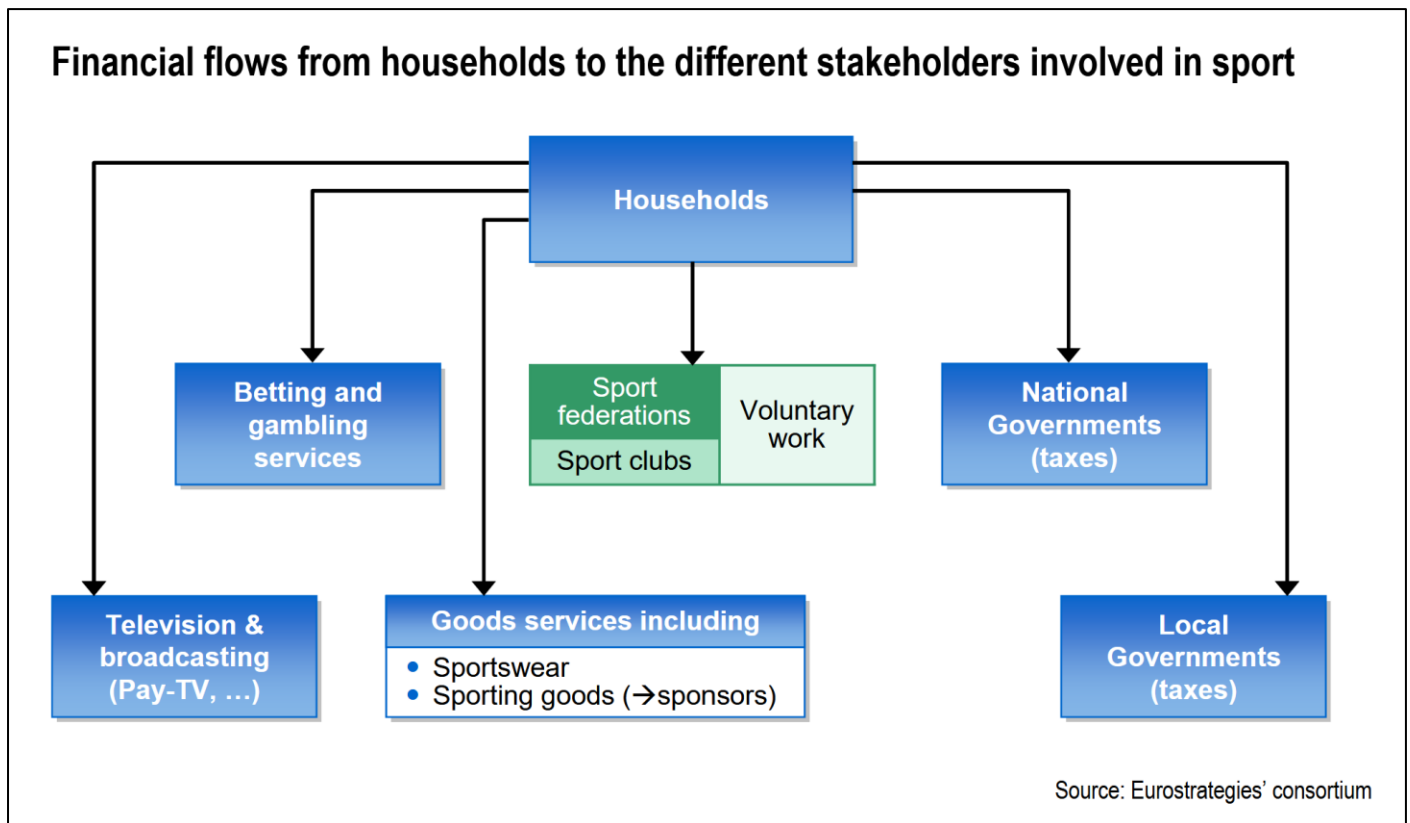
- **A** profile: “On their own, at home” (Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 23), which is an ‘A’ profile;
- **A-1** profile: “In public surroundings (for example, jogging or cycling)” (Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 23), which we again assign as an A profile for public access resources and settings and as an ‘A-1’ profile for designated public resources and settings; and
- **A-2** profile: Through “joining another type of organisation – i.e. outside the organized sport movement, for example a commercial fitness club” (Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 23). These organisations operate as commercial organisations whose funding model resembles that of any commercial company: their revenue primarily comes from their members, who pay the services that they buy and whose fees also have to cover all the equipment, training and facilities’ costs,” which we assign an ‘A-2’ profile.
- **A-1-2** profile: Through a combination of ‘1’ public designated and ‘2’ private resources and settings.

Given the sections covering 1) Public and 2) Private contributions will cover the three profiles of A-1, A-2 and A-1-2, this section for civic society contributions only focuses on an ‘A’ profile.

As outlined in the observations introducing this chapter, household contributions are routinely recognised for their importance to grassroots sport and sport generally (Gouguet et al., 2011; Zdrojewski, 2025). As visualised in **Figure 20**, the prevalence of household contributions

underpins nearly all other sources of contributions that support the organisation of and participation in sport.

Figure 20: “Financial flows from households to the different stakeholders involved in sport” (Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 48)



These include but are not limited to

- Television and broadcasting, which we will explore as the source of solidarity payments;
- Betting and gambling services, which we will explore as the source for public grants and redistribution;
- Goods services including sportswear and sporting goods;
- Sport federations and sport clubs, which will be captured under the discussion of ‘3’ profiles and the last of which constitutes an indirect contribution; and
- Taxes to national governments and local governments, which we will explore as the source for direct and indirect contributions.

Household contributions are estimated to total 101 billion EUR in 2008, with 30-34% of that contribution being “allocated to the payment of services to ‘actively’ practice sport: sport lessons,

membership fees, sport lessons, admission to swimming pools, purchase of sport equipment, etc.” (Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 50).

The remaining 66-70% of household expenditures on sport “are associated with the purchase of sporting goods, equipment and sportswear (which account for roughly half of consumers’ total expenditures on sport), the purchase of tickets to attend high-level and professional games, expenditures on TV sport channels, sport betting, etc.” (Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 287). Of this 66-70%, around 6-10% is anticipated to go to sports clubs, as “members can buy some of their equipment and sportswear (in the first category above) directly from the clubs” (Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 50). This means that “it can reasonably be assumed that 40% of total household expenditures on sport are allocated to grassroots sport,” with 30-34% paying for services to “actively” practice sport and 6-10% paying for equipment and sportswear.

Sports Club Sentvid Ljubljana – Slovenia

Sports Club Sentvid Ljubljana²⁹ is a non-profit sports club in Ljubljana, Slovenia borne out of the ‘sokol’ sports associations created to combine national values with basic physical activity and gymnastics (Play the Game, personal communication, October 30, 2025c). Today, Sports Club Sentvid Ljubljana offers a combination of facilities for autonomous activity, organised recreational activities, and organised sports in the federation system through competitive leagues and activities.

Sports Club Sentvid Ljubljana offers a diverse range of activities across several RESM profiles. 55-60% of members partake in sports in the sport federation system (a ‘3i’ profile), including competitive leagues and activities in basketball. This uses 100,000-140,000 EUR of the budget. The organisational models of sport are of full relevance to the activities within this sphere.

The other 40-45% of members are involved in a range of recreational activities, which account for 15,000 EUR of the budget, including membership-based access to organised recreational activities like organised activities for older people and futsal, along with reduced rental fees of facilities for autonomous activities, including tennis and basketball courts (a ‘3’ profile). Non-members can also access Sports Club Sentvid Ljubljana’s outdoor sport park and fitness centre, which are open to the public and facilitate autonomous activity (an ‘A’ profile).

The club’s finances similarly reflect a blend of direct and indirect contributions. Direct revenue-generating activities (a ‘3’ profile) include renting out tennis, basketball and beach volleyball courts, as well as leasing the clubhouse bar to an external operator. The club charges two types of

²⁹ For more information, visit <https://sd-sentvid-ljubljana.si/>.

membership fees: a taxed monthly fee for competitive sports and a tax-exempt annual membership for recreational participation. Public funding (a '1' profile) plays a significant role, including municipal calls for funding related to coaching salaries and facility usage for competitive teams and organised exercised programmes for older people. Additionally, the Sports Union of Slovenia, to which the club pays an annual membership fee, applies for national funding from the Ministry of Sport and the Foundation of Sport (which distributes the share of profit from the national lottery system) on behalf of member clubs and then redistributes funds to clubs running eligible projects (a '1-3i' profile).

Indirect contributions include free access to gym space for socially vulnerable and elderly groups and allocated hours in municipal facilities such as primary school gyms ('1' profiles). Aside from a small number of paid coaches, trainers and cleaning and maintenance staff, club activities are supported by volunteers (a '3' profile).

In terms of how the activities are funded, the relevance of the financial contributions differs between the membership-based activities of competitive sports ('3i' profiles) and recreational activities ('A' and '3' profiles). For competitive sports activities ('3i' profiles), in order from highest to lowest relevance:

- I. Funds from municipalities
- II. Monthly training fees for the club
- III. Other revenue-generating activities

For recreational activities ('A' and '3' profiles), in order from highest to lowest relevance:

- I. Other revenue-generating activities
- II. Funds from municipalities (for facility usage only)
- III. Annual membership fees for the club
- IV. Funding received through the Sports Union of Slovenia

In this way, Sports Club Sentvid Ljubljana activities fall under the following RESM profiles:

- A: Sports Club Sentvid Ljubljana's outdoor sport park and fitness center are open to the public and facilitate autonomous activity (A) without requiring membership or enrollment in the club.
- A-1: Adults and elderly members have access to facilities and can rent or use spaces for autonomous activity (A), an activity that directly benefits from indirect public contributions in the form of free usage of gym facilities through the municipality (1);
- 1-3: Members have access to organised recreational activities like futsal and basketball (3), which are supported by funding from municipal sources (for facility usage only, and

not for all groups) and the Sports Union of Slovenia, which apply for national funds on behalf of the sports club (1); and

- 1-3i: Competitive basketball falls within the sport federation system (3i) and draws from the direct public contributions made by municipal sources (1).

3 – Civil society organisations (CSOs)

This section for civic society contributions only focuses on a '3' profile. Applying the same logic developed regarding all 'A' profiles, activities with a '3' profile (1-3, 2-3, 1-2-3) that leverage 1) Public and 2) Private contributions are covered in the sections on these sectors.

In comparison to the “two thirds of those who practice a sport regularly” (Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 37), members who participate through CSOs are “estimated at 76 million across the EU-27. This represents 16% of the population” (Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 295). As the organisers of sporting activity, CSOs do not constitute contributors of direct or indirect provisions as much as they are service providers. As such, CSOs are not included as a sector in this financial analysis, but rather a recipient of contributions. Sources that contribute to activities with a '3' profile and therefore do not overlap with the public and private sectors are limited to self-generated revenue streams, like household contributions through membership fees; the “economic value of the contribution of voluntary work” (Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 46); and other income.

Vedbæk Vikingelaug – Denmark

Vedbæk Vikingelaug (hereinafter “VVL”) is an all-year outdoor swimming association located in Denmark (ISCA, 2025b). Established in 1975 as a year-round ‘sea swimming’ association, it operates as a volunteer-driven, non-profit CSO. Today, it has approximately 1,500 members. VVL’s governance follows a democratic civil society model, with an elected board supported by roughly 75 regular volunteers who contribute to leadership, events and daily operations. All VVL’s activities are recreational and social in nature, primarily based around year-round sea swimming and sauna culture. There are no competitive activities.

VVL’s finances feature 125,000 EUR annual turnover. Over 95% is self-generated income from membership fees (a '3' profile). The club house is owned by the municipality, and an indirect contribution from the public sector (a '1' profile) includes a relatively low rental fee of the clubhouse and maintenance fees, paid from VVL to the municipality. The municipality and foundations have also provided direct contributions by funding the construction of a bridge to enter the sea. As VVL is a member of the national Danish sport-for-all umbrella organisation, DGI, it also pays a membership fee of approximately 1,000 EUR annually to DGI.

3i – Sport federation system

The same logic of a '3' profile applies to a '3i' profile with no sectoral contributions. However, in this case, an additional source for '3i' profiles is the "indirect source" of redistribution and solidarity mechanisms (Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 10). In line with tracing household contributions as the origin of funding from other public and private sources, solidarity payments will therefore be discussed in the section of its source, which, in this case, is the private sector resource of television and other broadcasters (a '2' profile), which then are collected as revenues to the tertiary source of sporting governing bodies at the top of the pyramid, who contract centralised deals with these broadcasting partners. As described in Chapter 3, the trickle-down of these revenues is only conceived to be possible within the pyramid structure of the sport federation system (all '3i' profiles) and does not apply outside of the pyramid.

Another element applicable to '3i' profiles is bottom-up revenue streams as part of membership in the sport federation system, which includes that clubs pay membership fees to be part of the system, estimated to constitute 13% of grassroots clubs' budgets (Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 295).

Local sport association/federation – Slovenia

Each major city in Slovenia hosts a local sport association, which serves as an umbrella organisation for local sports clubs and acts as a representative of the local sporting community (Play the Game, personal communication, October 30, 2025a). These associations are typically members of the Slovenian National Olympic Committee (NOC) and of national sport federation associations (a '3i' profile) and are consulted on the basis of their representation of local sport communities. 60% of local sports clubs are members of their local sports association, with 68 members in total. While most clubs are affiliated with the International Olympic Committee framework (a '3i' profile), approximately 30% are non-affiliated (a '3' profile).

Local sport associations organise a range of activities with a focus on sport-for-all. Recreational programmes are designed to engage 'non-active' adults and elderly populations through free-of-charge functional training and other inclusive sport initiatives. Activities take place primarily in public facilities, including municipal gyms and school venues, which are either provided free of charge or rented at subsidised rates (a '1' profile). Associations also engage in programmes run by the NOC, which include company sport with local firms (a '2-3i' profile) and Mini Olympics for children (a '3i' profile).

Each local sport association's budget is approximately 120,000 EUR per year and is comprised of self-generated revenue in the form of membership fees, public funding, and national-level project funding. Membership fees from affiliated sport clubs average 40 EUR annually (a '3' profile).

Associations also pay 50 EUR annually to the Sports Union of Slovenia, which in turn applies on their behalf to national funding streams, including approximately 5,000 EUR received from the Ministry of Sport (a '1-3i' profile). Additional project-based funding includes direct applications to national foundations, which can amount to more than 30,000 EUR annually. Approximately 40% of the budget, or around 50,000 EUR, comes from direct public funding from municipalities or "local community" sources for their annual programming, and indirect support includes reduced rates for facility access from municipal tenders (a '1' profile). Targeted project funding from the NOC is around 10,000 EUR annually for the targeted initiatives described above (a '3i' profile). While the private sector only directly contributes 1% of total funding, indirect contributions include donated materials from private sponsors (a '2' profile).

Sokol – Czech Republic

Sokol units in the Czech Republic³⁰ have been around for over 160 years (Play the Game, personal communication, October 30, 2025e). Across 160,000 members, 50% are children under the age of eighteen years old. The organisations' offers focus on sport-for-all, with 70% of the activity portfolio constituting leisure-time activities, including games, swimming, gymnastics, athletics and yoga. Target groups for these offerings include persons with disabilities, parents and children (from two years old), children, adults and seniors. Sokol also has a sports department with clubs registered in the national federation system, including in the sports of fencing, basketball, floorball, athletics, volleyball and acrobatic gymnastics, which constitute 20% of their activities. Other social activities supported by the organisation include theatre groups and dancing (5%), and other activities (5%). Activities vary by location, with the largest variance occurring between urban and rural settings.

Self-generated income is the bulk of Sokol's budget (57%) and include units renting out their facilities (40%), annual membership fees (16%) and other revenue from goods sold (1%). Sokol units manage roughly 1,000 facilities, many of which consist of multiple buildings. Some of these buildings are owned directly by the Sokol units themselves, while others are held in partnership with municipalities, which are often reflected in the names of the units, such as "Sokol Prague." Building maintenance is costly, so ownership of some buildings has been transferred to municipalities to ensure adequate maintenance and long-term upkeep. Following the post-communist restitution process in 1991, many facilities were returned to Sokol units, re-establishing their organisational ownership. Nowadays, the trend is to keep buildings under the Sokol umbrella whenever possible, with municipalities stepping in primarily when funding or maintenance

³⁰ For more information, visit [Sokol.eu](https://sokol.eu).

challenges arise. Sokol facilities are thus rented out as office space, pools, playgrounds, etc. and generate a large percentage of Sokols' budgets.

Grants received constitute 41% of Sokol's budget. Public contributions (a '1' profile) include direct funding for the sport system for children under eighteen years old and project-based grants from municipalities, which include the payment of coaches for sport-for-all activities. Contributions from a mix of public and sport federation sources (a '1-3i' profile) include government funding that is distributed through the national sports agency and federations system. The Czech Olympic Committee also awards project-based grants through competitive applications, valued at approximately 10,000 EUR per year.

Donations and other contributions constitute 3% of the budget. Given the difficulties in securing private sector funding (a '2' profile), Sokol units are rarely funded by private sector contributors, which have a range of priorities and a diverse set of options, which makes it difficult for organisations to compete for these private funds.

1 – PUBLIC

Public contributions to sporting activity include both direct and indirect contributions. Public contributions include "the subsidisation of certain activities or projects, the financing of infrastructure and equipment, and making available human resources" (Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 26). Indirect contributions are exemplified through "making public facilities available free of charge or at a low cost to the sport clubs" or free of charge (Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 11). There are several types and functions of public subsidies:

"...a public subsidy is both necessary and justified in order to allow suppliers to adjust the level of offer to the social demand level or to induce consumers to raise their level of demand closer to the social demand level. The "subsidy" can take the form of monetary transfers (per member or lump sums: as we will see later, Denmark for example has instituted per member subsidies from the local authorities to the clubs). The 'increase in the level of supply' can also be obtained for example by providing 'in-kind' assistance to the clubs, such as the provision of infrastructure or facilities free of charge. All else being equal, this allows clubs to raise their level of supply, since this is an expenditure that they do not need to pay directly anymore. The subsidy can also take the form of reimbursements of all or part of the annual membership fee by a member's employer, or by a health insurance company. This reduces the fee paid by households, hence raising the demand level closer to the social level" (Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 31).

As is well-evidenced by the results of this research's analysis of gaps in the policy and literature in Chapter 2, public contributions are spurred by the “positive externalities” associated with sporting activity (Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 24), like the construction of identity and culture; benefits to health and well-being from physical activity; and the integrative effects of sport, including but not limited to social cohesion, citizenship, and inclusion.

This section focuses on activity profiles of A-1, 1-3, and 1-3i. Activity profiles that feature both public and private contributions (A-1-2, 1-2-3, and 1-2-3i) are covered in the next section. Examples of activities with a ‘1’ profile that demonstrate the financial flows include cases that showcase

- A. Municipal contributions (‘1-3’ and ‘1-3i’ profiles), including the municipality of Turku in Finland and the Nice Athletics Club (NCAA) in France;
- B. Public grants, through Kinezis³¹ in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the University Sport Association of the region of Primorska in Slovenia; and
- C. Public redistribution of funds received from taxes related to the sport industry, including from betting and lotteries and taxes on broadcasting rights, through the example of the ‘Buffet tax’ in France.

Municipalities

Municipality of Turku – Finland

The municipality of Turku in southwestern Finland (population ~200,000) provides an insider view into ways municipalities can subsidise sporting activity for their residents (Play the Game, personal communication, November 14, 2025).

An overview of sport policy and structures emphasises the importance of local government and CSOs in delivering sporting activity in Finland (Bergsgard et al., 2019; Mikkonen et al., 2022). At a national level, policy is guided by the Ministry of Education and Culture and advised by the National Sports Council, an expert panel evaluating the impact of initiatives. Of the 700 million EUR in direct public contributions, national funds equal 150 million EUR, while municipalities contribute 550 million EUR. The 308 municipalities in Finland also own three-fourths of the sport facilities in the country and yield significant autonomy in the organisation of their sport and physical activity offerings for underserved populations. Local implementation relies heavily on CSOs, which are approximately 8,500 volunteer-based, local sport clubs. Household contributions account for 1 billion EUR annually to the grassroots level, and elite sport only accounts for 1% of public funding.

³¹ For more information, visit <https://kinezis.ba/en/projects/>.

Turku's citizen-centred approach focuses on children aged 7 to 19 years old. Across the 22,700 residents aged 7-19, approximately 12,500 were members of Turku-based sports clubs at the beginning of 2025. A survey conducted through Turku schools revealed that around 3,600 respondents would like to participate in sports activities but face barriers like high costs, limited time, long travel distances, or excessive competitiveness. Turku launched a new systematic reform through "Boostii," a subsidy programme, in 2025 to increase participation rates of 7- to 19-year-olds in recreational, non-competition-oriented sports. The programme is designed to make sure that every child or youth, regardless of their background, not only can participate, but can also discover an activity that truly suits them.

Boostii makes available an annual voucher of 160 EUR for children aged 7-11 and 260 EUR for youth aged 12-19. Any costs incurred above the value of the voucher are paid by households; however, the municipality has determined the voucher value based on sport participation fees for 1-2 sessions a week.

The voucher can be activated and allocated by registered residents and be used to pay seasonal fees for sports clubs or associations registered with the municipality through the Boostii platform. Additional support is available for low-income families, and participants are entitled to two free trial sessions before committing to a programme. To register as an eligible organisation for the Boostii benefit, local sports clubs are required to demonstrate a sport component (e.g., not art and culture); must demonstrate consistency, by offering instructed weekly activities lasting at least three months; and must meet standards for coaching qualifications and safeguarding set by the Finnish Olympic Committee. Activities supported by Boostii cover a broad spectrum, including football, futsal, swimming and water sports, parkour, martial arts, floorball, dance, ice hockey, gymnastics, athletics, team gymnastics and basketball ('3' and '3i' profiles).

By the end of October 2025, nearly 10,000 vouchers had been used of the 11,455 made available, totalling approximately two million EUR in payments. During the programme's first year – from the beginning of 2025 to the end of October 2025 – the total number of 7-19-year-old Turku residents who were members of Turku-based sports clubs grew from approximately 12,500 to nearly 14,000, roughly a 10% increase.

By 2030, the city aims to have 16,000 7-19-year-old Turku residents as members in sports clubs, an increase of 3,600 children and youth compared to the beginning of the programme in 2025. Additionally, by 2035, the city aims to increase youth participation in hobbies to over 50%, up from approximately 30% in 2025, reducing disparities across neighbourhoods and promoting lifelong engagement in physical activity.

NCAA Nice – France

The Nice Athletics Club (Nice Côte d’Azur Athlétisme, or NCAA) is a non-profit sports association (*association loi 1901*) promoting athletics in all forms across children, youth, adults, seniors and elite athletes (Azur Sport Santé, personal communication, November 2025). **Table 13** provides a detailed overview of the eight major activity categories offered by the NCAA, all of which have a ‘3i’ profile due to the NCAA’s affiliation with the French Athletics Federation, Adapted Sports Federation and French Parasport Federation (a ‘3i’ profile).

Table 13: Overview of activities offered by the Nice Athletics Club (NCAA)

Describe the activity	% of total activities	% of total budget	RESM profile	Reasoning for activity profile
Baby / Discovery Athletics / Poussins. Fun introduction to athletics, motor skills development, first internal competitions.	25%	15%	1-2-3i Low to moderate relevance of organisational models of sport	Educational foundation of the club, strong local demand, and historic mission.
Leisure Athletics (Nordic Walking, Fit’Athlé, Family Time Slot). Adult leisure activities: Nordic Walking (gentle endurance), Fit’Athlé (strength/running), intergenerational family session.	20%	14%	1-3i Moderate to considerate	Activity meets growing adult demand, social cohesion, and attractiveness.
Health Sport (Fit Senior). Senior wellness program: conditioning, Nordic walking, monitoring of physical abilities.	8%	5%	1-3i None to very low	The activity addresses local territorial health needs, the priority audience.
Adapted Sport / Parasport. Three weekly slots plus integration, 21 licensed members + 1 parasport athlete.	5%	4%	1-3i Low to considerate	Strong, inclusive commitment from the club.
Competitive Athletics (Benjamins to Masters). Structured competitive groups, results at departmental/regional/national levels.	25%	35%	1-2-3i Full	The club’s sporting core, tradition of performance.
Elite Level. Support for international athletes: Olympics, World and European championships.	10%	25%	1-2-3i Full	National prominence, institutional support, club identity.
Sports Sections (Collège Port Lympia / Lycée Don Bosco). Adapted schedules, dual sport-studies project.	5%	3%	1-2-3i High to full	Performance pathway structuring and youth retention.
Event Planning (Bellet Festive / PRD). Two major events, 1600+ combined participants.	10%	10%	1-2-3i Considerate to full	Major financial resources, visibility, and partnerships.

A note on Table 13

The distribution of activities and their respective percentages is primarily based on the number of participants in each section. The club currently has around 1,200 members, and the percentages attributed to each activity reflect the relative share of participants engaged in that specific section. This quantitative approach is complemented by qualitative considerations linked to the level of human resources mobilised for certain activities, notably adapted sport and parasport, which require enhanced supervision ratios and specific expertise, as well as elite-level activities that involve specialised coaching and performance support. As a result, some activities may represent a proportion that goes beyond their sole number of registered members.

The events component follows a different logic, as it is not based on regular membership participation but nevertheless represents a significant and strategic part of the club's overall activities in terms of visibility, engagement, and outreach. In addition, the definition of "elite level" is not uniform across countries and sporting systems, which should be taken into account when comparing activities or interpreting their relative weight within the organisation.

The breakdown of the NCAA's financial overview, shown in **Table 14**, shows a detailed account of the sources of contributions for their activities. It is important to note that a range of values and variance in direct and indirect contributions leads to a range of 91.90%-119.90%. Within this range, there are four options: 1) the lower end of the private sector's three contributions (3%, 2% and 1%), leading to 91.90% of the total direct contributions are accounted; 2) the upper end of the private sector's three contributions (5%, 4% and 2%), equaling 96.90% of the total direct contributions; 3) the lower end of those three contributions (3%, 2% and 1%) and in including indirect contributions, total contributions equal 114.90%; and 4) the upper end of the private sector's three contributions (5%, 4% and 2%), and in including indirect contributions, total contributions equal 119.90%.

Table 14: Financial overview of the Nice Athletics Club (NCAA)

Sector of source	Describe the contributor / source	Describe the contribution	Indicate if a direct or indirect contribution	% of total budget this contribution represents
1) Public	City of Nice	Grant + facilities	Direct (money)	28.2%
		Facility provision in form of stadium and office access (sponsorship)	<i>Indirect (resource or setting)</i>	23%
	Region PACA	Grant	Direct (money)	2.6%
	Department 06	Grant	Direct (money)	7.1%
	Regional Health Agency (ARS PACA)	Health Enhancing Physical Activity (HEPA) Grant	Direct (money)	2.1%
	National Sports Agency	Grant	Direct (money)	4.7%
2) Private	Private partners (Caisse d'Épargne)	Sponsorship	Direct (money)	3-5%
	Private partners (DSO)	Sponsorship and event support	Direct (money)	2-4%
	Donations and patronage	Donation	Direct (money)	1-2%
3) CSOs	Events (PRD/Bellet)	Revenue generating activity from the organisation itself (registration fees from competitions) + Partnerships (sponsorship)	Direct (money)	9.1%
	Membership fees	Revenue generating activity from the organisation itself (membership fees)	Direct (money)	28.6%
	Miscellaneous revenue (courses)	Revenue generating activity from the organisation itself (registration fees from competitions)	Direct (money)	1.5%
3i) Sport federation system	French Athletics Federation	Solidarity payment – federal support	Direct (money)	1.1%
	Ligue Sud Athletics (regional federation)	Solidarity payment – Competition support	Direct (money)	0.9%

Total **91.90%-
119.90%**

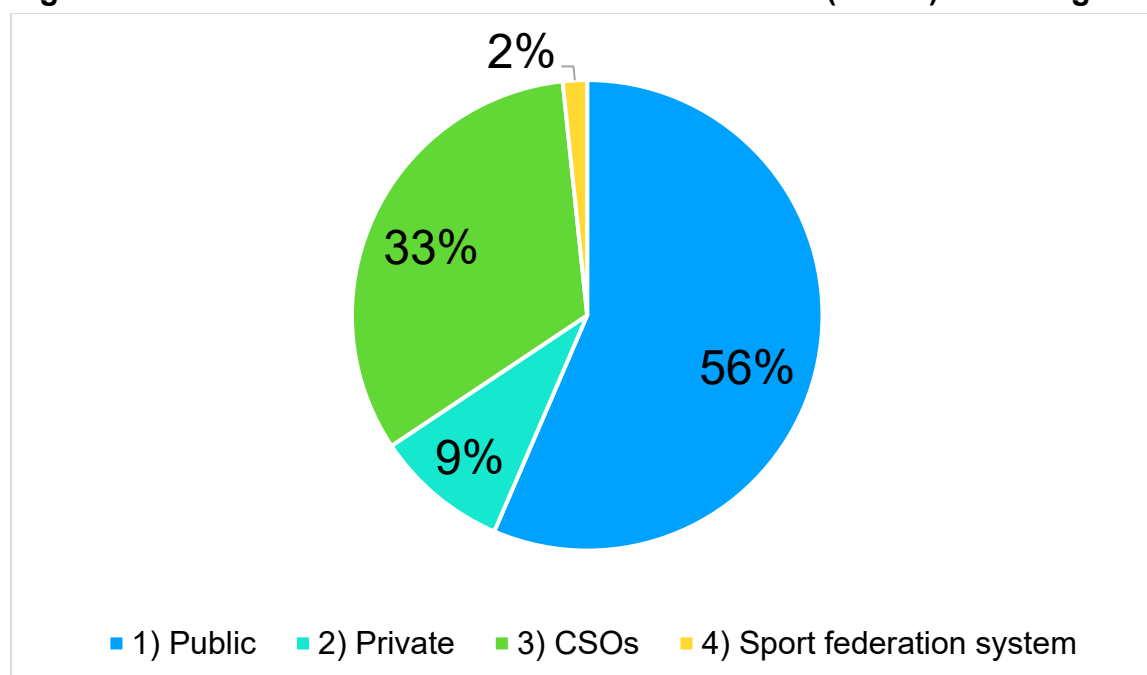
A note on Table 14

The allocation of the budget follows a different logic and should be analysed separately from participation figures. Budgetary differences between activities are influenced by structural factors such as the number of weekly training sessions, associated human resources costs, and logistical requirements, including facilities, equipment, and travel. These elements vary significantly

between activity types, particularly between elite-level athletes, competitive groups, and recreational or health-oriented participants. Furthermore, annual budget variations (with totals sometimes below or above 100%) reflect changing opportunities such as private partnerships, project-based funding, and events, as well as fluctuations in membership, sporting results, or access to facilities from one year to another.

A sectoral breakdown is further useful in this regard to understand the contributions of each sector against the total contributions received. **Figure 21** shows this sectoral breakdown, applying the upper end of the range provided for private sector contributions (5%, 4% and 2%) and including indirect contributions, the total contributions equal 119.90%. The public sector contributions, both direct and indirect, comprise 56% of the total contributions; followed by 33% from CSOs; 9% from private sector sources; and 2% from the sport federation system.

Figure 21: Sectoral breakdown of Nice Athletics Club (NCAA) financing



Grants

Kinezis – Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Kinezis Association is a non-profit organisation run by volunteers based in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina (Play the Game, personal communication, October 30, 2025b). Kinezis' funding model represents activities based on programs that are entirely run by volunteers (a '3' profile) and are financed by one-time grants from national applications and international cooperations, such as those with the British and German embassies in Bosnia and Herzegovina (a '1' profile). Kinezis

has a particularly good cooperation with the public and private sectors that finance certain projects. For example, their school sports program is financed by support from the Federal Ministry of Education and Science for the inclusion of students and teachers in school sports activities during the European School Sports Day in four primary schools (Kinezis, 2025b). Another activity includes the Mostar Run Weekend, the largest event of its kind in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is co-financed by the City of Mostar (a '1' profile) and private companies (a '2' profile). There is no systematic way of financing sports programs for children with disabilities, so these programs are implemented periodically depending on donor funds. The association itself does not have its own sports facilities and fields but uses city parks and playgrounds as well as the University Sports Hall "Zlatko Dalić" within the Rodoč campus of the University of Mostar ('1' profiles) (Kinezis, 2025a).

University Sport Association of Primorska (Koper) – Slovenia

The University Sport Association of the Region of Primorska (Koper) is a regional, non-profit that organises free of charge sporting activities for students across three member universities in the region (Play the Game, personal communication, October 30, 2025d). The association is affiliated with the European University Sport Association (EUSA) and the International University Sport Federation (FISU).

Membership in the association is granted to all students in the region who can present a valid student card. Its activity portfolio is divided into two main pillars: competitive sports and recreational sport. Competitive activities, which constitute roughly 25% of all programming and account for approximately 35% of the budget, include monthly basketball 3v3 tournaments and inter-faculty competitions. Recreational activities are the remaining 75% of programming and 65% of the budget, encompassing leagues in futsal, volleyball, basketball, sports like table tennis, Pilates, yoga, badminton, and occasional activities such as bowling, billiards, sport climbing and rowing. The association also supports student participation in national-level university competitions.

Approximately 80% of funding comes from annual, public grants at the national level, through the Ministry of Sport, and municipal level, through the city of Koper (a '1' profile). Additional funding is accessed through the Foundation of Sport, an independent body whose board comprises 50% government representatives and 50% sport representatives, with funds sourced from the national lottery (a '1' profile). The university sport association is unable to apply directly to these funding streams, so applications are submitted on its behalf by the national university sport association (a '3i' profile). This indirect administrative support from the national association is directly financed by the membership fee paid by the university sport association.

The remaining ~20% of funding comes from student organisations, which are financed through taxes collected from student employment (a '3' profile). It is worth noting that, historically, the association received funds directly from the universities themselves, but that 200,000 EUR contribution has been significantly reduced by 50% due to administrative changes.

Public redistribution of taxes on commercial sport broadcasting revenues

Public contributions can also be made by redistribution mechanisms tied to sport, either through taxes imposed on broadcasting revenue of sport competitions or on betting and lotteries. Taxes can be specifically imposed on 'sports betting,' which refers to "any wagering of a stake of monetary value in the expectation of a prize of monetary value, subject to a future and uncertain occurrence related to a sports competition" (Council of Europe, 2014, Article 3). Lotteries can also produce funds available for redistribution. For example, the European State Lotteries and Toto Association (The European Lotteries, EL) "estimates that total mandatory payments made in the form of tax payments or duties to other 'good causes' amounted to € 21.4 bn in 2008. Of this, they identify € 2.1 bn as channelled directly to sport, a share of 10%" (Gougnet et al., 2011, p. 67). A further breakdown of the allocation of these revenues "indicates that approximately 70% (i.e. € 1.6 bn) of the funds go to grassroots sport," and "Logically, the estimate of a 70% share to grassroots sport implies that the remaining 30% (i.e. €500 million) goes to high-level sport and to professional sport" (Gougnet et al., 2011, pp. 68–69). Lotteries are also involved in sponsorship, with budgets previously amounting to "€ 297 million (in 2007), € 140 million (in 2008) and € 113 million (in 2009)" (Gougnet et al., 2011, p. 54). This increases the contribution of lotteries to elite-level and professional sport to over 600 million EUR in the late 2010s.

These taxes are implemented at a national level, as shown through the case study of the 'Buffet tax' in France.

France's Buffet tax

The French model structures solidarity between professional and amateur sport through two mechanisms: the 'Buffet tax,' which incurs 5% on broadcasting rights for events organised in France (Sénat, 2024a); and mandatory transfers from leagues to federations (Assemblée nationale, 2021). Analysis of financial flows reveals significant structural limitations.

The French National Sports Agency (ANS) established in 2019 serves as the primary state operator responsible for distributing public funding to grassroots sports. The ANS operates as a Public Interest Grouping (GIP) under a shared governance model designed to involve all stakeholders. Decision-making power is distributed between the state (30% voting rights), the

sports movement (30%), local authorities (30%), and the business sector (10%). While this structure aims for shared governance, the State remains the dominant financier, providing the vast majority of ANS resources.

Funding and distribution

The funding mechanism relies on earmarked taxes. Besides the Buffet tax, which imposes a 5% tax on broadcasting rights (General Tax Code, Article 302 Bis ZE, n.d.), the ANS is funded by levies of 1.8% on sports betting and 1.8% on lottery games operated by the Française des Jeux (Cour des comptes, 2022). The ANS total budget for 2024 amounts to 339.2 million EUR, comprised of 179.12 million EUR in state subsidies and 166 million EUR from affected taxes (including the Buffet tax, sports betting levies, and gaming taxes). The Buffet tax generated approximately 59 million EUR of the ANS' 2024 budget (Sénat, 2024a), approximately 17% of the total budget and 35.5% of the budget from taxes.

The agency redistributes these funds through two principal channels: a territorial allocation supporting mainly grassroots development, valued at 313 million EUR in 2025; and elite sport, which was allocated 111 million EUR (Agence nationale du Sport, 2025). To qualify for these territorial and national subsidies, organisations must be federations or associations officially approved by the Ministry of Sports. Eligible entities include associations affiliated with approved sports federations; school and university associations (provided activities are outside official teaching hours); associations promoting regional cultural sports; associations contributing to sport development or promotion, as approved by the prefect under Article R121-2 of the Sports Code (Code du sport, 2007); regional and departmental committees of sports federations; and Olympic and sports committees.

How ANS funding looks in practice varies. On one hand, 'sprinkling' of funds across many organisations means that distributed sums are often considered too small to have a structural impact on the beneficiary clubs. For example, in 2021, the ANS funded over 38,000 projects for nearly 16,100 associations, but the average grant amount was approximately 5,000 EUR. This can be seen in the case study above concerning the Nice Athletics Club (NCAA), where only 4.5% of the NCAA's budget is funded through an ANS grant, a relatively unsubstantial contribution. On the other, in the 2022-24 cycle, the ANS contributed 200 million EUR to building facilities and for the Club and Practice Development Assistance program (ADCP) to support sporting activity, with 96 million EUR contributed in 2024 alone (Sport, 2022).

Criticisms and debates

The main criticisms of the Buffet tax revolve around its dependence on economic conditions, its complexity, and the insufficiency of the revenue it generates to fund the ANS.

Firstly, the Buffet tax is highly dependent on economic conditions and exposes amateur sport to the volatility of the professional market. The default of the broadcaster “Mediapro” in 2021 caused a significant drop in the tax's yield, forcing the State to intervene with an exceptional budget compensation of 14.4 million EUR to balance the Agency's accounts (Cour des comptes, 2022). The broadcaster's default led to a sharp decrease in Ligue 1 rights revenue, estimated at 575 million EUR, resulting in a gap between forecasts and actual revenue worth 14.4 million EUR per year. This shortfall was offset by budget allocations earmarked for the ANS in 2023 and 2024 (Sénat, 2024a).

Aside from acute financial collapses, chronic difficulties in negotiating broadcasting rights also affect the ANS (Sénat, 2024b). For example, over the period 2024-2029, the French Football League (LFP) is expected to receive a total of 678.5 million EUR per year from the television rights of Ligue 1 and Ligue 2, compared to 743 million EUR per season under the previous contract. This shortfall will have consequences on the yield of the Buffet tax until at least the 2028 financial year, which should result in a decrease in ANS funding of 4 million EUR per year. Furthermore, the LFP has included a clause allowing the contract with DAZN to expire after two seasons, i.e., mid-2026. Broadcaster beIN SPORTS, for its part, has a contractual clause for automatic termination after two years if its contract with DAZN is not renewed. Consequently, uncertainty surrounding Ligue 1's broadcasting rights, and therefore the revenue from the Buffet tax, could resurface as early as 2026. The financial difficulties of French clubs also represent an additional constraint on the valuation of the leagues. This dependence on the economic context and the fluctuations in the market for television rights makes the funding of the ANS uncertain and unreliable.

Secondly, the complexity of the Buffet tax and the difficulty in estimating its revenue have also been highlighted. The Senate report points out that the tax is complex and that its yield is difficult to predict due to the volatility of the television rights market (Sénat, 2024b). The emergence of new broadcasting platforms, such as the one created by the Professional Football League (LFP), has raised uncertainties about the application and yield of the Buffet tax. This complexity and lack of reliability make it challenging to ensure stable funding for the ANS.

Moreover, the effectiveness of distribution is constrained as the revenue allocated to the ANS is capped by the Finance Law. If the actual yield of the taxes exceeds this cap, the surplus reverts to the State's general budget rather than to the sports sector. Consequently, the ANS often receives

only a minority share of the generated wealth. For instance, in 2022, the Agency was expected to receive only 173.3 million EUR out of a total estimated yield of 385.8 million EUR from these taxes (Cour des comptes, 2022). The total amount of taxes allocated to the ANS is down by 6 million EUR compared to previous years. This sum, which was not offset by the levy on online sports betting, represents a cost-saving measure in the ANS budget.

Thirdly, the revenue generated by the Buffet tax has been deemed insufficient to adequately fund the ANS. In 2023, for example, the yield of the Buffet tax decreased, necessitating an increase in state contributions to compensate for this shortfall (Assemblée Nationale, 2022). The response to a written question in the National Assembly indicates that the revenue from the tax is difficult to estimate due to uncertainties about the number of subscribers and tariff conditions (Assemblée Nationale, 2025). These uncertainties further complicate the financial planning for the ANS.

The French model establishes a financial redistribution mechanism through earmarked taxes on elite sports. However, the redistributive power of these taxes is complicated by several factors, and, as a result, grassroots sport receives a rigid, capped subsidy instead of a fair share of the commercial success of professional sport, which limits the system's ability to drive structural development.

2 – PRIVATE

This section on private contributions (a '2' profile) incorporates profiles that were not covered in previous sections on contributions from civic society ('A' and '3' profiles), the public sector ('1' profiles), and their overlaps ('A-1', '1-3' and '1-3i' profiles). This includes the six profiles of 'A-2', 'A-1-2', '2-3', '1-2-3', '2-3i' and '1-2-3i', all of which feature private sector contributions.

Overlaps between private sector and public sector contributions ('A-1-2', '1-2-3' and '1-2-3i' profiles) are featured in this section, rather than under public contributions, given our understanding that “money attracts money,” meaning, “In general, public subsidies exert a strong leverage effect... the clubs which attract private funding (beyond members' contributions) are those which receive public financing” (Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 294). Analysing cases that include both private and public financing thus can assess the nature of public financing to entities that also receive private financing. It is also worth noting that private sector contributions raise concerns of whether they are properly accompanied by the requisite regulatory and fiscal frameworks to ensure “private funding sources do not overtly restrict private choices” (Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 32), which can lead to monopolies and restricted choices for civic life.

The private sector contributions explored in this section include private resources and settings alongside direct forms of support like sponsorship. A case study of Dietanzschule in Austria explores how autonomous activity uses private resources and settings ('A-1' and 'A-1-2' profiles). '2-3' and '1-2-3' profiles are demonstrated through how private sector resources and settings are utilised by CSOs through the examples of TSC TheOne in Austria and Isle of Play in the Isle of Man.

Lastly, private sector contributions to the sport federation system ('2-3i' and '1-2-3i' profiles) are broken down through case studies on the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), national reporting from national sport federations, and CSOs in the sport federation system. While the understandings of private sector resources and settings apply to all CSOs, including those within the sport federation system, the overlap between sport governing bodies and private sector contributions can be best understood through analysis of direct support in the form of sponsorship and broadcasting rights contracts ('2-3i' and '1-2-3i' profiles). In terms of sponsorships, "close to 90% of sponsorship contracts in the EU" were allocated to sport in 2011, with sponsorship revenue to professional sport and major sport events being valued at 8 billion EUR (Gouguet et al., 2011, pp. 53–54). On top of this, "donations, grants and other forms of financial flows from private companies to the sport system" were calculated to be worth 10.5 billion EUR. These specific financial flows into the sport federation system from private sources specifically characterise '2-3i' and '1-2-3i' profiles.

A-2 and A-1-2

Autonomous activity leverages private sector resources and settings, particularly in profit-oriented gyms and other sport facilities. Dietanzschule showcases how 'membership' in these private entities is defined as 'autonomous' activity (an 'A' profile) rather than a CSO, given there is no association to a CSO which exercises one's freedom of association (a '3' profile).

Dietanzschule – Austria

Dietanzschule is a privately operated, profit-oriented dance school in Austria and is not a CSO (IDO, 2025a). Its mission is to promote the joy of dancing across multiple styles, including Standard and Latin, Hip Hop, Show Dance, and Discofox. The school serves a broad age range from 4 to 80 years old. Dietanzschule operates on a pay-for-access model, where 'membership' is constituted by paying fees to the private entity (a '2' profile). It only receives public support for hosting events with relevance to tourism (a '1' profile), which accounts to 10-15% of its total revenue. Its budget is approximately 150,000-200,000 EUR annually.

Dietanzschule offers classes that paid members may attend autonomously (an 'A' profile). Approximately 40% of members attend Standard and Latin dance classes one to three times per week, with each session lasting around 90 minutes. Another 40% of members practice Hip Hop or Show Dance on a similar schedule, depending on whether they participate in competitive structures within Austria.

Most Hip Hop dancers are aged between 6 and 28. Within this group, around 30% train in a specialized Powergroup that competes at the national level in Austrian championships and internationally through the International Dance Organization (IDO). Although this activity constitutes a '3' profile, these activities are not offered by Dietanzschule and therefore no '3' profile is assigned to the organisation's activities.

2-3 and 1-2-3

Private sector contributions are also utilised by CSOs, in the form of rented spaces and equipment, sponsorship, and donations. The case studies of TSC TheOne in Austria and Isle of Play in the Isle of Man³² showcase how CSOs rely on these resources and settings.

TSC TheONE – Austria

TSC TheONE is a non-profit dance sport club based in Graz. It offers a wide range of dance disciplines, focusing on Hip Hop, Show Dance, Jazz Dance, and Contemporary (IDO, 2025b). The club is part of the Austrian dance sport system, as these dance forms were officially recognised as sports in Austria in August 2025.

TSC TheONE primarily offers dance sport courses, with approximately 60% of activities focused on Hip Hop. Participants range in age from 6 to 40 years old, with women representing about 90% of the membership. In addition to classes held in its rented studio spaces (a '2' profile), the club organises courses in schools (a '1' profile) and participates in public events such as city runs and marathons, bringing dance sport to a wider audience.

TSC TheONE operates on an annual budget of approximately 120,000 EUR. 30% of this (40,000 EUR) is spent on privately rented facilities (a '2' profile), 30% on trainer salaries (a '3' profile) and the remaining 40% to fees associated with competitions and membership costs to federations. The majority of funding comes from membership fees (a '3' profile). The club receives indirect rental subsidies of privately owned spaces (a '2' profile) from the Sports Department of the City of Graz (a '1' profile), which were renovated using the club's own funds (a '3' profile). Funding from the

³² For more information, visit <https://www.isleofplay.im/>.

federal state or the national government is not yet available for these newly recognized dance sport disciplines. It also does not receive support from Austria's national dance federation, Österreichischer Tanzsportverband (ÖTSV), which exclusively funds Standard and Latin disciplines.

Isle of Play – Isle of Man

The Isle of Play is a non-profit in the Isle of Man dedicated to “promote, provide and advocate for opportunities for all children on the Island to fulfil their ‘Right to Play’” (Isle of Play, n.d.). Isle of Play's financial landscape includes a variety of public grants and contributions from schools to pay for resources (a ‘1’ profile); private charitable donations and sponsors, like Manx Gas, an Isle of Man energy company (a ‘2’ profile); and institution-owned settings, like Lester's Yard, a playground originally funded by CSO-sourced charitable donations (a ‘3’ profile).

It is worth noting that among the participants in the pilot survey, the activity described by a representative from Isle of Play was the only activity to meet a ‘1-2-3’ profile; however, given that the in-person survey was focused on an individual's activity to stay active and the participant was a representative of the organisation rather than a participant in the activity described (Play the Game, personal communication, October 2025), this activity was not included in the results of the pilot survey detailed in Chapter 4.

2-3i

The only organisations conceived to not rely on public funding for their activities (a ‘2-3i’ profile) appear to be sport governing bodies at the top of the pyramid structure with sufficient revenues from private sources associated with broadcasting rights (a ‘2’ profile).

Union of European Football Associations (UEFA)

UEFA, for example, relies entirely on revenue from its commercial competitions (UEFA, 2024a). This aligns with UEFA's political neutrality (UEFA Statutes, 2024, Article 1). This means, however, that UEFA's activities constitute a ‘2-3i’ profile, where the vast majority of its revenues hail from private sector broadcasters through contracts.

This presents a certain irony (Vandenberg, 2026). The policy analysis and literature review showcased that commercialisation of sport and commercial interests are perceived as a threat to amateur sport (Commission of the European Communities, 1999, p. 9; Council of Europe, 1992, p. 8; Council of the European Union, 2020, p. 2; European Parliament, 2013, p. 50). UEFA positioned itself as the necessary counterweight to this influx of private influence and “selfish interests” threatening European football (UEFA.com, 2024c). However, as all of UEFA's activities

are ‘2-3i’ profiles, UEFA’s positioning as the solution to commercialisation, when commercialisation in fact funds all of its activities, presents an inherent contradiction. Solidarity payments through a mechanised redistribution of revenues thus becomes a hypercritical justification for UEFA’s dual role as a regulator and commercial entity. To support this dual role, financial redistribution is predicated on the concept of the centralisation of rights from multiple member associations and/or sport disciplines under one entity. Gouguet et al. explain how this works, with the sport event organisers representing the single entity ownership of rights:

“The sport event organisers, which own the rights, negotiate with the broadcasters in order to generate revenue from the broadcast of the event. Given that the revenue from media rights is typically linked to the broadcast of high-level or professional sport events, it is generally paid to the leagues or to the national federations. These can then distribute part of the revenue to the grassroots level. Note that the Olympic Games also generate important revenue from media rights which are channelled to the grassroots levels via the National Olympic Committees, as will be explained later in this section. In the EU, there is no specific regulation defining how the value of media rights is to be defined, nor its destination. The value is defined through negotiation between the sport event organiser or a representative thereof, and the broadcaster” (Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 56).

One implication of this system was raised at the European Parliament following UEFA’s 2011 decision to centralise “the worldwide TV and related media rights for national team qualifying games to the European Championships and the FIFA World Cup,” citing concerns the centralisation could result in an “uncontrolled monopoly” (Løkkegaard, 2011). Another implication lies in the positioning of redistribution mechanisms as belonging to the sport federation system as a whole (a ‘3i’ profile), rather than to the national federations who delegated contractual authority to an entity to centralise the negotiation and procurement of more favourable deals with television and broadcasting companies. It is worth examining this contribution and its characterisation as a revenue generated by the sport federation system itself (a ‘3i’ profile), rather than recognising this revenue as a payment for services rendered by the private sector (a ‘2’ profile), in further detail.

UEFA’s financial documentation confirms that UEFA operates under “trickle-down” economics (Vandenberg, 2026). 97.5% of UEFA revenues are ‘invested’ into clubs that participate in their competitions (76%) and national associations that constitute UEFA’s 55 members (21.5%) (UEFA, 2024a). As concerns clubs, UEFA will distribute 308 million EUR in annual solidarity payments to non-participating clubs in the 2024-27 season, which amounts to 7% of the predicted 4.4 billion EUR in annual revenues from UEFA’s men’s club competitions (UEFA.com, 2024b).³³ Of this, 258

³³ UEFA’s club competitions constitute >78% of UEFA’s total revenues (UEFA, 2024a).

million EUR (just over 5%) will be distributed to non-participating clubs across 50 member associations.

UEFA's HatTrick programme, which is lauded as one of the largest development initiatives in sport and was established "to provide financial support to UEFA's member associations in order to develop and foster football at all levels" (UEFA, n.d.), distributed 2.6 billion EUR to UEFA's 55 national associations by June 2024 (UEFA.com, 2022). This amounts to less than 5% of UEFA's total revenues of 52.45 billion EUR from 2004-2024 (the same period as the HatTrick Programme), and it only reaches one tier below UEFA itself in the football pyramid: national federations.³⁴ In total, this means about 6.4% of total revenues are distributed; however, this does not automatically mean these redistributions reach grassroots sport. UEFA's only regulation relevant to grassroots sport includes an annual 250,000 Euro incentive for each UEFA member association for implementing the UEFA Grassroots Programme (UEFA, 2024b), which would total 13,750,000 Euro across its 55 members.³⁵ This regulated contribution only represents 0.2% of UEFA's nearly 6.8 billion Euro revenue in the 2023/24 season (UEFA, 2024a). This figure reflects the academic literature, which estimates that 500 million EUR (9%) of media rights revenues are redistributed to grassroots, accounting for only 0.7% of the total budget for grassroots sport across the EU (Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 287).

The finding that HatTrick funding is not regulated for grassroots sport is supported by UEFA's published information highlighting some of the projects funded by HatTrick (UEFA.com, 2024a). This reveals the many instances where HatTrick is used for national association infrastructure projects and develops elite and national-level football, including

- Elite soccer academies for the development of the women's national team in Switzerland;
- Dragon Park in Newport Wales, a "state-of-the-art facility [that] has helped national teams qualify for European competitions" (UEFA.com, 2024a), which cost 5 million GBP (BBC Sport, 2013);
- A television channel, "Canal 11," in Portugal, to promote national football" (UEFA.com, 2024a);
- Hasan Doğan, "a national technical centre near Istanbul renovated in 2008" in Turkey;

³⁴ UEFA's revenue is as follows in millions of Euro (UEFA, 2024a, 2025; UEFA.com, 2022): 656.1 (2004/05); 647.7 (2005/06); 895.5 (2006/07); 2237 (2007/08); 900.4 (2008/09); 1309.8 (2009/10); 1384.1 (2010/11); 2795.7 (2011/12); 1698.9 (2012/13); 1730.4 (2013/14); 2099.4 (2014/15); 4579.8 (2015/16); 2835.9 (2016/17); 2789.8 (2017/18); 3857.2 (2018/19); 3038.2 (2019/2020); 3841.9 (2022/21); 4051.6 (2022/23); 4320.8 (2022/23); 6776.6 (2023/24).

³⁵ Please note this value is only relevant to the HatTrick VI 2024 regulations, which would be anticipated to have increased the total incentive for all funding areas supported by UEFA's HatTrick Programme in line with increasing profits and related increased redistribution.

- Reconstruction of the Shamakhi Stadium in Azerbaijan “to support the growth of youth and elite men's and women's football” near Baku;
- Renewed lighting and sound systems at Wembley Stadium in England “to meet EURO 2020 requirements and improve the experience for broadcasters and fans” (UEFA.com, 2024a), which were reported to cost 2 million GBP (AllfootballOfficial, 2018);
- “Strategic investments to improve training infrastructure and stadiums” in North Macedonia, associated with leading to their national men’s team’s qualification in EURO 2020 (UEFA.com, 2024a);
- Introducing Virtual Assistant Refereeing (VAR) “in all matches of the Slovakian top division starting from the 2022/23 season, thanks to the purchase of vehicles, video rooms and VAR cameras in the stadiums”;
- The “urgent renovation of the football pitches of major clubs, including the installation of drainage and underfloor heating systems” in September 2020 in Croatia;
- A football campus in Zeist, the Netherlands, “to house training camps for all national teams, a sports medical centre, conferences, and other stakeholders in national football, including the professional league.”

These figures and examples call into question whether UEFA upholds its self-proclaimed “raison d’être” of solidarity (UEFA.com, 2024c). Future research could conduct a document analysis of Annual Reports from each of UEFA’s 55 National Associations (NAs) to trace how funding is spent across cost categories, including those specific to grassroots football.

1-2-3i

Clubs demonstrate variation in funding streams to include public (a ‘1’ profile) and private sector contributions (a ‘2’ profile). This is showcased in the examples of the Birkerøed Rowing and Kayak club and Boldklubben Skjold football club in Denmark (‘3i’ profiles)

Birkerøed Rowing and Kayak club – Denmark

Birkerøed Rowing and Kayak Club is a non-profit, volunteer-driven sports association located in Denmark. It was established in 1949 as a rowing club and today includes rowing and kayaking. The club has 225 members. The club operates under a democratic civil society model, with volunteers managing leadership, training, facility maintenance, and day-to-day operations. The club is a member of the Danish national sport-for-all association, DGI, as well as the Rowing Federation and Kayaking Federation (a ‘3i’ profile).

All activities are recreational in nature, focusing on rowing and kayaking. In addition to on-water activities, the club offers guided indoor machine rowing during the winter season using eight

rowing machines. The club also provides seniors from the municipality access to rowing boats and facilities without requiring formal membership. These activities occur at Birkerød Rowing and Kayak Club (a '3i' profile), which is located on municipality-owned land (a '1' profile). Most on-water activities take place on a public lake (no profile attributed as a public access setting). The club owns rowing boats and kayaks (a '3i' profile), with some members additionally using personal kayaks.

Birkerød Rowing and Kayak Club has an annual turnover of approximately 90,000 EUR. Over 60% of income is derived from membership fees (a '3' profile), 20% from sponsorship and foundations (a '2' profile), and 10% from municipal support (a '1' profile). Indirect contributions include free use of the municipal ground and lake for club activities (a '1' profile). The club pays an annual membership fee of roughly 3,500 EUR to DGI, the Rowing Federation, and the Kayaking Federation (a '3i' profile).

Boldklubben Skjold (football club) – Denmark

Boldklubben Skjold is the largest community-based football association located in Denmark with approximately 3,700 members (ISCA, 2025a). More than half of its members are under the age of 18, and the club's core activity is football: around 80% of members participate in tournaments organised by the Danish Football Federation (DBU), 10% compete in alternative tournament structures, and the remaining 10% take part only in training sessions. Boldklubben Skjold is a member of the DBU (a '3i' profile), the national sport-for-all association, DGI (a '3' profile), and the international semi-professional Fenix Trophy tournament. Activities span all age groups, from early childhood football to senior-level participation. The men's first team competes in Denmark's fifth-tier league, and the club fields a team in the Fenix Trophy, an international tournament designed for semi-professional and community-oriented clubs. The women's first team competes in Denmark's fourth-tier league. While football is the primary activity, a small group of members also take part in supplementary activities such as floorball.

The club has an annual turnover of approximately 1.3 million EUR. Membership fees account for 35% of total income, municipal support contributes 20% (a '1' profile), and 40% comes from private foundations and sponsorships (a '2' profile). Less than 1,000 EUR annually comes from the "Pro System" through solidarity payments annually, or less than 0.07% of the budget. In terms of expenditures, 30% of the budget is allocated to salaries and support for volunteers (a '3i' profile), 20% to tournament fees paid to the football federation account (a '3i' profile), and 20% is directed toward training costs and facility operations.

ANALYSIS

These results yield two areas for further analysis. First, all case studies of CSOs with activities in the sport federation system (a '3i' profile) showcase a financial reality unaligned with the narratives of solidarity payments of the sport federation system. Household and public contributions remain the most critical across the cases with '3i' profiles, in the order they were presented:

- Sports Club Sentvid Ljubljana in Slovenia;
- Local sport associations in Slovenia;
- Sokol units in the Czech Republic;
- Sport organisations within the federation system funded by the municipality of Turku;
- University sport association of Primorska (Koper) in Slovenia;
- Nice Athletics Club (NCAA) in France;
- Birkerød Rowing and Kayak club in Denmark; and
- Boldklubben Skjold (football club) in Denmark.

This has implications for the reality of financing for clubs and associations within the '3i' pyramid structure: they receive very little from the top of the pyramid and subsidise their offerings with other sector contributions, along with their own resources to be able to provide service offerings for the masses. The only entity proven to not rely on household and public contributions is UEFA.

This raises whether a more direct comparison across case studies can be conducted. In attempting to create a comparable framework for these cases, a first observation is the difficulty in comparing activity-level profiles from the RESM framework, which, while useful in mapping activities, are not detailed enough to capture intricacies within contribution sources. For example, a '1' profile of direct funding from public sources applies to an organisation as a whole, even if that organisation has activities that constitute both '3' and '3i' profiles. To remedy this, comparability is better facilitated by deconstructing the RESM framework profile by sources of contribution (i.e., sectors, lending the profiles of '1', '2', '3' and '3i') and by profile of the activity organiser (i.e., level of organisation as 'A', '3' and '3i' profiles).

The three case studies from Denmark of Vedbæk Vikingelaug, Birkerød Rowing and Kayak club, and Boldklubben Skjold were chosen based on relative comparability and consistency in the data gathered. One limitation regarding the data of the other cases covered in this Chapter is they do not consistently measure contributions in the same way (e.g., stating contributions of the budget as a percentage versus providing a ranking of influence) and the profiles of the activities run by each organisation are not systemically identified (e.g., in some cases, broad activity categories were described but individual activities were not assigned a profile). **Table 15** below shows the

results of deconstructing the RESM framework profile by sources of contribution and profile of activity organiser across the three Danish case studies.

Table 15: Sample comparative table of contribution sources and RESM framework activity profiles from Danish case studies

Case study	Source of contribution				Profile of activity organiser		
	Public (1)	Private (2)	CSOs (3, 3i)		A	3	3i
			Self-generated revenues	Other sources (solidarity)			
Vedbæk Vikingelaug	5%		>95%			X	
Birkerød Rowing and Kayak club	10%	20%	60%			X	X
Boldklubben Skjold	20%	40%	35%	<0.1%		X	X

Given direct comparability proves difficult, this raises an important series of questions about other potential mechanisms for measurement, such as thresholds. At what threshold do the benefits of being part of the sport federation system outweigh the costs? For example, at what amount do top-down solidarity payments from elite sport to CSOs outweigh the bottom-up payment for CSOs' memberships in this system? As concerns the RESM framework, should a CSO that primarily relies on contributions from means outside of the sport federation system be considered a '3i' profile, or is it more accurate to assign a '3' profile of a general CSO? To answer these questions, this analysis conducted an extensive search for a detailed accounting of the financial flows from elite-level sport to grassroots sport. The search yielded two case studies on national-level sport federations in Denmark and France, which are explored below.

National-level case studies

The case study on Denmark highlights the importance of distinguishing the sources of grassroots-targeted funding from national federations, which tend to come from public contributions (a '1' profile). The case study on France highlights that even when public subsidies are not distinguished, some top commercial sports still provide negligible amounts of funding to their grassroots levels. These two cases further call into question the efficacy of the trickle-down effect of top-down solidarity flows.

Reported data from national sport federations across these two countries further validates that these federations receive public subsidies (a '1' profile), indicating that '2-3i' profiles are limited to the international bodies at the highest-levels of the pyramid.

Denmark

It was not possible to obtain financial reports for all sports federations in Denmark, and the selection of sports was based on transparency criteria related to the governing national-level federation, focusing on those with accessible and detailed financial disclosures. The sports chosen were football, handball, cycling, volleyball and badminton. Please see Appendix H for the breakdown of data across individual sports that led to these evaluations. As showcased in **Table 16**, reporting from five national-level sport federations in Denmark is displayed to calculate a per-participant contribution from elite-level sport to grassroots sport.

Table 16: Contributions to grassroots levels from Danish national sport federations (2024, in EUR)³⁶

	Football	Handball	Cycling	Volleyball	Badminton
Total revenue	83.466.399	11.831.470	7.557.438	2.365.391	6.438.894
Annual report indication of amount of funding to grassroots level	9.444.578	1.636.414	395.558	444.683	740.014
# of participants in grassroots (national registration figure)	393.466	117.004	40.671	20.315	107.424
Per participant contribution (total funding divided by # of participants at grassroots level)	24.00	13.99	9.73	21.89	6.89
Income from national public subsidies	4.115.663	3.699.948	2.463.542	882.492	2.199.251
Income from international subsidies	4.527.041	291.044	--	--	--
Funding for grassroots minus national subsidies	5.328.916	-2.063.534	-2.067.984	-437.809	-1.459.237
% as part of total revenue	6%	--	--	--	--
Per participant contribution (EUR, non-national subsidies to grassroots level)	13.54	-17.64	-50.85	-21.55	-13.58

In Denmark, sports are predominantly financed by membership fees and public funds, with municipalities accounting for more than 80% of public sports funding. In 2024, the municipalities invested more than 858 million EUR – equivalent to 143 EUR on a per capita basis – into elite and

³⁶ Converted from Danish Krone (DKK) to EUR at an exchange rate of 7,47:1.

grassroots sports (Statistics Denmark, 2025). Further, the government subsidises the sports sector with the profits of the state-owned gambling company (National Lottery Funds) to key stakeholders through a distribution key fixed by law. In 2024, it was approximately 150 million EUR (Brandt, 2025). The lion's share of the lottery funds is distributed to the two major sports organisations in Denmark: in 2024, DIF (the National Olympic Committee and the Sports Confederation of Denmark) received 47.6 million EUR, and DGI (Danish Gymnastics and Sports Associations) received 44.2 million EUR. Both organisations redistribute most of their funds to their member organisations, which then redistribute some of the funds, either directly and/or indirectly, to grassroots sports. A large part of the funds distributed by DIF, however, goes to elite sports.

Thus, on a relative basis, the funds flowing from professional to grassroots sports are, at best, negligible. Data in **Table 16** estimates that funding for grassroots level sport specifically sourced from non-public contributions yields negative per-participant contributions across the sports of handball, cycling, volleyball and badminton. This indicates that 'trickle-down' revenues from the elite levels of these sports to grassroots levels do not occur, and public contributions largely determine whether any positive contribution is possible.

Still, some trickle-down could occur. As football is by far the largest commercial sport in Denmark, it also has the greatest capacity to redistribute resources to grassroots levels. According to the Danish Football Association's 2024 annual report, it received 4.1 million EUR in national subsidies and 4.5 million EUR from UEFA (2.8 million EUR) and FIFA (1.7 million EUR), while redistributing 9.4 million EUR to grassroots football, including specific grassroots projects (Dansk Boldspil-Union, 2025). The distribution of UEFA's HatTrick funds to grassroots initiatives through the Danish FA is corroborated by UEFA's reporting, which states, "the Danish FA is introducing to encourage more men and women between the ages of 30 and 50 to take up football. Other initiatives are aimed at teenagers, volunteers, girls, and disadvantaged communities" (UEFA.com, 2024a). Subtracting national public subsidies received by the Danish FA, the contribution to grassroots football amounts to 5.3 million EUR, or 6.4% of its total revenue. This is equal to 13.54 EUR per player across 393,466 football participants. While this suggests that some trickle-down does occur, it is anticipated to amount to a fraction of what amateur players pay in membership fees.

To assess the contribution against the costs of participation, we refer to the city of Turku's assessment of its Boostii subsidy programme, which estimates sporting activities once or twice a week cost around 160 EUR for children aged 7-11 years old and 260 EUR for youth aged 12-19. To compare Danish and Finnish costs, the OECD's Price Level Indices (PLI) were referenced as

they “reflect the relative price levels of countries by comparing purchasing power parities to market exchange rates” (*Price Level Indices*, n.d.). Denmark’s 2024 PLI was 114 compared to Finland’s 105, indicating Denmark is generally 8-10% more expensive on average. Using the 8% rate, these fees in Finland would be estimated to be respectively 172.8 EUR for children aged 7-11 and 280.8 EUR for youth aged 12-19. The contribution of 13.54 EUR can therefore be assessed to respectively comprise 7.84% and 4.82% of these fees. Using the city of Turku’s annual subsidy as a benchmark, the contribution of the DFB to grassroots levels of football in Denmark can be accurately described as a very small share of the actual costs of participating in football.

Moreover, since municipalities also finance sports facilities for professional football clubs, professional football in Denmark likely receives more (direct and indirect) public subsidies than it gives back to grassroots sports. The handball, cycling, volleyball, and badminton federations all receive vastly larger national public subsidies than they redistribute to grassroots sports.

France

The research struggles to procure data on funding to grassroots levels in France. Not only are there differences in reporting and definitions of grassroots contributions, but there is also limited transparency of data across French sport federations (French National Assembly, 2023). As a result, contributions from elite-level sport to grassroots-level sport was unable to be distinguished by source, and all tracing of funds to grassroots sport include public subsidies. These limiting factors make data gathering within individual sports difficult and further complicate any direct comparison between sports.

In France, the top five commercial sports are football, tennis, basketball, handball, and rugby, each supported by its respective national federation. Football, governed by the French Football Federation Française de Football (Fédération Française de Football, hereinafter “FFF”), remains the country’s largest TV product, with Ligue 1 media rights contracted at around 400 million EUR per year through DAZN and other streaming platforms, attracting the biggest audiences nationally (FFF, 2024). Tennis, overseen by the French Tennis Federation (Fédération Française de Tennis, hereinafter “FFT”), benefits from global attention through Roland-Garros, which is an event that generates strong domestic and international media rights revenues worth a reported 460 million EUR in the 2023/24 season (FFT, 2024). Basketball, managed by the Fédération Française de Basketball (hereinafter “FFBB”), is growing commercially, with the professional Betclic Élite league secured on DAZN through 2029 and expanding audience and licensing revenues (FFBB, 2023). Handball, under the French Handball Federation (Fédération Française de Handball, hereinafter “FFHandball”), has a professional league structure (LNH) and domestic TV rights with beIN, supported by strong national team performance (FFHandball, 2024, 2025). Finally, rugby,

governed by the French Rugby Federation (Fédération Française de Rugby, hereinafter “FFR”), maintains a highly commercial Top 14 league with a long-term Canal+ TV deal running to 2032, averaging around 129 million EUR per year (FFR, 2024).

Even before narrowing the source of funding to just broadcasting rights, the available data suggests that the per-capita contribution to grassroots levels in basketball and handball appears relatively modest, if not negligible. The FFBB reported a total revenue of 39.215 million EUR in 2022/23 (FFBB, 2023). Amounts shared with grassroots levels in 2023/24 vary across reports, with one presenting 700,000 EUR contributed to the grassroots level (FFBB, 2024b), and another indicating 3.1 million EUR was contributed to supporting clubs and territories through both actions and subsidies (FFBB, 2023).³⁷ Registration numbers also vary from 725,500 registered participants (FFBB, 2024a) to 765,909 (Roulet, 2024), leaving contributions to the grassroots level ranging from 0.91 EUR to 4.04 EUR per participant.

Total annual revenue for FFHandball could not be found. 2024 data from handball reports 3.11 million EUR is distributed as grants to clubs and territories (FFHandball, 2025). Across the 602,218 registered participants in 2024/25 (FFHandball, 2024), this equals 5.16 EUR per participant.

For rugby, the FFR shows how the growth of commercial revenues can lead to a greater per-capita contribution, but that this growth in contributions is not associated with a growth in player registration. In 2013, an annual report indicates 2.9 million EUR were contributed to the grassroots level (Duchêne et al., 2013). With 447,000 registered participants (Insee, 2016), this equals a contribution of 6.49 EUR per participant. As of 30 June 2024, the total operating revenue (*total produits d'exploitation*) of the FFR was valued at 127 million EUR (FFR, 2024). The sum of a series of contributions including committee grants (€10.64 million EUR), employment grants (€10.38m EUR), a solidarity fund (€0.51m EUR), other grants (€3.18m EUR), and blocking fund & club grants (€0.055m EUR), equals a much higher contribution to grassroots, totalling 24.77 million EUR (FFR, 2024). With 364,664 registrations (*licenciés*) in 2024/25 (FFR, 2025), this equals 67.9 EUR per participant. This per-capita estimation includes public subsidies.

For football, different numbers were found for the same year in 2024. Only the FFF's total revenue was 2022/23 was able to be identified, valued at 283.6 million EUR (FFF, 2023). The FFF's 2023/24 annual report indicated that 106 million EUR were distributed to the grassroots level

³⁷ This variation may be explained by the narrow ‘subventions’ lines (0.7 million EUR for certain lines) and broader envelopes combining actions and subsidies for clubs and territories (‘actions et subventions aux clubs et territoires’, around 3.1 million EUR) in FFBB's financial and *personnes et structures fédérales* (“PSF”) documents.

(AFP, 2025). A different report for 2023/24 indicated 97.4 million EUR was contributed to the grassroots level (FFF, 2024), with around 16 million coming from the Amateur Football Assistance Fund (CasalSport, n.d.; FFF, n.d., 2018).³⁸ With 2.4 million participants (Gaillard, 2024), this per capita contribution is around 41-44 EUR per participant. This per-capita estimation includes public subsidies.

For tennis, the FFT is France's richest sports federation, with revenues of 466.8 million EUR in 2024 and total expenses of 433.2 million EUR (FFT, 2024). In August 2025, it had 1,228,679 members spread across 7,000 clubs supported by around 10,000 volunteers and 441 employees (FFT, n.d.). According to press reports and documents issued by the FFT, the federation's financing system operates largely on the basis of the trickle-down effect. In fact, the financial operations of the FFT rely heavily on the financial success of the Roland Garros Tournament, one of the Grand Slam tournaments (along with the US Open, Australian Open, and Wimbledon) that has been in existence since 1891.

According to an article quoting Stéphane Morel, CEO of the French Tennis Federation, in 2023, the Roland Garros tournament generated 328 million EUR, which represented 87% of the federation's revenue for that year (Newstank, 2024). Various sources estimate Roland-Garros' 2024 revenues to be around 340–346 million EUR, accounting for roughly 80–85% of the FFT's annual income. For example, the 2024 edition of the tournament generated 345.7 million EUR in revenue as follows: 117.8 million EUR in media revenue, 63.6 million EUR in partnership revenue, 71.3 million EUR from hospitality, 63.8 million EUR from ticket sales, 29.2 million EUR generated by the brand, and miscellaneous revenue. Total revenue for the year was 466.8 million EUR, including 1.3 million EUR from French teams and exceptional products, 47.2 million EUR from institutional products, and 418.3 million EUR from event products.

With total revenues of 466.8 million EUR, including 345.7 million EUR from Roland Garros, the share of revenues from the tournament for 2024 was therefore slightly above 74%. Taking into account the revenue generated by another major tournament held in the fall, the Rolex Paris Masters, amounting to 27.4 million EUR in 2024, the share of revenue derived from two major tournaments is close to 80% (FFT, 2024). Other sources of revenue include 0.7 million EUR from “subventions,” which are, based on the common definition, assumed to be public contributions (a ‘1’ profile), but constitute a negligible 0.15% of the FFT's total revenue.

³⁸ *Le fonds d'aide au football amateur*, or “FAFA”, is a specific fund for amateur football. These discrepancies likely stem from differences in what is counted as ‘grassroots support’ (e.g. inclusion or exclusion of specific funds such as FAFA within a larger amateur support envelope) and can be inconsistently reported based on how the FFF and the media present these figures.

With such a large share of its revenue coming from the tournament, in June 2025, the FFT amended Article 1 of its statutes to prohibit “any total or partial transfer of the Roland Garros tournament to a third party” (Statuts de La FFT – Titre Premier : But et Composition de La Fédération, 2026). This is to protect the true value of the tournament and the source of revenue it represents (Ouest-France, 2025). This money is cited as being used, among other things, to fund amateur tennis, train young players, and support the operations of affiliated clubs (Média, 2025).

However, this research could not identify the amount of funding from the FFT to grassroots levels, and any claim of the efficacy of these revenues trickling down to grassroots levels requires substantiation. The only data that could be sourced is from 2013, when the FFT contributed 46 million EUR to the grassroots level (Duchêne et al., 2013). Across 1,103,000 registered participants, this equals 41 EUR per participant (FFT & Direction de la Vie Fédérale, 2013). This per-participant average would be assumed to have increased proportionally over time, but data could not be sourced to substantiate more recent claims of trickle-down effects.

Conditions

These two cases in strong, liberal, democratic contexts were anticipated to benefit from more transparent data availability and to reflect well-functioning redistribution in line with national welfare systems. Nonetheless, the data presented in the case studies and the original research above on national-level sport federations’ reporting of contributions to grassroots sport indicate that solidarity payments within the sport federation system (a ‘3i’ profile) are largely unsubstantial. Cases where solidarity payments may yield significant contributions at the grassroots level appear to be limited to sports with significant revenues from private sector sources (a ‘2’ profile), particularly those with sponsorships and broadcasting revenues. While significant profits appear to be a necessary condition for trickle-down to occur, trickle-down does not automatically occur simply because significant profits exist.

This yields potential conditions for future research, namely the prevalence of high-revenue broadcasting and sponsorship contributions from private sector sources. This condition could be theorised to lead to three potential outcomes:

- i. Conditions exist, redistribution trickle-down occurs;
- ii. Conditions exist, redistribution trickle-down does not occur as claimed; and
- iii. Conditions do not exist, redistribution trickle-down is not possible.

What remains unclear, however, is a possible indicative threshold of the amount of revenues that must be generated by elite-level sport to facilitate efficacious ‘trickle-down’ of top-down solidarity payments. A possible test includes whether there is a threshold of revenues that triggers efficacious trickle-down effects. **Table 17** below presents a high-level summary of revenues and

participation numbers to set up future research for testing the efficiency and scale of resource distribution.

Table 17: Number of participants against total revenue for Danish and French sports

Country	Sport	Total revenue	Total participants	Participants as % of total revenue	Per-participant contribution in EUR (including public subsidies)
Denmark	Football	83.466.399	393.466	0.471%	24.00
	Handball	11.831.470	117.004	0.989%	13.99
	Cycling	7.557.438	40.671	0.538%	9.73
	Volleyball	2.365.391	20.315	0.859%	21.89
	Badminton	6.438.894	107.424	1.669%	6.89
France	Football	283.600.000	2.384.192	0.841%	40.85
	Tennis	466.800.000	1.169.722	0.250%	--
	Basketball	39.215.000	765.909	1.952%	4.32
	Rugby	127.063.960	364.664	0.287%	67.9
	Handball	--	602.218	--	5.16

Based on this sample, there is a tendency that sports with a high turnover compared to the number of participants tend to have a higher per-participant contribution. This suggests a threshold of sorts: only sports with sufficient revenue relative to their participant base are able to provide meaningful benefits to each participant, while sports with large memberships but modest revenue see negligible trickle-down. This trend combats the ESM's claim that there is universal "interdependence" (European Commission, Directorate-General X, 1998b, p. 7) between open competitions and "solidarity" (European Parliament, 2021, p. 5) and "a pyramid structure of competitions from grassroots to elite level" (Commission of the European Communities, 2007b, p. 13).

Future research would need to further test this potential threshold for validation, along with exploring its implications, including the contradictory concept that sport federations, to increase their per-participant contribution to the grassroots level, would either need to increase total revenues or decrease total participants. Both scenarios are contradictory to the claims of sport governing bodies: the former, to increase total revenues, highlights the earlier argument of the threats of commercialisation to amateur sport. The latter, to decrease total participants, threatens the basis of elite sport's monopoly, given it is tied to the abstract claims of solidarity between layers of the sport federation pyramid. In both cases, SGB's claims of the relationship between revenues and participation result in a contradiction.

CONCLUSION

Our analysis showcases that solidarity payments within the sport federation system represent an unsubstantial proportion of the financial flow in the broader landscape of the organisation of and participation in sporting activity in Europe. Further, the notion that the redistribution of centralised revenues – contracted by a sport governing body at the top of the pyramid on behalf of its member associations – constitutes a ‘3i’ profile seems inaccurate. We find a more appropriate categorisation of this revenue, which would have reached the associations directly had they not delegated the rights to the centralised entity to maximise potential contract values, is a private sector contribution (a ‘2’ profile).

The evidence reviewed suggests that the current solidarity redistribution mechanisms are an unsound justification for the ESM. It is suggested that redistribution mechanisms either be acknowledged as such or pursue substantiation and qualification through further vigorous assessment. Areas for improvement along these lines could include

- The defining and implementing of legal frameworks and/or national regulations that govern how broadcasting revenue is redistributed (Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 120);
- Establishing redistribution within and across sport disciplines and transnationally to address disparities in revenue generation; and
- Aligning the portion of TV rights income redistributed to grassroots sport with public expectations (Gouguet et al., 2011, p. 42).

If the solidarity mechanism is to continue being invoked as a rationale for the centralisation of revenue and its redistribution, it must be significantly reformed to ensure that resources truly flow to grassroots levels and improve inequalities, rather than exacerbate them.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

In response to the research question, “To what extent does the ESM reflect the diversity of the organisation of and participation in sporting activity in Europe?” the findings from this research reveal that the current ESM does not present a cohesive framework that is representative of the depth and breadth of the realities of the organisation of and participation in sporting activity in Europe.

This headline finding was supported by four sub-findings encapsulated in each Chapter of the report:

- Chapter 1: **ESM definitions and understandings of concepts and topics prove to be inconsistent.**
- Chapter 2: **Society-facing topics lack substance and assessment, while current key features lack mechanisms and measurements.**
- Chapter 3: **A map of the relationships between civic life and sectoral contributions better captures the diversity of the organisation of and participation in sporting activity.**
- Chapter 4: **The diverse financial landscape of direct and indirect contributions to sporting activity in Europe remains largely unsupported by financial redistribution from sport governing bodies.**

This research sought to build stepping stones towards the definition of an updated version of the European Sport Model through

- (1) Outlining the current debates and concepts critical to the ESM as it has been discussed and conceived of thus far;
- (2) Identifying areas that prove to be gaps and could be considered in future policymaking;
- (3) Proposing and validating a new visualised framework, which combines civic life with sectoral contributions to more accurately represent how sporting activities are organised and how participation is facilitated; and
- (4) Assessing the direct and indirect contributions across sectors that comprise the broader financial landscape to launch a discussion of where contributions and mechanisms are currently concentrated and could be strengthened.

Ultimately, this research has not sought to disprove the European Sport Model, but to build upon its debate to define a new trajectory that is inclusive in its approach. Further, given that this

research finds the sport movement's claims for exceptionality require further substantiation, its exceptional status did not need to be proven. Rather, the burden of proof has been and continues to lie with those advocating for exceptional treatment. This research argues that the burden of proof has not been met, and, in the meantime, a revised approach is required to capture the breadth and depth of the reality of the organisation of and participation in sporting activity in Europe.

This report outlined several areas where future research could further elaborate on the way forward. Future research could revisit our policy analysis in Chapter 1 to

- a) Develop and explain causality of major shifts in concepts, perhaps linking significant divergences to specific events, crises, people, or other factors; and
- b) Trace the omission of concepts.

Related to our identification of gaps in Chapter 2, future research could

- c) Validate the mechanisms and develop measurements associated to either a concept and/or mechanism; and
- d) Assess the identified and tested gaps to determine, in greater detail, the relationship between these gaps and the ESM.

Related to the proposed framework in Chapter 3, future research could

- e) Add detail and examples to bring the Relational European Sporting Map framework to life across the 12 profiles relevant to sporting activity;
- f) Operationalise the Relational European Sporting Map framework by creating an organisational mapping tool, which would bring life to the twelve profiles and provide an advocacy tool for the broader sporting activity ecosystem;
- g) Validate representativeness of the population's activity distribution across the twelve profiles to inform the allocation of resources based on citizens' needs and habits, through the 1) public deployment of the pilot survey for original data gathering, and 2) mapping existing participation data into the pilot survey to generate results using Artificial Intelligence to simulate a much larger sample; and
- h) Consider the preliminary findings related to the relationship between individual motivations and the proxy measures of relevance of the organisational models of sport, including if weighting the scoring would more accurately reflect these motivations.

Lastly, to build upon financial flows in Chapter 4, future research could

- i) Conduct a document analysis of Annual Reports from each of UEFA's 55 National Associations (NAs) to trace how funding is spent across cost categories, including those specific to grassroots football;
- j) Test the outlined conditions and validate relevant thresholds applicable to sporting revenues and the trickle-down effect;
- k) Extend the scope of analysis beyond liberal democratic contexts; and
- l) Assess other sources of national-level federation data, including through a systematic approach to one sport across multiple member states.

We hope these new research avenues and spaces engage stakeholders and representatives from the public, private and civil society sectors involved in organising and financing sporting activity to shape a diverse European Sport Model that is as inclusive and representative as the continent it aims to serve.

Annex

ANNEX A: TIMELINE

- **1975/76:** European Sport for All Charter (Council of Europe, 1976)
- **1991:** Communication from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council and the European Parliament, “The European community and Sport” (Commission of the European Communities, 1991)
- **1992:** European Sports Charter (Council of Europe, 1992)
- **1997:** Report to European Parliament, “Report on the Role of the European Union in the Field of Sport” (Pack & Committee on Culture, Youth, Education and the Media, 1997)
- **1998:** Commission Staff Working Paper, “Development and Prospects for Community Action in the Field of Sport” (European Commission, Directorate-General X, 1998a); Consultation document of DG X, prepared for 1999 European Conference on Sport (European Commission, Directorate-General X, 1998b)
- **1999:** Helsinki Report on Sport
- **2000:** Nice Declaration (European Council, 2000)
- **2005:** Recommendation of Committee of Ministers on principles of good governance in sport (Council of Europe, 2005)
- **2007:** White Paper on Sport (Commission of the European Communities, 2007a); Treaty of Lisbon (European Union, 2007, Article 124)
- **2008:** Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which outlines the competences and actions relevant to the European Union in sport (European Union, 2008a, 2008b)
- **2011:** European Commission communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions (European Commission, 2011)
- **August 2013:** European Parliament passes resolution (2011/2087(INI)) from 2 February 2012 on the European dimension of sport (European Parliament, 2013)
- **November 2013:** Council of European Union recommendation on health-enhancing physical activity (Council of the European Union, 2013)
- **2018:** Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)12 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the promotion of good governance in sport (Council of Europe, 2018)
- **2020:** EU Work Plan for Sport (2021-2024) released (Council of the European Union, 2020)
- **May 2021:** European Parliament and Council of the EU establish Erasmus+ programme with Chapter IV on Sport (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2021)
- **October 2021:** Recommendation of the Ministers on revisions (Council of Europe, 2021)

- **November 2021:** Resolution from European Parliament referencing the June study (European Parliament, 2021)
- **December 2021:** EU releases resolution on key features (Council of the European Union, 2021)
- **2022:** Revised European Sports Charter (Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport, Council of Europe, 2022)
- **2023:** Council Conclusions on grassroots sport (Council of the European Union, 2023)
- **February 2024:** Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions shared, “Building a values-based, bottom-up European sports model: a vehicle for encouraging inclusion and social wellbeing among young Europeans” (European Committee of the Regions, 2024)
- **May 2024:** EU Council conclusions (Council of the European Union, 2024a); EU Work Plan for Sport (2024-2027)(Council of the European Union, 2024c)
- **July 2024:** Draft conclusions from Hungarian presidency on MSEs (Council of the European Union, 2024b)

ANNEX B: INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

Azur Sport Santé. (2025). *Interview with representatives from Nice Côte d'Azur Athlétisme.*

IDO. (2025a). *Interview with representatives from the Dietanzschule.* International Dance Organisation.

IDO. (2025b). *Interview with representatives from TSC TheONE.* International Dance Organisation.

International Sport and Culture Association. (2025a). *Interview with Boldklubbe Skjold.*

International Sport and Culture Association. (2025b). *Interview with Vedbæk Vikingelaug.*

Play the Game. (2025a). *Interview with Isle of Play.*

Play the Game. (2025b). *Interview with representatives from a local sport association in Slovenia.*

Play the Game. (2025c). *Interview with representatives from Kinezis.* Copenhagen, Denmark.

Play the Game. (2025d). *Interview with representatives from Sports Club Šentvid Ljubljana.*

Play the Game. (2025e). *Interview with representatives from the Municipality of Turku.*

Play the Game. (2025f). *Interview with representatives from the University Sport Association of Primorska (Koper).*

Play the Game. (2025g). *Interview with representatives of Sokol.*

Appendix

APPENDIX A: MOVE CONGRESS DISCUSSION SECTION

QUESTION 1

Which are CURRENTLY the most important for developing sport participation in your country?

Choose up to 3 options per category.

QUESTION 2

Which requires greater support to develop sport participation in your country?

Choose up to 3 options per category.

QUESTION 3

Which mechanisms would ensure these receive the support they require to develop sport participation in your country?
Choose up to three options per category from the 'Possible Mechanisms' box below.

A) Organisations	☐ Civil society based, non-profit organisations	☐ Civil society based, non-profit organisations	1.
	☐ Professional clubs	☐ Professional clubs	2.
	☐ Private companies (fitness centres etc.)	☐ Private companies (fitness centres etc.)	3.
	☐ Informal groups /self-organised	☐ Informal groups /self-organised	
	☐ Public authorities and schools	☐ Public authorities and schools	
	☐ Other: _____	☐ Other: _____	
B) Human resources	☐ Volunteers	☐ Volunteers	1.
	☐ Paid employees	☐ Paid employees	2.
	☐ Professional trainers	☐ Professional trainers	3.
	☐ School teachers	☐ School teachers	
	☐ Other: _____	☐ Other: _____	
C) Facilities	☐ Outdoor facilities available to the public (nature, parks, streets, playgrounds, etc.)	☐ Outdoor facilities available to the public (nature, parks, streets, playgrounds, etc.)	1.
	☐ Public sport facilities	☐ Public sport facilities	2.
	☐ Public school facilities	☐ Public school facilities	3.
	☐ Private household facilities	☐ Private household facilities	
	☐ Private facilities by payment	☐ Private facilities by payment	
	☐ Other: _____	☐ Other: _____	
POSSIBLE MECHANISMS	• Education programmes and support	• Tax exemptions for volunteers	• Facility support and access
	• Safeguarding policy	• Media coverage and campaigns	• Public funding
	• Legislation	• Domestic and international co-operation	• Private funding
	• Better elite sports results	• Data and research	• Private household funding
	• Hosting of major sports events	• Human resources	• Funding from private foundations and private sponsorships
			• Other

APPENDIX B: SURVEY

Introduction

Across the categories of A) organisations, B) human resources, and C) facilities. The following three questions will be asked across these categories:

1. Which are CURRENTLY the most important for developing sport participation in your country? Please choose up to two.
2. Which requires greater support to develop sport participation in your country? Please choose up to two.
3. Which mechanisms would ensure these receive the support they require to develop sport participation in your country? Please choose up to three.

Q: Which country are you thinking of while filling out this survey? [Open text box]

A. ORGANISATIONS

Q1: Which are CURRENTLY the most important organisations for developing sport participation in your country? Please choose up to three.

- Civil society based, non-profit organisations
- Professional clubs
- Private companies (fitness centres etc.)
- Informal groups /self-organised
- Public authorities and schools
- Other:

Q2: Which organisations require greater support to develop sport participation in your country? Please choose up to three.

- Civil society based, non-profit organisations
- Professional clubs
- Private companies (fitness centres etc.)
- Informal groups /self-organised
- Public authorities and schools
- Other:

Q3: Which mechanisms would ensure these structures receive the support they require to develop sport participation in your country? Please choose up to three.

- Education programmes and support
- Safeguarding policy
- Legislation
- Tax exemptions for volunteers
- Media coverage and campaigns
- Domestic and international co-operation
- Data and research
- Public funding

- Private funding
- Private household funding
- Funding from private foundations and private sponsorships
- Better elite sports results
- Hosting of major sport events
- Human resources
- Facility support and access
- Other:

Q4: Please provide any additional comments regarding the support required. [Open-ended textbox]

B. HUMAN RESOURCES

Q1: Which are CURRENTLY the most important human resources for developing sport participation in your country? Please choose up to two.

- Volunteers
- Paid employees
- Professional trainers
- School teachers
- Other:

Q2: Which human resources require greater support to develop sport participation in your country? Please choose up to two.

- Volunteers
- Paid employees
- Professional trainers
- School teachers
- Other:

Q3: Which mechanisms would ensure these human resources receive the support they require to develop sport participation in your country? Please choose up to three.

- Education programmes and support
- Safeguarding policy
- Legislation
- Tax exemptions for volunteers
- Media coverage and campaigns
- Domestic and international co-operation
- Data and research
- Public funding
- Private funding
- Private household funding
- Funding from private foundations and private sponsorships
- Better elite sports results

- Hosting of major sport events
- Human resources
- Facility support and access
- Other:

Q4: Please provide any additional comments regarding the support required. [Open-ended textbox]

C. FACILITIES

Q3: Which are CURRENTLY the most important facilities for developing sport participation in your country? Please choose up to two.

- Outdoor facilities available to the public (nature, parks, streets, playgrounds, etc.)
- Public sport facilities
- Public school facilities
- Private household facilities
- Private facilities by payment
- Other:

Q4: Which facilities require greater support and/or access to develop sport participation in your country? Please choose up to two.

- Outdoor facilities available to the public (nature, parks, streets, playgrounds, etc.)
- Public sport facilities
- Public school facilities
- Private household facilities
- Private facilities by payment
- Other:

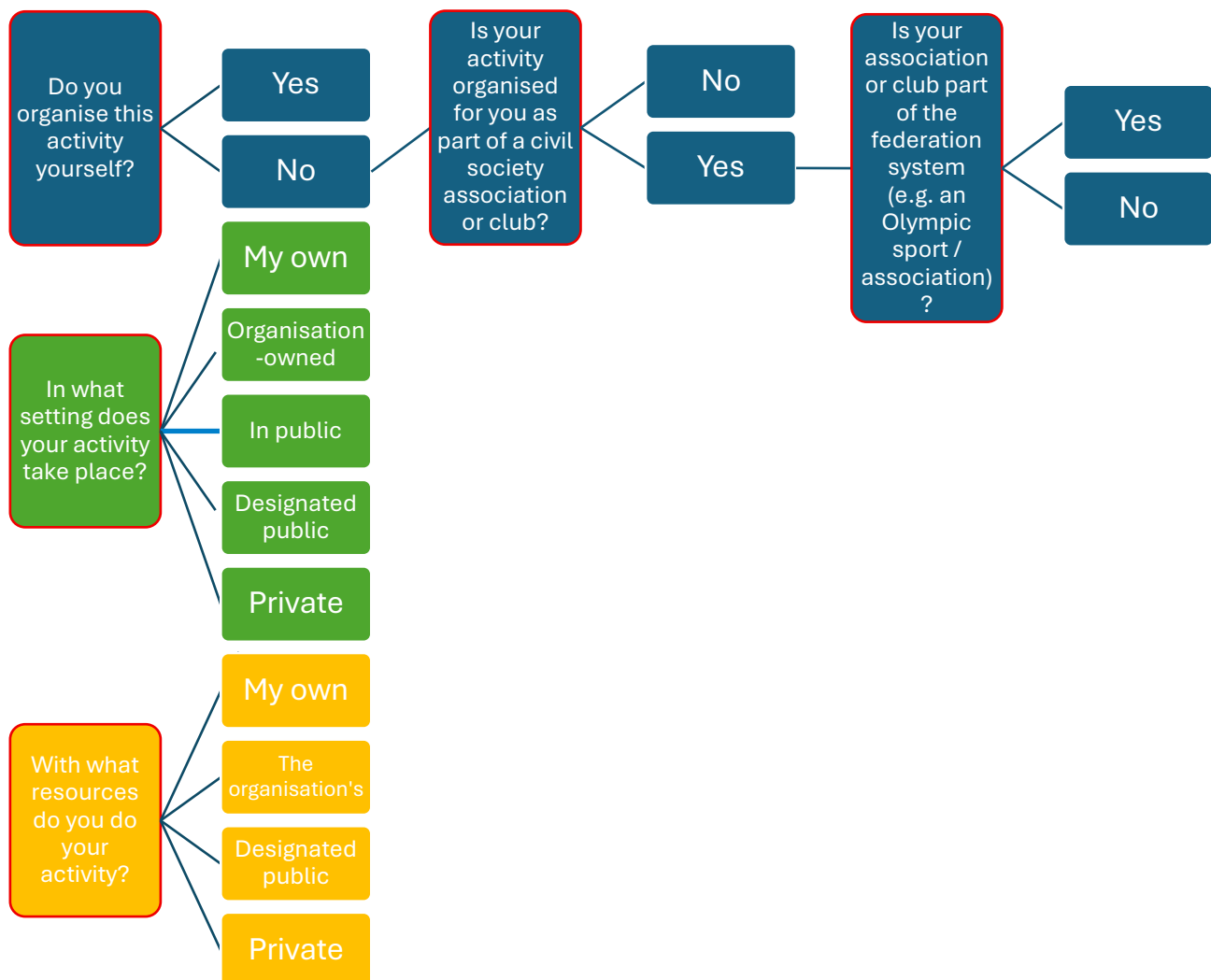
Q3: Which mechanisms would ensure these facilities receive the support they require to develop sport participation in your country? Please choose up to three.

- Education programmes and support
- Safeguarding policy
- Legislation
- Tax exemptions for volunteers
- Media coverage and campaigns
- Domestic and international co-operation
- Data and research
- Public funding
- Private funding
- Private household funding
- Funding from private foundations and private sponsorships
- Better elite sports results
- Hosting of major sport events
- Human resources

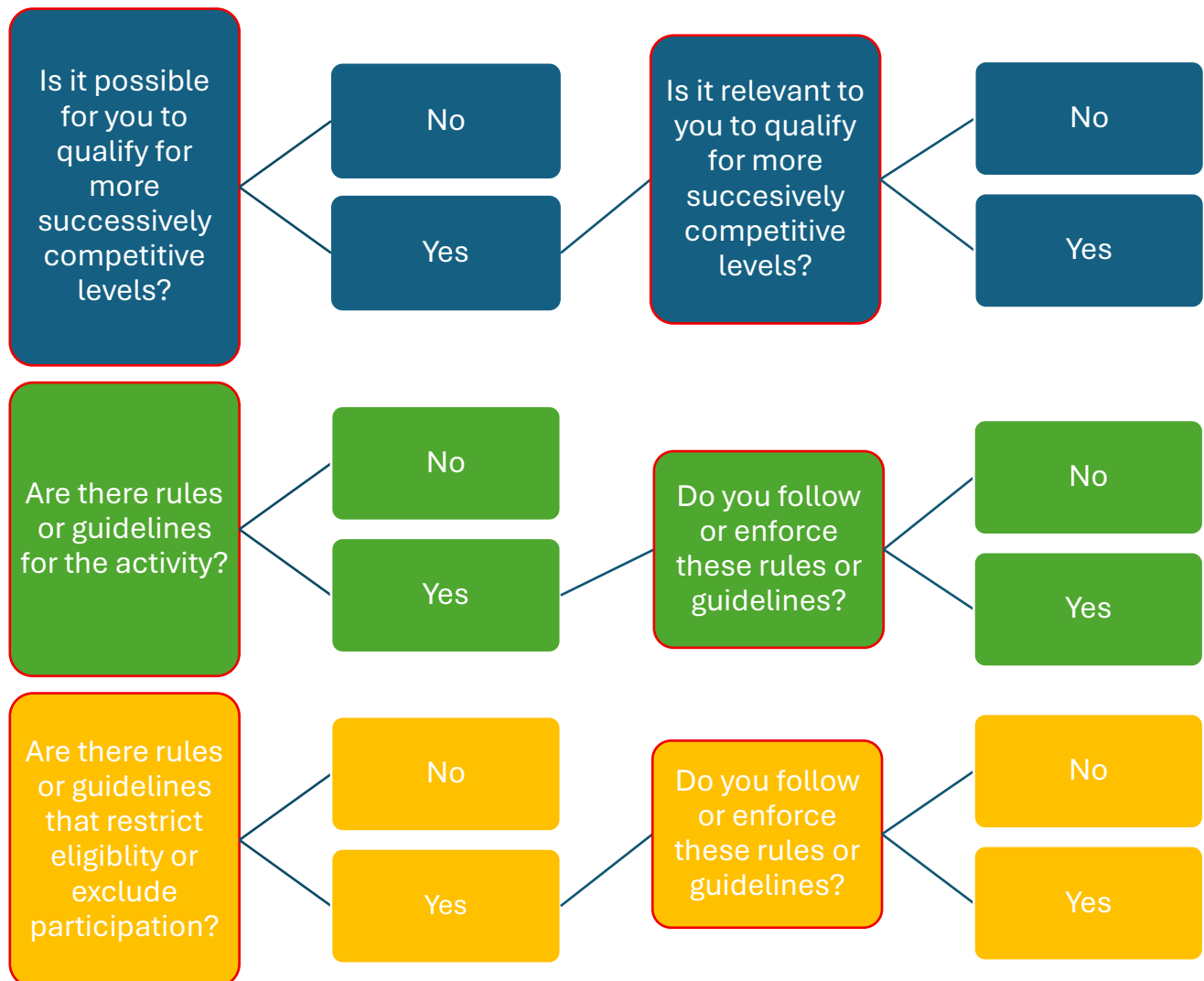
- Facility support and access
- Other:

Q4: Please provide any additional comments regarding the support required. [Open-ended textbox]

APPENDIX C: IN-PERSON SURVEY FACILITATION (PART I)



APPENDIX D: IN-PERSON SURVEY FACILITATION (PART II)



APPENDIX E: DIGITAL SURVEY QUESTIONS

The digital survey questionnaire, conducted to test the theoretical framework, included the following sections and questions.

A. Introductory questions

Inclusion criteria

1. Are you European? [Yes/no]
2. Do you live in Europe? [Yes/no]

Individual demographics

3. What is your sex? [Male/female/intersex or other/prefer not to say]
4. Please write your age in years.
5. Which of the following sectors best describes the main activity of your organisation? [Sports movement / sports industry / public sector / private sector / non-profit or charity (third sector) / academic or research institution / other]
6. Please tell us the name of your organisation. [Open text field, non-obligatory]

Sporting activity

Please see our researchers for assistance with the following questions. First, think of the sporting activity you do the most.

You may think of “sporting activity” however you wish, but if you need some direction, here's how the WHO defines it: “Sport covers a range of activities performed within a set of rules and undertaken as part of leisure or competition. Sporting activities involve physical activity carried out by teams or individuals and may be supported by an institutional framework, such as a sporting agency.”

World Health Organization. (2020). WHO Guidelines on Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour. World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/978924001512>.

7. Please write the name of the sporting activity below. [Open text field]
8. Do you organise this activity yourself? [Yes – I organise it myself / No – it is organised for me]

If NO to Q8, survey continues to Q9. If YES to Q8, survey continues to Q11.

9. Is your activity organised as part of a civil society organisation, like a club or association? [Yes/no]

If NO to Q9, survey continues to Q10. If YES to Q9, survey continues to Q11.

10. Is your organisation part of the federation system (e.g. an Olympic sport)? [Yes/no/I do not know]

Setting

11. In what setting does your activity take place? Choose all that apply. [My own / In a public space (e.g., on the street, in the forest, on the beach, etc. / A designated public setting (e.g., in a park, at a community facility, at a school, etc.) / Private setting (e.g., a commercial gym, private sports clubs, commercial studios, apartment complex facility, the office) / The organisation owns the setting (e.g., a member-owned space)]

Resources

12. What resources do you use when you do this activity? Choose all that apply. [My own / General public resources (e.g., sidewalk) / Dedicated public resources (e.g., street workout infrastructure, cycling lane, public track) / Private resources (e.g., equipment in a commercial gym, the office's resources) / The organisation provides its own resources (e.g., member-owned equipment)]

Relevance of organisational models of sport

The following questions aim to understand how relevant the organisational model(s) of your sporting activity are to you.

13. In your sporting activity, is it possible you qualify for more successively competitive levels? [Yes/no]

If YES to Q14, survey continues to Q15. If NO to Q14, survey continues to Q16.

14. Is it relevant to you to qualify for more successively competitive levels? [Yes/no]

15. Are there rules or guidelines for the sporting activity? [Yes/no]

If YES to Q15, survey continues to Q16. If NO to Q15, survey continues to Q17.

16. Do you follow or enforce these rules or guidelines? [Yes/no]

17. Are there rules or guidelines that restrict eligibility or exclude participation in the sporting activity? [Yes/no]

If YES to Q17, survey continues to Q18. If NO to Q17, survey continues to Q19.

18. Do you follow or enforce these rules or guidelines that restrict eligibility or exclude participation? [Yes/no]

Conclusion

19. Please let us know if you have any final thoughts or comments. [Open text field]

Please click "Finish" below. Thank you for participating in our pilot survey! For more information about the RESM Project, please visit our website at <https://realsportmodel.isca.org/>.

APPENDIX F: GUIDING CRITERIA FOR CASE STUDIES

The last stages of the research seek to substantiate this framework with case study examples. We ask partners to provide one-page overviews of organisations related to sporting activity.

There are four options for the guiding criteria for choosing case studies:

1. **Option 1:** provide examples that fit any of the 12 profiles for all sporting activities, including profiles A, A-1, A-2, A-1-2, 3, 1-3, 1-2, 1-2-3, 3i, 1-3i, 2-3i, and 1-2-3i.
2. **Option 2:** provide examples and/or case studies to organisations that facilitate autonomous participation in sporting activity but *do not organise* sporting activities themselves, then please consider the following four profiles for activities that could inspire potential examples: A, A-1, A-2, and A-1-2. For these specific profiles, please consider determining the relevance of organisational model(s) of sport through the proxy measures provided.
3. **Option 3:** provide case studies that demonstrate the following eight profiles possible for organisations that **organise** sporting activities: 3, 1-3, 2 3, 1-2-3, 3i, 1-3i, 2-3i, and 1-2-3i.
4. **Option 4:** provide case studies regarding any organisations within the sport federation system ('3i' profiles) that demonstrate success stories or challenges and/or failures of solidarity payments (financial redistribution) from the federation system to civil society organisations, otherwise demonstrating the "trickle down" effect of funds. Other flows in the federation system, including from civil society organisations to the federation system, demonstrating an upwards flow of funds.

If it is helpful in thinking of financial redistribution from the federation system to CSOs, think of these quotes from Gouguet et al. (2011): "revenue from media rights allocated to grassroots sport represents € 0.5 bn (0.7% of the total)" (p287); and "the estimate used in this study is a share of 15% of total revenue from sponsorship to grassroots sport in the EU, i.e. € 1.6 bn annually. This is the total revenue channelled to grassroots sport, excluding revenue from the compulsory levies on lotteries, betting and gambling operators that are not channelled to sport via the state or local authorities budgets, and media rights' revenue allocated to grassroots clubs through regulated solidarity mechanisms (in Italy and France)" (p55).

If it is helpful in thinking of financial flows from CSOs to the federation system, think of this quote from Gouguet et al. (2011, p295): "It therefore appears that payments from the grassroots clubs to their federations (13% of their budget) account for a lot more than the revenue going from the federations to the clubs (which represent 2% of the grassroots clubs' revenue). The difference represents the payment by the clubs of services provided to them by the federations, and in some cases insurance payments for the members: on average, at EU level, the solidarity mechanisms channelling resources from media rights, sport betting and

even national governments to the grassroots clubs via the sport federation do not fully fund the services provided by the federations to their member clubs.”

Reference information for writing the one-pager case study

Following yesterday’s discussion, the format and information you submit in a one-pager is largely open-ended. Although we will not require you to use a pre-defined template, there are several areas that each partner should include in their case study:

- A. The name of the organisation;
- B. The country where the organisation operates;
- C. A short description of the organisation, which can include a broader scope of their activities;
- D. A description of the activities offered by the organisation that are of specific relevance to the case study (e.g., you do not need to describe and list every activity offered by the organisation, and any broad activities and their profiles can be indicated in C), the short description above. Please provide the following information along with the brief justification for your choice:
 - a. Identifying which profile each activity falls within on our framework (A, A-1, A-2, A-1-2, 3, 1-2, 1-3, 1-2-3, 3i, 1-3i, 2-3i, and 1-2-3i), based on the organisation of the activities offered, resources and settings; and
 - b. Where relevant (i.e., Option 2 case studies), an identification of the relevance of organisational model(s) of sport to the activity.
- E. A description of the organisation’s financial information, which is described below.

Regarding E, a description of the organisation’s financial information, this can be done on the basis of individual activities or for the organisation as a whole. Partners are encouraged to reference and choose which information is most relevant to them and their case studies based on the reference information you can find in the template.

These one-pagers will then be used for two purposes:

1. To give more examples in the “Example (participation) column in the table above, as was described in Option 1 of the PPT; and
2. To provide case studies of how financial flows within organisations are constituted, as is captured by Options 2-4 in the PPT.

APPENDIX G: CASE STUDY TEMPLATE FOR PARTNERS

SECTION 1: ORGANISATION DETAILS

Name:	Location (country):
Brief description:	
<i>Type here to explain the type of organisation, the broader activities, the target participants, or whatever other details are broadly relevant to describing this organisation.</i>	

SECTION 2: ACTIVITIES RELEVANT TO THE CASE STUDY

Describe the activity	% of total activities this activity represents	% of total budget this activity constitutes	Indicate ONE activity profile from the 12 options and, where relevant, the relevance of organisational models	Describe reasoning for choice of activity profile
<i>Type here to describe Activity 1...</i>	%	%	A, A-1, A-2, A-1-2, 3, 13, 12, 1-2-3, 3i, 1-3i, 2-3i, 1-2-3i <i>Full, high, considerate...</i>	
<i>Type here to describe Activity 2...</i>				

SECTION 3: FINANCIAL OVERVIEW, including funding, resources and settings

Describe the contributor / source	Indicate ONE profile of the contributor / source	Describe the contribution	Indicate if a direct or indirect contribution	% of total budget this contribution represents
<i>Type here to name Contributor 1...</i>	1) Public, 2) Private, 3) Third sector / civil society org, 3i) sport federation system	<i>Describe if it is a donation, a grant, a sponsorship, a solidarity payment, a revenue generating activity from the organisation itself (i.e., registration fees from competitions, membership fees, renting out spaces, other household contribution)</i>	<i>Direct (money) or indirect (resource or setting)</i>	%
<i>Type here to name Contributor 2...</i>				

APPENDIX H: CASE STUDY OF DENMARK

The following tables organise data collected from the annual reports of the respective national sport federation in 2024. All conversions from Danish Krone (DKK) to EUR were done at an exchange rate of 7,47:1.

Please note membership and license fees are treated exclusively as part of total revenue. Although these fees are paid by participants and clubs and could therefore be classified as 'funding', national organisations incur membership-administration costs that are not counted as funding directed to grassroots sports. It is reasonable to expect that these administrative expenses do not fully offset the revenue generated by membership and license fees.

Table H.1: Football in Denmark, DBU 2024 data

DBU (football)	DKK	€
Total revenue	623.494.000	83.466.399
Subsidy national bodies (income)		
Danish Olympic Committee	13.829.000	1.851.272
Team Denmark (Elite Sports)	9.250.000	1.238.286
Danske Spil (National Lottery)	7.665.000	1.026.104
Subsidy international bodies		
FIFA, operational projects	9.291.000	1.243.775
FIFA, specific projects	3.536.000	473.360
UEFA	20.990.000	2.809.906
Funding to grassroots		
Breddepulje 3 og 4 / DBU Bredde	43.726.000	5.853.548
FSR og projektaktiviteter	20.834.000	2.789.023
Hele Danmarks klubhus	5.991.000	802.008

Table H.2: Handball in Denmark, DHF 2024 data

	DKK	€
Total revenue	88.381.081	11.831.470
Subsidy national bodies (income)		
Danish Olympic Committee	8.439.000	1.129.719
Team Denmark (Elite Sports)	12.200.000	1.633.199

Danske Spil (National Lottery) - special	6.999.609	937.029
Subsidy international bodies		
IHF & EHF	2.174.097	291.044
Funding to grassroots		
Udviklingsvirksomhed	8.619.695	1.153.908
Projekt "Foreningsudvikling"	1.618.877	216.717
Projekt "revision af børnetræneruddannelsen"	15.230	2.039
Rigtig, Sjøv håndbold	55.984	7.495
Projekt "#Gamechanger"	120.000	16.064
Uddannelsesvirksomhed	310.948	41.626
Uddannelsesprojekt 2023-2026	743.519	99.534
Beach Handballprojekt 2023-2026 - Bredde	667.038	89.296
Dommervirksomhed - Bredde	72.718	9.735
	12.224.009	1.636.414

Table H.3: Volley in Denmark, Volleyball Danmark 2024 data

	DKK	€
Total revenue	17.669.473	2.365.391
Subsidy national bodies (income)		
Danish Olympic Committee	5.506.011	737.083
Bredde & udvikling	1.086.202	145.409
Subsidy international bodies		
None		
Funding to grassroots		
Bredde & udvikling	3.321.780	444.683

Table H.4: Cycling in Denmark, Danish Cycling Union (DCU) 2024 data

	DKK	€
Total revenue	56.454.061	7.557.438
Subsidy national bodies (income)		
Danish Olympic Committee	6.126.314	820.122
Team Denmark (Elite Sports)	11.565.442	1.548.252

Other	710.903	95.168
Subsidy international bodies		
None		
Funding to grassroots		
Strategispor 1: Rekruttering af Børn og Unge	973.191	130.280
Strategispor 2: Sikkerhed	515.089	68.954
Strategispor 5: E-cykling og DIF Soldaterprojekt	662.061	88.629
Cycling Community (DIF - Initiativpuljen)	798.040	106.833
E-cykling	6.436	862

Table H.5: Badminton in Denmark, Badminton Danmark 2024 data

	DKK	€
Total revenue	48.098.540	6.438.894
Subsidy national bodies (income)		
Danish Olympic Committee	8.834.559	1.182.672
Team Denmark (Elite Sports)	7.044.000	942.972
Other public subsidies	549.848	73.607
Subsidy international bodies		
None		
Funding to grassroots		
Klubudvikling - Badminton For Livet	1.381.780	184.977
BD & DGI Fælles konkurrenceaktiviteter	790.228	105.787
Seniorarrangementer	1.295.829	173.471
Ungdomsarrangementer	2.010.069	269.086
Para Badminton	50.000	6.693

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