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## **Chapter 5.**

# **Sport in Western Europe**

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### **Chapter Objectives**

After studying this chapter, you will be able to do the following:

- Define Europe and Western Europe geopolitically and culturally in relation to sport management.
- Outline the region's common approaches to the philosophy, organization, and financing of sport.
- Identify the main trends in terms of viewership of live sport events and participation in sport or physical activity.
- Identify the main national similarities and differences in terms of sport participation patterns in Western Europe.
- Discuss the methodological challenges of national sport comparisons in Western Europe.

### **Key Terms**

- Sport
- Sport participation
- European Union (EU)
- Work plan for sport
- Traditional sport system
- Economics of sport
- Key Terms
- EU definition of sport
- Categories of sport goods and services expenditure
- Traditional pillars of sport participation in Western Europe
- Omnivorism



The overall aim of this chapter is to draw the picture of sport consumption in Western Europe. In this sense, sport is considered in both its social and economic dimensions. Indeed, Andreff (1999, p. 135) observed that sport participation was “an act of consumption” that engages sport specific expenditures such as clothes, sport products and material, tickets and fees for using sport equipment, traveling, and tourism. According to this view, sport participation and, more broadly, sporting and leisure activities create various primary and secondary sport markets (Andreff, Bourg, Halba, & Nys, 1994). Sport can then be analyzed through the lens of both its economic and social aspects.

To appreciate the various challenges in relation to the sport sector in Western Europe, this chapter discusses the political and governance dimension of sport, demographic considerations in sport consumption, and participation in sport and physical activity sectors.

## **Geographic Description, Demographics and Background**

On March 25, 1957, Germany, Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands signed the two treaties of Rome, creating the European Economic Community (CEE) and the European Community of Atomic Energy, which are usually considered the first two foundational pillars of the birth of a political Europe. Later, on

February 7, the CEE entity became the European Union (EU), with the signature of the Maastricht treaty. Sixty years later and after several additions, the EU comprises 28 member states: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. But Europe remains a continent that is difficult to define because it is simultaneously one and several, which is well illustrated in the EU motto “United in diversity.”

Because defining Europe is not an easy exercise, defining Western Europe is similarly difficult. Traditionally, Western Europe is defined geographically but also politically. According to the United Nations (i.e., Western Standard Countries Codes for Statistical Use), Western Europe comprises 9 countries: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, (the) Netherlands, and Switzerland. But for other standards, notably UNESCO’s, Western Europe comprises 23 countries: Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Iceland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway, the Netherlands, Portugal, San Marino, Spain, Switzerland, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and Vatican. From a geopolitical point of view, the West–East division also refers to the Cold War, which goes beyond geographical boundaries. During the Cold War (1945-1991), Western Europe comprised the countries situated west of the Iron Curtain, which were the European countries belonging to NATO with the exception of Turkey, plus the neutral ones.

#### **Learning Activity**

Compare the composition of the European Union, the Euro Zone, and the border-free area called Schengen. Using a web search, distinguish the countries that belong to all three of these areas from those that do not.

These countries were allied with the United States of America (USA) and formed what was commonly called the Western bloc or capitalist bloc. This definition will be used in this chapter mainly because the political systems in Europe strongly influence sport and its development as a cultural, social, and economic phenomenon, and because it excludes the very small nation-states that are not representative of Europe because of their small population (e.g. Monaco, San Marino, Vatican, and so forth).

Consequently, we define Western Europe as made up of Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Finland, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Iceland, Norway, and Switzerland. From a geographic and climatic viewpoint, Western Europe is extremely diverse, which has a significant influence on sport consumption and participation. Europe is often described as a pen- insula of peninsulas, a peninsula being a piece of land surrounded by water on three sides. Western Europe has the Arctic Ocean on the north, the Atlantic Ocean on the west, and the Mediterranean Sea on the south. The European continent is generally divided into seven geographic regions, four of which are included in Western Europe as we defined it: Scandinavia (Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Denmark), the British Isles (the United Kingdom and Ireland), West Europe (France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg), and South Europe (Portugal, Spain, Italy, and few small states). The fifth and sixth areas, Central and South- east Europe, integrate several Western European countries according to our definition: Germany, Switzerland, Austria, and Greece. The

last area is East Europe. Climate varies from polar climate in the far north, Atlantic climate for the countries facing the Atlantic Ocean, mountain climate in the Alpine region, continental climate in northern countries (e.g., Sweden, Finland), and a dry and warm Mediterranean climate in the south. These

differences particularly influence the development of outdoor versus indoor sports, and summer versus winter sports. The performance of Norway at the Winter Olympics is illustrative of these differences and specificities. In terms of demography, Western Europe comprises the most populated European countries: Germany (about 82 million inhabitants in 2018), the United Kingdom (about 66 million), and France (65 million), as well as sparsely populated countries like Iceland (about 330,000) and Luxembourg (590,000).

Overall, according to our definition Western Europe gathers about 420 million inhabitants. In terms of economies, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, and Italy are among the top 10 largest economies in the world in terms of gross domestic product (GDP), and Luxembourg, Ireland, Norway, and Switzerland are among the top 10 economies in terms of GDP per capita. Consequently, we can consider Western Europe a wealthy area.

## **Role of Sport**

Because of its important social and economic impact, sport has taken a growing place in European development programs and more generally in EU strategy. Consequently, the EU designed in 2017 a dedicated work plan for sport that comprises three key challenges: integrity of sport, economic dimension of sport, and sport and society. Essentially, EU's aim is to (1) ensure integrity for those under 18 years old and fight against corruption and doping through the good governance of sport; (2) stimulate economic activity, especially in terms of jobs, through support of innovation and the construction of a specific sport market; and (3) fight against exclusion, preserve and improve individuals' health, and protect the environment through the promotion of sport and physical activity for European citizens. In that sense, sport is used as a platform to address numerous social, economic, and political challenges.

Sport plays a positive role in the cross-sectoral cooperation at EU level and thereby helps to ensure sustainable development and to adequately tackle the overarching socio-economic and security related challenges facing the EU, including migration, social exclusion, radicalization that may lead to violent extremism, unemployment, as well as unhealthy lifestyles and obesity. (Council of European Union, 2017, p. 3)

### **Learning Activity**

Although the Council of European Union sees sport almost exclusively as producing positive outcomes for populations, reflect on the potential mixed and negative consequences of sport participation, attendance, and viewership.

Regarding sport participation, nonparticipation rates in Europe remain as high as the differences between countries, confirming the need for public intervention for the promotion of sport and physical activity (Downward & Rasciute, 2011). This has been the case since the ratification of the European Sport for All Charter that addresses the

importance of participation for all, a confirmation of the importance of sport participation irrespective of geographical, social, education, and gender aspects. Sport has to be accessible to everyone to fit with the European idea of sport for all. But because of the strong differences between national and regional contexts, designing global sport policies based on few general indicators such as participation rates and frequencies appears difficult, as well as inefficient.

## **Governance of Sport**

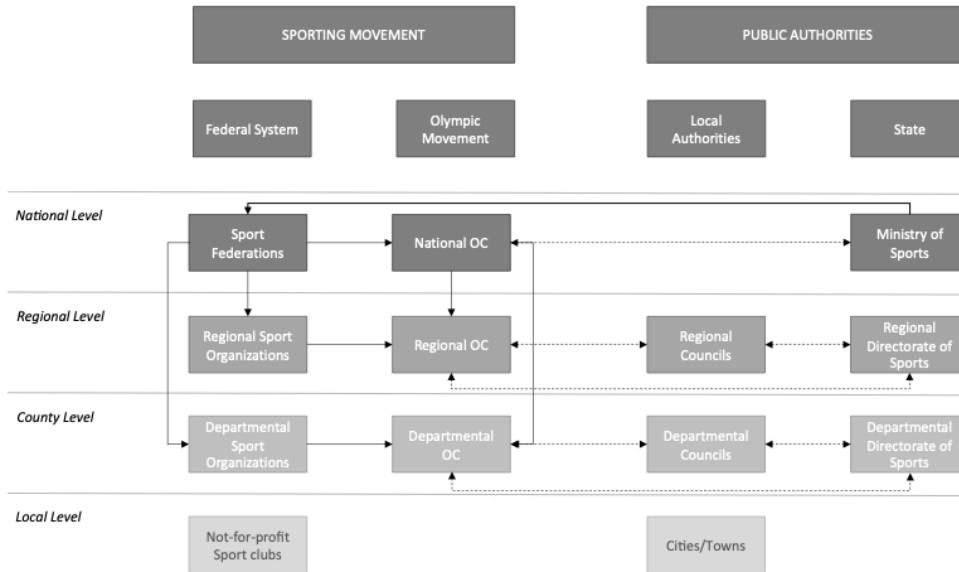
In 2007 the European Council adopted a resolution institutionalizing new trans-Europe cooperation about sport named Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS). This platform of cooperation between governments aimed to foster a dialog between EU member states, public authorities, sport federations, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to contribute to better governance of sport. In that sense, EPAS constitutes a tool that should help Europe tackle current sport threats and challenges. The Erasmus + program also supports, notably financially, development, exchange and transfer, and the realization of innovative ideas and actions through Europe. This cooperation between various stakeholders also contributes to the development of the European dimension of sport. In the same vein, the European week of sport aims to raise awareness of the benefits of regular sport and physical activity among European citizens, irrespective of their age and level of fitness. In emphasizing local initiatives, it aims to encourage people to #BeActive on a regular basis.

The traditional sport system in Western European countries is based on a system of interdependences between various sport institutions that can be actors, producers, organizers, managers, and administrators. This system is generally organized as a pyramid. Elite sport is on top, organized by international and national institutions (i.e., governing bodies and federations), and grassroots sports at the bottom, organized by not-for-profit organizations and clubs. Excluding professional sport, the historic actors of the organization of sport in Europe are the ones from the “sporting movement” comprising the federal system, the Olympic movement, and public institutions made up of states and local authorities. Each of these actors is active at the regional and local levels to implement national sport policies, and interactions occur at each level. Figure 5.1 proposes a simplified structure of the French sport organization system.

### **CASE STUDY: Sport in France**

In France, public authorities are strongly and directly linked to sport federations that are delegated to organize the sport and its development within the national territory, although each of numerous actors has a specific role. For instance, within the sporting movement, national federations are given by the state a direction to organize the sport, its rules, and its competitions; to deliver local and national titles; and to select athletes to represent the country. This mandate is renewed every four years. The French National Olympic Committee (FNOC) is the representative of the Olympic Movement and deals with public authorities about common-interest issues such as the preservation of the Olympic spirit. It collaborates with both sport federations and public authorities to prepare and select elite athletes for Olympic Games. Last, it gives its opinion on the delegation of public service to national federations. The state, through the ministry of sports and its decentralized directorates, is centered on the

functions of coordination and regulation. Specifically, it deals with safety issues in controlling sport equipment and formations (i.e., role of administrative police). As for the elite level, the state is the administrative tutor of federations in the sense that it establishes, in coordination with them and the FNOC, the lists of elite athletes and conducts the fight against doping. Last, it warrants the development of sport for all by conducting actions such as the Sports Day, supporting small rural clubs, and ensuring equal access to sport equipment within the territory.



**Figure 5.1 The simplified French sport organization system.**

Based on information from Ministère Des Sports. Available:

[http://www.sports.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/orgasportfrancais\\_sigles5.pdf](http://www.sports.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/orgasportfrancais_sigles5.pdf)

## Economics of Sport

The analysis of the economics of sport and its challenges in Europe is not an easy task partly because of the growing importance of economic and monetary factors influencing sports and sporting activities. It consists, according to Andreff et al. (1994), of looking at both sides of a coin by focusing on the origins of sport funding, the recipients of these expenses, and the activities that they generate. To shed light on these two aspects, surveys and studies are regularly conducted to produce relevant data and knowledge that, in turn, should influence policies.

First, to identify the main European sport funders and the amounts invested, we can rely on a study conducted by the consultancy firm Groupe AMNYOS (2008). Second, we focus on sport-related employment in Western Europe using the Labor Force Survey from Eurostat, the statistical office of the EU. Third, we focus on trade in sporting goods. Fourth, we look at households' sport-related consumptions and expenses in Western Europe using Eurostat's data.

To understand the meaning of the data, the EU definition of sport is important to keep in mind because it comprises three levels: a statistical, a narrow, and an extended

definition. The statistical definition comprises all sporting activities that have their own statistical category in the Statistical Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community classification (NACE, 2002 & 2008). Within this category, we can find, for instance, professional athletes, sport coaches, and instructors. The narrow definition gathers all activities considered as sport inputs, that is, all goods and services necessary to participate in sport, to which we add the elements from the statistical definition. Finally, the extended definition gathers all activities in which sport is an input, that is, all goods and services related to sport but that are not necessary to participate, to which elements from the narrow definition are added.

According to a study commissioned by EU Directorate-General Education and Culture (SportsEconAustria et al., 2012) including the 27 countries, sport represented about 1.13 percent of the European GDP when using the narrow definition and 1.76 percent when using the extended definition. When considering the more restrictive definition, the statistical definition, which concerns the organized sport sector, it represents less than 0.3 percent of the EU GDP. Furthermore, we can observe that the sport sector when direct and indirect impacts are concerned was evaluated at 2.98 percent of the EU GDP and corresponded to 2.12 percent of overall employment. According to the study from Groupe AMNYOS (2008), Eastern European countries allocate a smaller share of their GDP to sport, for instance, 0.21 percent for Bulgaria, 0.38 percent for Lithuania, and 1.13 percent for Estonia, in comparison with Western European countries, which invest more in that sector, for instance, 1.76 percent for France, 1.67 percent for the United Kingdom, and 1.42 percent for Germany.

When looking at the funding of sport, the picture is clear: Private funding (households and firms) represents the most significant share in comparison with public funding (state and local authorities). Sport is on average funded at 63.8 percent from private funding, and more precisely at 49.7 percent from households. On average, public funding in Europe was about 36.2 percent in 2008, with 24.3 percent funded by local authorities. This structure has been quite stable since 1990.

The case of France is interesting. Until 2011 household expenditure was on average greater than public administrations' expenditure (national and local, 47 percent and 44 percent, respectively), while firms' funding remained relatively low (less than 10 percent). From 2012 the hierarchy was changed mainly because of the economic consequences of the 2007 financial crisis. Although household expenditure still increased (an increase of 7 percent between 2007 and 2013), this growth was lower than public administrations' expenditure (an increase of 26 percent between 2007 and 2013). Therefore, the share of public funding in France went from 42.5 percent in 2005 to 47.8 percent in 2013, while the share from household expenditure decreased from 47.4 to 43.6 percent (see table 5.1). The sport sector is therefore an important sector with significant potential. Moreover, the European sport sector showed strong resilience after the 2007 financial crisis in comparison with other economic sectors, possibly because of the maintenance of effort and expenditure from public actors, especially local ones. In France sport expenditure growth was greater than GDP growth: Between 2007 and 2013, sport expenditure increased by 15 percent whereas GDP increased by only 9 percent.



**Table 5.1. Structure of Sport Expenditures in France (2005-2013)**

|                               | 2005    | 2006    | 2007    | 2008    | 2009    | 2010    | 2011    | 2012    | 2013    |
|-------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| <b>Households</b>             | 47.4%   | 47.0%   | 46.8%   | 46.4%   | 45.4%   | 46.6%   | 45.8%   | 44.7%   | 43.6%   |
| <b>Public administrations</b> | 42.5%   | 42.9%   | 43.5%   | 44.1%   | 44.8%   | 44.0%   | 45.0%   | 46.0%   | 47.8%   |
| <b>Firms</b>                  | 10.1%   | 10.0%   | 9.7%    | 9.8%    | 9.8%    | 9.6%    | 9.2%    | 9.0%    | 8.7%    |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                  | 30.6    | 31.9    | 33.1    | 33.8    | 33.7    | 34.3    | 36.0    | 36.5    | 38.1    |
| <b>GDP</b>                    | 1,772.0 | 1,853.3 | 1,945.7 | 1,995.8 | 1,939.0 | 1,998.5 | 2,059.9 | 2,086.9 | 2,116.6 |
| <b>% of GDP</b>               | 1.73    | 1.72    | 1.70    | 1.70    | 1.74    | 1.72    | 1.75    | 1.75    | 1.80    |

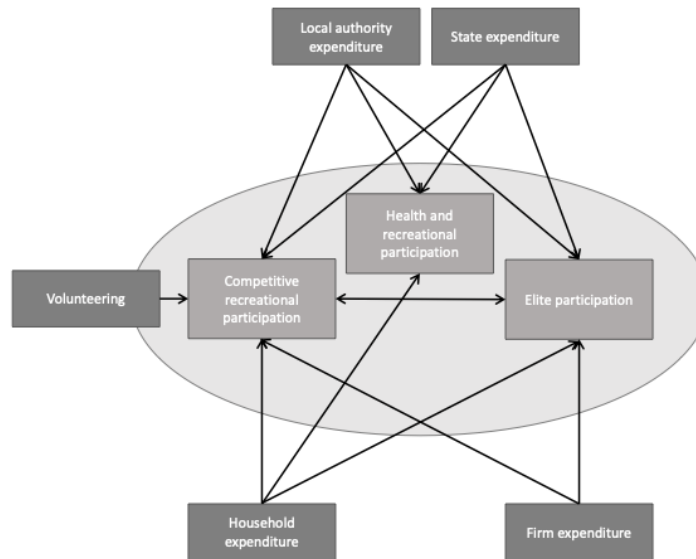
Data from Mission des Etudes, de l'Observation et Statistiques (MEOS), à partir des données fournies par l'INSEE (Comptes nationaux), les organismes professionnels, le Ministère de l'Intérieur (DGCL), le Ministère de l'Education nationale et le Ministère de la Ville, la Jeunesse et les Sports

The European sport model (elite and professional sports at the top and grassroots and mass participation at the bottom) generally uses “trickle-down effects” to justify funding elite sport, presuming that success at the elite level will increase mass participation (Bosscher, Sotiriadou, & Bottenburg, 2013). But this model shows some fragility; expenditures become increasingly specialized and contribute more to the top of the pyramid than the bottom (Groupe AMNYOS, 2008). Private expenditures (households and firms) mainly go to elite and professional sports (mostly through broadcasting and TV rights), and public expenditures, especially those from the states, tend to follow the same orientation.

In the meantime, funding for mass participation becomes increasingly complex. Because of the progressive disengagement of public actors, not-for-profit organizations, which are the basis of the system, have to develop new strategies and competencies, especially from a financial perspective.

Those sport organizations are extremely dependent on volunteers, and without this “invisible labor,” not-for-profit organizations could not operate as they do now (Chantelat, 2010). As an example, in France in 2005, the financial value of volunteers’ time and skills in not-for-profit sport organizations was evaluated at €5.6 billion (US\$6.9 billion) when both direct and indirect (i.e., construction, maintenance, and access to sport facilities) funding from public administrations was considered (Chantelat, 2010). Figure 5.2 illustrates the current streams of funding for various types of sport (i.e., elite sport, competitive recreational sport, health and recreational sport), demonstrating the plurality of funding origins and the complexity of the sport system.

When specifically focusing on employment within the sport sector, the Labor Force Survey conducted by the UE provides relevant information regarding the status of workers and their sociodemographic characteristics such as age, gender, and education levels (using the ISED classification). The definition used by Eurostat refers to the statistical definition that gathers sport activity economic sectors from the NACE classification, but it brings another dimension through related occupations according to the ISCO classification by integrating sport and fitness workers outside the sport sector. The figures presented consider the number of workers irrespective of their amount of work; no distinction is made between full-time and part-time jobs (i.e., they are not full-time equivalent values).



**Figure 5.2. The simplified European sport funding system.**

MOCK Adapted by permission from Groupe AMNYOS Consultants. (2008). Study of public and private financing of sport in Europe. Minister for Health, Youth, Sport and the Voluntary Sector.

At first, we can observe that in 2016, 86 percent of jobs from the sport sector were located within Western European countries. This portion had remained relatively stable despite a slight decrease observed starting in 2013 (see table 5.2).

Within Western European countries, gender balance in terms of workers within the sport sector is relatively even, even if the portion of males remains slightly larger (54.9 percent) than that of females. But the gap is being progressively reduced; between 2011 and 2016, the number of male workers increased by 6.1 percent and the number of female workers increased by 18.6 percent.

Regarding age, most sport workers in Western European countries are between 30 and 64 years of age, representing about 58.5 percent of workers in 2016. The most rapidly growing age group is the 65 and older age group, which increased 107.6 percent. The 15 to 29 years old age group increased by 12.1 percent, and the 30 to 64 years old age group increased by 10.6 percent.

Last, we observe that the majority of jobs within the sport sector in 2016 required moderate qualifications; 48 percent of them were upper-secondary and postsecondary nontertiary education jobs, jobs of levels 3 and 4 from the 2011 ISCED classification. In comparison, jobs from levels 5 to 8 represented only 35 percent of jobs. But the global trend has been toward an upgrade in terms of qualification since 2011. Specifically, while the number of workers from levels 0 to 2 decreased by 5.4 percent between 2011 and 2016, the number of workers with qualifications from levels 5 to 8 increased by 37.2 percent (table 5.3).

**Table 5.2. Part of Western Europe in European Employment in Sport**

|                            | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|----------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Part of Western Europe (%) | 88   | 88   | 87   | 86   | 86   | 86   |

Based on data from Eurostat (2017).

**Table 5.3. Employment in Western Europe (2015)**

| Sociodemographic characteristics |       | Number of persons employed in sport (thousands) | Distribution of persons employed (%) | Evolution 2011-2016 (%) |
|----------------------------------|-------|---|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Gender                           | Women | 730.5   | 45.9                                 | 18.6                    |
|                                  | Men   | 860.8   | 54.1                                 | 6.1                     |
| Age group                        | 15-29 | 611.1   | 38.5                                 | 12.1                    |
|                                  | 30-64 | 928.7   | 58.5                                 | 10.6                    |
|                                  | 65+   | 48.3  | 3.0                                  | 107.3                   |
| Education level (ISCED)          | 0-2   | 269.7   | 17.0                                 | -5.4                    |
|                                  | 3-4   | 760.6   | 48.0                                 | 6.1                     |
|                                  | 5-8   | 554.8   | 35.0                                 | 37.2                    |

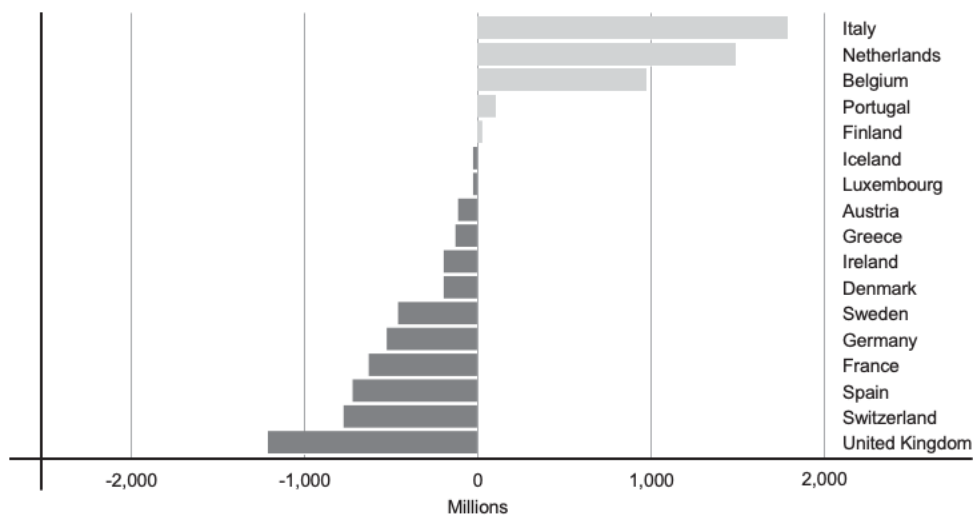
Based on data from Eurostat (2017).

## Sporting Goods

Using the COMEXT data published by Eurostat, it is possible to assess the value of the sporting goods trade in Europe (imports and exports) within and outside the EU. Within this database, sporting goods are identified according to the Harmonized System classification and then gathered according to sport disciplines. The following categories can be found: skis and associated materials; skates; boats and nautical sport materials; golf materials; racquet sport materials; balls; gymnastics, athletics, and swimming materials; fishing materials; bikes; parachutes; sport clothes; sport shoes; and sport and hunting guns.

In 2017, 87.2 percent of European imports and 87 percent of exports were produced by Western European countries. Imports from these countries increased by 18.3 percent between 2006 and 2015, while exports increased by 29.2 percent over the same period. These trends strongly contributed to the reduction of the trade balance deficit, which fell by 70 percent between 2006 and 2017. But all countries from Western Europe (see figure 5.3) do not present the same situation of deficit; Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Finland present trade surpluses.

Three countries can be considered the biggest contributors in terms of imports: Germany, the United Kingdom, and France. In 2016 they represented 20 percent, 14.8 percent, and 13.6 percent of sport goods, respectively. This result is not surprising because these are the richest countries in Europe, having the largest GDPs in 2016 (OECD, 2016). As for exports, Germany remains the strongest European contributor, followed this time by Italy and the Netherlands. In 2015 they represented 18 percent, 17.5 percent, and 15.8 percent of exports, respectively, from Western Europe.



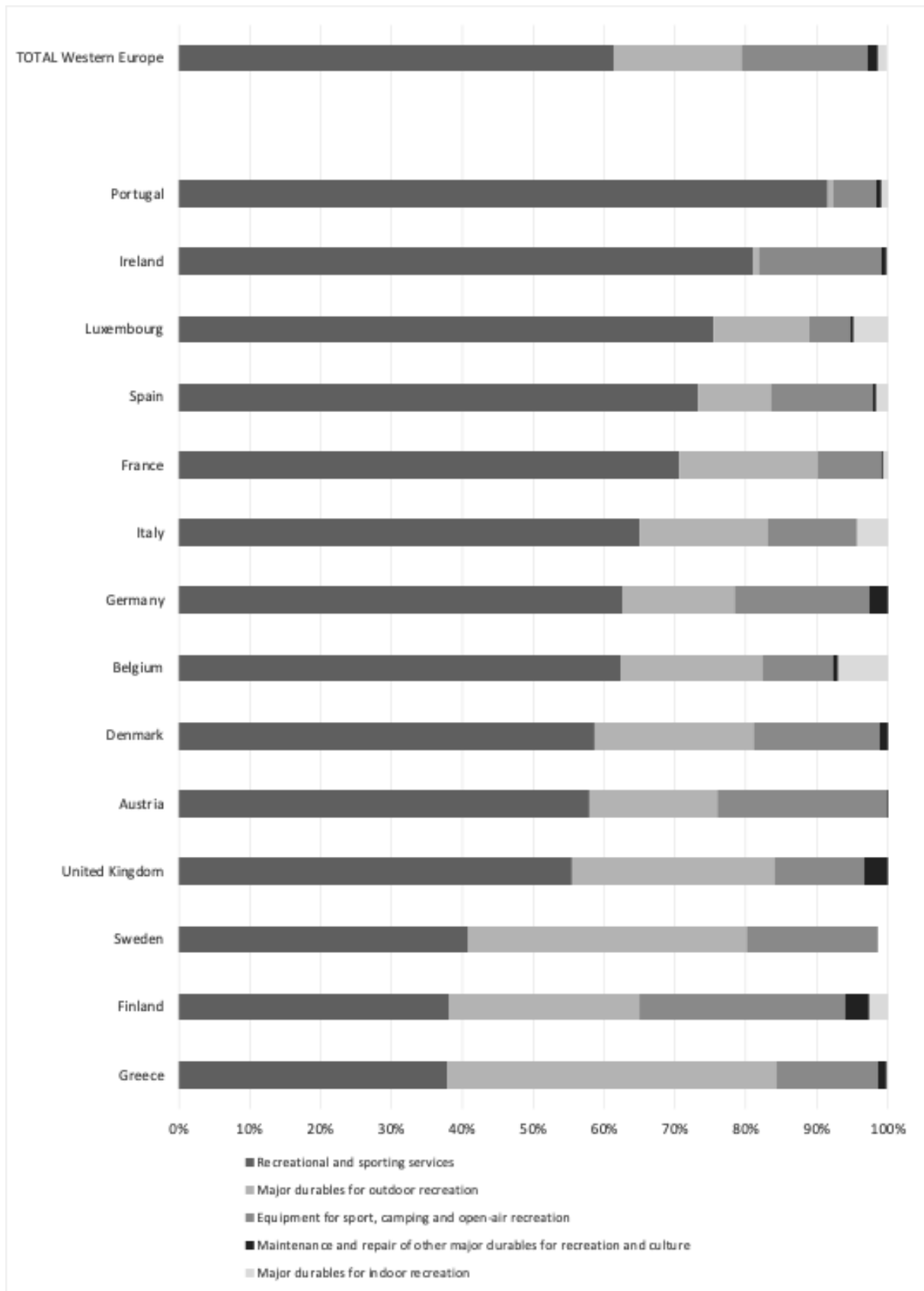
**Figure 5.3** Trade balance of Western European countries.

Based on data from Eurostat (2017).

## Privat expenditure of sporting goods and services

To get an idea of household sport consumption in Western Europe, the Eurostat data, particularly the 2010 Household Budget Survey, focusing on household expenditures on sport goods and services, can be used. This study includes the 28 EU countries and provides information regarding five categories of sport goods and services expenditure: (1) recreational and sporting services; (2) major durables for outdoor recreation; (3) equipment for sport, camping, and open-air recreation; (4) maintenance and repair of other major durables for recreation and culture; and (5) major durables for indoor recreation.

The overall value of household expenditures is estimated at €52,078,000 (about US\$70,000,000) (Purchasing Power Standard), representing 1.2 percent of their overall expenditures. This value also constitutes 75 percent of the overall expenditures in the sport sector in Europe, and it represents 61 percent of overall expenditures. In that sense, in Western Europe the consumption of sporting goods and services takes a bigger place in household budgets and expenses in comparison with countries from Eastern Europe (i.e., 0.6 percent of their overall expenditures) (see figure 5.4).



**Figure 5.4. Distribution of household sport expenditure in Western Europe by country and category.** Based on data from Eurostat (2017).

## Management of Sport

As indicated in the previous section, Governance of Sport, the state and public authorities have a significant role in the traditional sport system in Western Europe through the funding and management of elite sport and the funding of recreational participation.

Keep in mind, however, that the direct management of sport is related to where and when participation is executed within a sport structure, as well as the nature of the structure. Most sport participation is individual and self-organized. The management role here of the state and the public authorities mainly deals with offering public spaces, sport venues, and facilities to the public.

For those who participate within a sport organization, about 25 percent go to commercial places and about 15 percent join not-for-profit clubs. Commercial organizations (e.g., health and fitness clubs, golf clubs, five-a-side football organizations, indoor climbing structures, and so on) are privately owned and structured (e.g., independent or franchised). The following sections provide further information about the places of participation and memberships

## Places of Sport and Physical Activity Participation

Among sport participants in Western Europe, the favored places (see table 5.4) tend to be parks or outdoors and the home, although fitness centers and sport clubs are also preferred places for participation.

This table shows some notable differences for participation preferences between the countries of Western Europe and those of the EU. Participants in Western Europe favor parks and outdoors (+11 points), not-for-profit sport clubs (+8 points), and health and fitness centers (+8 points). For the other EU countries, the privileged place of participation is at home (+13 points of difference). The other places do not present remarkable differences.

Beyond the classic north–south division observed earlier, there are important differences and specificities, and the at-home category is the most discriminant. In Germany (+13 points gap) and in Sweden (+13 points), at home is the privileged place of participation for almost half the population (46 percent). In contrast, at-home participation concerns a little more than 1 person out of 10 in Italy (13 percent, –20 points), in Spain (14 percent, –19 points), and in Portugal (14 percent, –19 points). Part of this difference can be explained by geography and, consequently, climate characteristics, the latter countries being sunnier and warmer overall. Health and fitness centers are used by numerous Swedish participants (40 percent, +23 points), whereas they are not much attended by French participants (5 percent, –12 points).

**Table 5.4** Places of Sport and Physical Activity Participation in Western Europe (row percentages, n = 12,283)

|                               | At home | Parks or outdoors | On the way | Fitness center | Sport club | At work | Sport center | School or university | Elsewhere | DK |
|-------------------------------|---------|-------------------|------------|----------------|------------|---------|--------------|----------------------|-----------|----|
| Sweden                        | 46      | 55                | 38         | 40             | 12         | 16      | 6            | 6                    | 3         | 1  |
| Germany                       | 46      | 42                | 27         | 16             | 21         | 15      | 5            | 4                    | 2         | 2  |
| Finland                       | 43      | 72                | 47         | 27             | 7          | 15      | 12           | 5                    | 5         | 1  |
| Austria                       | 43      | 54                | 30         | 19             | 12         | 10      | 5            | 5                    | 9         | 1  |
| United Kingdom                | 40      | 38                | 22         | 21             | 11         | 18      | 9            | 4                    | 6         | 4  |
| Denmark                       | 39      | 50                | 29         | 26             | 22         | 18      | 7            | 7                    | 3         | 3  |
| Belgium                       | 38      | 32                | 29         | 11             | 17         | 13      | 9            | 6                    | 5         | 4  |
| Netherlands                   | 35      | 37                | 29         | 18             | 23         | 13      | 10           | 6                    | 5         | 2  |
| Luxembourg                    | 35      | 36                | 11         | 14             | 16         | 11      | 9            | 7                    | 4         | 3  |
| Greece                        | 31      | 33                | 41         | 20             | 8          | 10      | 5            | 3                    | 4         | 0  |
| France                        | 27      | 42                | 16         | 5              | 17         | 16      | 7            | 5                    | 5         | 4  |
| Ireland                       | 27      | 44                | 14         | 16             | 18         | 7       | 7            | 5                    | 6         | 2  |
| Portugal                      | 14      | 44                | 25         | 17             | 7          | 5       | 3            | 4                    | 5         | 2  |
| Spain                         | 14      | 51                | 31         | 19             | 9          | 6       | 11           | 2                    | 4         | 1  |
| Italy                         | 13      | 36                | 23         | 15             | 7          | 4       | 19           | 4                    | 5         | 2  |
| Western Europe (15 countries) | 33      | 42                | 25         | 17             | 14         | 13      | 9            | 4                    | 4         | 3  |
| Others (13 countries)         | 46      | 31                | 26         | 9              | 6          | 11      | 5            | 6                    | 3         | 7  |

Based on data from Eurostat (2017).

Based on data from [European Commission \(2014\)](#)

One possible explanation is that the French sporting culture is strongly associated with not-for-profit clubs and public funding, and they are more reluctant to join commercial organizations. On-the-way is the participation place for more than 2 people out of 5 in Finland (47 percent, +22 points) and Greece (41 percent, +16 points), although on-the-way participation concerns only 1 person out of 10 in Luxembourg (11 percent, -14 points). Last, it can be observed that about three-quarters of Finnish participants (72 percent, +30 points) take part in sport and physical activities in parks and outdoors, indicating a strong cultural orientation toward natural environments.

## Membership

In Western Europe, affiliation with a club (see table 5.5) concerns about 30 percent of the population. Sport clubs (14 percent) and health and fitness clubs (12 percent) recruit the most. Sociocultural clubs (3 percent) and other types of clubs (1 percent) represent marginal shares of participants.

The Western Europe population is significantly more involved (+15 point gap) in sport club and health and fitness center participation compared with other EU countries, made up of a +9 point difference for sport clubs and a +6 point difference for health and fitness centers. Important differences are also evident among Western European countries. Northern European countries demonstrate the highest rates of club affiliations, and Southern European countries show less developed not-for-profit club networks.

With a ratio of four individuals out of five who are not members of a sport organization, we find without surprise the countries of Portugal (88 percent, +18 point

gap) and Greece (83 percent, +13 point gap). In the northern part of Western Europe, less than half of the population from Sweden (47 percent, -24 points) and Denmark (47 percent, -23 points), a little more than half of the population in the Netherlands (54 percent, -17 points), and three out of five persons in Germany (60 percent, -13 points) participate outside sport organizations. When looking at the extremes, the proportion of people participating in sport organizations is 4.3 times higher in Sweden than in Portugal.

Other national differences can also be observed. For instance, note a stronger role of health and fitness centers in Sweden (33 percent, +21 point gap) and Denmark (25 percent, +13 points). In the same vein, the Netherlands (27 percent, +13 points) and Germany (24 percent, +12 points) demonstrate a stronger role of not-for-profit clubs in comparison with other countries of Western Europe. Overall, sport participation and place clearly differ among the countries of Western Europe.

**Table 5.5** Rates of Membership in Sport Organizations in Western Europe (row percentages, n = 15,689)

|                               | Not a member | Health or fitness center | Sport club | Sociocultural club | Other | DK | Total |
|-------------------------------|--------------|--------------------------|------------|--------------------|-------|----|-------|
| Portugal                      | 88           | 6                        | 4          | 2                  | 0     | 0  | 100   |
| Greece                        | 83           | 11                       | 5          | 1                  | 1     | 0  | 100   |
| Italy                         | 80           | 6                        | 7          | 3                  | 2     | 2  | 100   |
| Spain                         | 79           | 10                       | 7          | 3                  | 1     | 1  | 100   |
| France                        | 74           | 4                        | 16         | 4                  | 1     | 2  | 100   |
| Finland                       | 70           | 13                       | 12         | 7                  | 1     | 0  | 100   |
| Austria                       | 70           | 16                       | 13         | 3                  | 2     | 0  | 100   |
| United Kingdom                | 69           | 18                       | 11         | 2                  | 2     | 2  | 100   |
| Belgium                       | 68           | 11                       | 16         | 5                  | 2     | 2  | 100   |
| Ireland                       | 65           | 15                       | 19         | 4                  | 2     | 0  | 100   |
| Luxembourg                    | 65           | 13                       | 21         | 5                  | 2     | 0  | 100   |
| Germany                       | 60           | 14                       | 24         | 4                  | 0     | 1  | 100   |
| Netherlands                   | 54           | 19                       | 27         | 3                  | 3     | 0  | 100   |
| Denmark                       | 47           | 25                       | 25         | 9                  | 1     | 1  | 100   |
| Sweden                        | 47           | 33                       | 22         | 8                  | 2     | 0  | 100   |
| Western Europe (15 countries) | 70           | 12                       | 14         | 3                  | 1     | 2  | 100   |
| Others (13 countries)         | 85           | 6                        | 5          | 2                  | 1     | 2  | 100   |

Based on data from Eurostat (2017).

## Major Sport Events

In terms of regular events, men's football results from England, Spain, Italy, Germany, and France are regularly broadcast and dominate media discourse. Annual regular tennis tournaments such as Roland Garros, Wimbledon, Rolex-Monte Carlo Masters, and Mutua Madrid Open have national and international coverage. Further, cycling races such as the Tour de France, the Tours of Italy and Spain, and the most prestigious one-day races, called classics, organized in France, Italy, Belgium, and the Netherlands (e.g., Milan-San Remo; the Tour of Flanders, Paris-Roubaix, Liege-Bastogne-Liege, and the Tour of Lombardy) are followed in many countries.



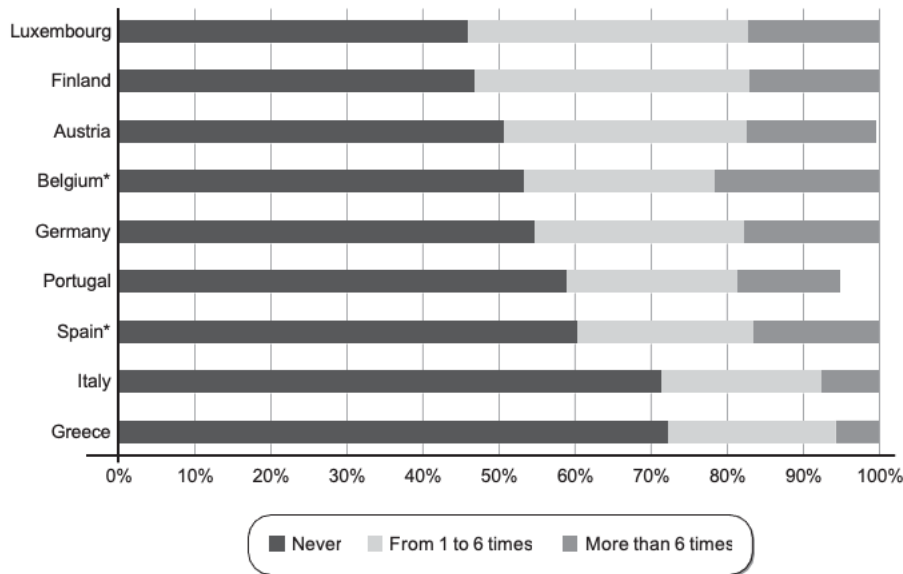
Some of the most prestigious and attractive events in this region include the Champions League and the Europa League in football, the EuroLeague of basketball, the EHF Champions League in hand- ball, and the European Rugby Champions Cup. The following category deals with regular but infrequent European competitions that are generally organized every two or four years depending on the sport (e.g., every four years in football, every two years for the European Athletics Championships) and hosted in various European countries following a bid process similar to the Olympics. An exception is the Six Nations Championship, the top European national competition in rugby, which happens every year. The final type is international events such as world cups, championships, and the Olympic Games, which are organized in Western European countries on an irregular basis.

Considering the diversity of sport interests within Western Europe (see later sections), the countries' wealth, the quantity and quality of sport infrastructures (e.g., stadia, indoor arenas, swim- ming pools, and so on), and the proximity between locations and sites, these events are quite regularly hosted in Western Europe, even if they have dif- ferent audiences and impacts. For instance, the World Men's Handball Championship in France, World Women's Handball Championship in Ger- many, IAAF World Championships in London, UCI Road World Championships (road cycling) in Bergen (Norway), IIHF World Championships (ice hockey) in both Koln (Germany) and Paris, and World Figure Skating Championships in Helsinki (Finland) were hosted in 2017.

The analysis of participation in live sport events has multiple dimensions. One approach consists of looking at live attendance, whereas another consists of looking at mediated attendance, par- ticularly through television (TV) broadcasting. The distinction is important to have in mind because the significance of sports and sporting events may vary according to the approach used. Several types of data can be used to identify the most popular sports and events to attend and watch. Eurostat data are useful in that regard, especially because they allow analyzing these figures according to gender, age, and education level.

Overall, we observe that viewership of live sport events concerns a large part of the population of Western Europe. Despite the lack of data, we can say that in 2011 about 44 percent of Western Europe inhabitants had taken part in a live sport event at least once during the previous year and about 15 percent attended more than six sport events over the same period. Behind these global figures, however, huge differences are evident among countries. Data from figure 5.5 show that inhabitants from South- ern European countries participate less often in live sport events. At the extremes, we find that 72 percent of the population of Greece never attended sport events, compared with a rate of 46 percent for Luxembourg.

The popularity of sport can also be evaluated through media diffusion and television broadcasting in particular. Because no comparative data are available, identifying the sports most broadcast Western Europe is difficult. Nevertheless, a focus on the case of France is interesting.



\*Belgium and Spain: 2011 data not available. Data from 2007 used instead. No data are available for Denmark, Ireland, France, Netherlands, Sweden, United Kingdom, Iceland, Norway, and Switzerland.

**Figure 5.5** Live sport events attendance (over a 12-month period) in Western Europe per countries and per frequency (2011, persons aged 25 to 64).

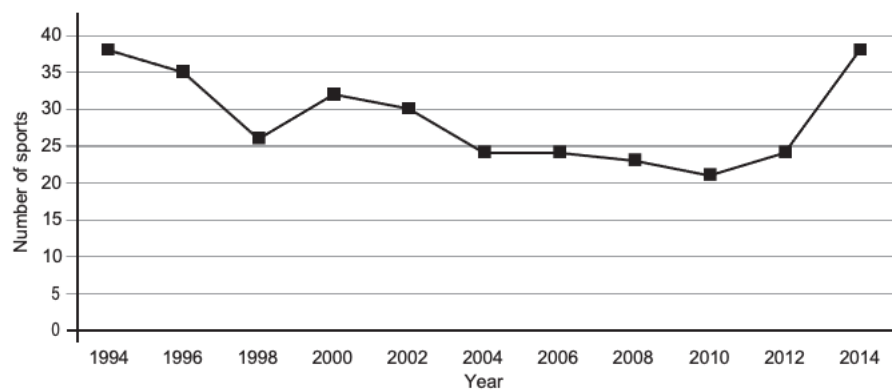
Based on data from Eurostat (2017).

First, the evolution of TV broadcast in Europe in general and in France in particular has significantly influenced the diffusion and consequently the watching of live sport events. In 1995 the French Audio-Visual Superior Council (CSA) counted 7 channels broadcasting sport (3 with pay per view). In 2016 the number was 35, with 22 pay-per-view channels, which belonged to 16 media groups. Between 2000 and 2016 the volume of TV sport programs increased by a multiple of four, rising from 50,846 to 211,677 hours. This rise is essentially due to the increase of media groups and channels, especially the number of pay-per-view channels (95 percent of broadcast hours), in response to increasing demand from spectators.

In France the six sports that are most often broadcast on free-to-air channels are football, cycling, tennis, rugby, basketball, and motorsports. These sports represent more than half of TV sport event programs, and 10 sports represent about 85 percent of the sport event programs, indicating a strong concentration of the market around a small number of sports. If the popularity of football, tennis, and motorsports remains high, their relative share tends to decrease on free-to-air channels, whereas rugby and cycling have increased their share since 2012, and basketball has increased its share since 2010. But this structure change in sport event TV programs has to be linked with the increasing number of sports broadcast, and after a reduction between 1994 and 2010, the offers have been strongly diversified since 2010 as demonstrated in figure 5.6.

Between 2012 and 2014 in France, the number of sports (excluding the Olympics) broadcast on free-to-air channels increased by 58 percent, from 24 to 38 sports. This significant increase is notably due to the arrival of a new channel (L'Equipe 21) that broadcast 15 sports that were not offered on other free-to-air channels. Besides the analysis of volumes and number of sports, audience scores and rankings are interesting. First, note that since 1995, all TV programs that gathered more than 11 million spectators in France are sport programs. Second, although women sports broadcasting is

significantly lower than men's, major women sport events are receiving more and more interest and consequently bigger audiences. A prime example is the Women's Football World Cup; the France–Germany game gathered 4.1 million spectators in France. The France–South Korea (2.8 million), France–USA (2.3 million), and Mexico–France (2.2 million) games from the same competition gathered several million spectators each, which are noticeable figures for a country of 66 million inhabitants and are among the top 10 audiences of free-to-air channels, when the traditional five channels are excluded. Even minor sports that are rarely broadcast can attract huge audiences during major sport events, and we may wonder whether there is a causal link between the two (i.e., scarcity creating interest when finally broadcast) or whether TV channels are missing huge opportunities when they broadcast only major events.



**Figure 5.6** Number of sports broadcasts on free-to-air channels in France.

## Sport Participation

The 2013 Eurobarometer (Eurobaromètre 412) (European Commission, 2014) provides important information about sport and physical activity participation. It is produced by Eurostat, EU's statistical service, and it follows previous editions from 2002 and 2009. The existence of such a tool and the regularity of its use demonstrate how the sport sector in general and sport participation in particular are of importance for the EU. This Eurobarometer relies on a standardized questionnaire translated into the various languages of EU country members and a sample of 1,000 respondents in each country. The population at stake comprises individuals aged 15 years old and above from the 28 member states. The overall sample comprises 27,919 respondents. According to our definition, Western Europe comprises northern and southern countries: Finland, Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, Germany, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Belgium, Luxembourg, Austria, France, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece. With the exception of very small countries in terms of population such as Malta and Cyprus, the remaining 13 countries (out of 28) correspond to countries from the former Eastern bloc: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Slovenia, Croatia, and Bulgaria.

### Learning Activity

In your own country, identify the top five sport activities that have the highest participation rates, that broadcast events the most often (total hours per year), and that attract the biggest audiences. Explain these results and compare them with the case of France

## Sport and Physical Activities: Five Pillars and National Specificities

Table 5.6 presents the 10 sports with the highest participation rates in France (Lefèvre & Thiéry, 2010), Spain (Estadística, 2015), Switzerland (Lamprecht, Fischer, & Stamm, 2014), and England (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2011). Although informative, these results should be taken with caution because some sports have different names and are not grouped in the same ways. But the results are quite stable. For instance, the rankings remained the same in Switzerland between 2008 and 2014 and in France between 2000 and 2010.

Walking, swimming, cycling, keeping fit, and running represent the five traditional pillars of sport participation in Western Europe. Geography and natural resources, equipment, and cultural aspects explain some of the variance in sport participation among countries in Western Europe.

Sporting activities are defined here according to four dimensions: frequency of participation, place of participation, membership in a sport club, and the motives behind sport participation. In the following analyses, estimates for each country are produced using the country-specific weighting proposed by Eurostat. These estimates of the differences between each country and the overall Western Europe population require using a weighting for this population that respects the demographic share of each country. This calculation is needed because, for example, the over-15-years-old population in Germany is 148 times bigger than the one from Luxembourg. Only the biggest differences are interpreted in the following sections.

**Table 5.6** Top 10 Activities With the Highest Participation Rates (Over a 12-Month Period) for France, Spain, Switzerland, and England

| Rank | France (2010)                 | Spain (2014)                  | Switzerland (2014)        | England (2010-2011)   |
|------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| 1    | Walking                       | Cycling                       | Hiking                    | Walking   |
| 2    | Swimming (leisure)            | Swimming                      | Cycling                   | Swimming or diving (indoors)                                |
| 3    | Cycling (leisure)             | Walking, hiking               | Swimming                  | Health, fitness, gym or conditioning activities             |
| 4    | Gym and well-being activities | Running                       | Skiing                    | Cycling (health, recreation, training, competition)         |
| 5    | Running                       | Gym and well-being activities | Running                   | Swimming or diving (outdoors)                               |
| 6    | Winter sports                 | Football                      | Fitness, aerobic          | Snooker, pool, billiards (excluding bar billiards)          |
| 7    | Hiking, mountaineering        | Body toning, bodybuilding     | Gymnastics                | Tenpin bowling  |
| 8    | Bowls                         | Padel                         | Football                  | Football  |
| 9    | Football                      | Tennis                        | Dancing (with jazz dance) | Jogging, cross-country, road running                        |
| 10   | Body toning, bodybuilding     | Basketball                    | Walking, Nordic walking   | Keepfit, aerobics, dance exercise (including exercise bike) |

Samples: residents 15 years old and older except for Switzerland (15-74 years old) and England (16 years old and older)

Reading: In Spain the fourth activity in terms of participant numbers for the last 12 months is running.

## Frequency of Participation

The sport and physical activity definition used in the Eurobarometer questionnaires is quite restrictive (oriented toward sport, without a broad temporal reference, and subjective), but its advantage is that it strongly differentiates individuals. To ease the interpretations, frequencies are gathered for four categories: DK (don't know), never, sometimes (less than once a week), and regularly (at least once a week).

In Western Europe (see table 5.7), nonparticipation concerns two persons out of five (39 percent), occasional participation is evaluated at 16 percent, and regular participation concerns more than two persons out of five (44 percent at least once a week). People from Western Europe participate more than people from Eastern Europe do. Nonparticipation rates differ by 12 points, and the gap for weekly participation is larger at 15 points.

Beyond the overall figures, important differences can be observed between countries from Western Europe. Specifically, populations from northern Western Europe participate the most, whereas in certain southern Western European countries, more than half of the population does not participate in sport and physical activity. These differences in terms of participation are the consequence of numerous factors such as cultural differences, general and sport-specific cultures, political history (for instance, social democratic or conservative political regimes), and democratic systems, in terms of economy and religion (for instance, Protestant versus Catholic countries).

### Learning Activity

Conduct a web search and compare the rates of sport participation in your country with those in Western Europe

Countries in general, and European countries in particular, are rarely culturally uniform and homogenous, and this characteristic has a strong influence on sport participation and consumption. The complexity is also present at the level of participants who increasingly participate in multiple sports and activities (Bodet, 2009). This multiple practice pattern is called omnivorism (Lefèvre & Ohl, 2012). In this case, sport participations should not be considered independently, but combined, which is the case of the portfolio approach that focuses on the number of sports and physical activities performed (Sullivan & Katz-Gerro, 2007) and their types (Lefèvre & Ohl, 2012). Last, sport participation and consumption are also strongly influenced by individual and sociological characteristics such as age, gender, social position, and place of residence. These variables should also be considered when comparing countries and cultural groups such as Scheerder & Vos (2011) did for Belgium and Llopis-Goig et al. (2017) did for France and Spain.

### Learning Activity

In your own country, what are the regional differences in terms of types and rates of physical activity and sport participation? Which factors and variables can explain these differences? What is their nature (e.g., geographical, historical, cultural, economic, and so on)?

## Summary

One definition of Western Europe is the region that corresponds to the Cold War's Western bloc, most of which are part of the European Union. Sport is a focus of European Union's policies. Nevertheless, although these countries belong to the same political entity, and common European Union tools have been developed, comparing countries in relation to the diverse issues of sport consumption is a difficult exercise because of the lack of uniformity in the objectives and methods used. In addition, despite communalities in terms of sport funding structure, employment rates in sport, and economic importance, national differences are significant in terms of viewership of live sport events and participation in sport and physical activity. For instance, walking, swimming, cycling, keeping fit, and running represent the five traditional pillars of sport participation in Western Europe, but the popularity of certain sports is observed only in certain countries. In the same vein, sport participation frequencies vary strongly according by country, and the Northern European ones show higher rates than their Southern European counterparts. This north-south division is observed in relation to many sport issues and sport structures in this area. Consequently, if Western Europe can be compared with other regions of the world in regard to sport issues, the reader should keep in mind the heterogeneity of these countries and their cultures, which have significant influence on the way that sport is defined and consumed.